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TOURISM MANAGEMENT SERIES

How To ORGANISE SPECIAL EVENTS & FESTIVALS

By **Rob Tonge**



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Thank you for downloading the sample chapters of *How To Organise Special Events & Festivals* published by Gull Publishing. This excerpt includes the Table of Contents, the preface about the Author and the first chapter, which overviews the book.

We hope you find this information useful in evaluating this book

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Rob Tonge is Senior Partner of the Queensland based regional tourism development consultancy firm Rob Tonge and Associates providing assistance to the tourism industry around Australia and the Pacific since 1977.

The company specialises in community and regional tourism planning, remote area tourism, feasibility analysis, tourism association development and the establishment and operation of visitor information centres.

Since 1980 Rob Tonge and Associates have conducted 70 research projects giving the Rob Tonge organisation an unparalleled depth of knowledge and experience.

Rob has used his extensive experience to compile the popular Tourism Management Series of practical “how-to” manuals now used by all levels of government, the private sector and training organisations, in 24 countries.

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A Practical Guide for Non-Profit Clubs & Associations



CHAPTER ONE



Every week throughout the year a wide variety of special events and festivals are held in communities across the nation, amounting to hundreds of events annually. The special events sector today covers many different types of events, ranging from small local club displays and functions, to large, hallmark events drawing international participation and support. Growth in the number of special events has been particularly evident throughout regional Australia, and in recent years, many innovative events have been added to the national events calendar.

Traditionally, special events and festivals did not target the tourism market and were organised for reasons such as centenary celebrations or other milestones in community development, cultural and heritage events, sporting competitions, field days, religious holidays, and events with a local focus to raise funds for a specific purpose to benefit clubs and communities in some way.

Special events are widely recognised as being a growth sector of the tourism industry with potential to generate substantial economic benefit for the city, township or region involved. This wider recognition of 'events tourism' has also heralded a continually expanding number of new events in many regions as community leaders, clubs, and local and regional tourism industry representatives have identified opportunities to tap into the visitor market.

Special events form part of the 'attraction' component of the tourism industry. In places with only limited natural and/or built attractions, there are a number of instances in rural and regional areas where special events have become attractions with high levels of appeal that draw large numbers of visitors to these places.

While larger events may have sufficient financial resources to employ paid organisers or secretariats, the vast majority of special events and festivals held in regional areas are organised, on a voluntary basis, by clubs, associations, other special-interest groups and community committees. Service clubs such as Rotary, Lions, Apex and Jaycees are frequently at the forefront of these initiatives. In addition to these voluntary organising committees, the staging of events is supported by many thousands of volunteers from the wider community.

The dedication and commitment of the volunteer labour force from the wider community is critical to the success of special events. It is generally recognised that events could not be staged without this assistance.

Many events start out in a small way with some achieving state, national and international recognition and patronage. Successful events can generate substantial economic benefits for the local economy, and importantly, these events foster a strong sense of 'community', as people with diverse experience work together to achieve a common goal.

Because of the many different types of special events, the planning, management and marketing requirements will vary from event to event, nevertheless, there are a number of fundamental principles which apply to all events, irrespective of size, scope and type.

This manual explains these generic principles and provides a practical step-by-step guide to assist clubs, associations and event committees with the event planning, management and marketing process including the preparation of submissions for sponsorship, and conducting a post-event evaluation.

The last section in the manual summarises this process with a comprehensive checklist.

... but at this point let us review the reasons why some events fail - and the characteristics of successful events.

WHY SOME EVENTS FAIL TO ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVES

Although there are many successful events, instances occur where hard working organising committees see their events generate only limited interest and fail to meet the desired objectives - situations that can leave committees with substantial debts, creating disenchantment in the community and sponsoring organisations.

In these cases, the main reasons for failure are usually a combination of two or more of the following factors:

- Failure to allow sufficient planning time;
- Inadequate planning;
- Problems within the organising committee - i.e. power struggles, infighting, lack of the necessary skills;
- Overly optimistic income projections;
- Inadequate market research - does the event have appeal outside your community?
- Clashing of event dates;
- An ad hoc approach to marketing (lack of a marketing plan);
- Lack of a sponsorship plan;
- Inadequate budget and/or poor financial management;
- Failure to meet spectator and/or competitor expectations; or
- Failure to adequately make provision for inclement weather conditions.

These problems are often compounded by four other issues:

- 1) In many communities there is a lack of networking and communication between organising committees, resulting in duplication of effort, failure to take advantage of co-operative opportunities, and failure to recognise the benefits that can be gained by sharing resources;
- 2) There is now evidence to indicate that firstly, in some regions the number of events has reached, or is reaching, saturation point, and secondly, event committees often tend to overlook the fundamental issues of supply and demand;



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- 3) Committee 'burnout' can sometimes occur when annual events grow and achieve state or national status, or when after the first flush of enthusiasm wanes, the workload falls on a small core of dedicated committee members; and
- 4) When event committees plan to gain patronage from tourists, there is sometimes a lack of understanding that, because of the dramatic growth in the number of regional special events, many are being duplicated from region to region, with the result that some types of events may now have little appeal or potential to attract the visitor market.

From the viewpoint of people attending local and regional events, recent research has revealed five main complaints (excluding bad weather):

- 1) Insufficient toilets;
- 2) Overpriced food and beverages;
- 3) Inadequate traffic management and signage;
- 4) The event program ran considerably over the scheduled time; and
- 5) The event failed to meet expectations created by promotion.

Organising committees need to be aware in planning any event that the populace today is more demanding and selective than ever before, and expectations are high.

What all these issues mean is that if a special event or festival is to achieve success, it must be innovative, well planned, and effectively marketed. The potential market must be identified. Professionalism and attention to detail are mandatory elements.



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