

PORTLAND RACE COLLEGE REPORT

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OVERVIEW

- Majority of attendees were marathon organizers and much of the information given was focused on marathon and/or big races. The principals for all races, large and small, are basically the same - the amount of organization, coordinators and volunteers are what change.
- Races tied to a charity in some way generally have an easier time selling sponsorships.
- Try to think of races as “wellness events” or self-managed wellness programs – can “sell” this concept to sponsors. Health care providers are becoming more viable sponsoring sources.
- For larger races, think “destination” events vs. just a race – try to bring people in on mini vacations. Maybe design the course or part of it where the participants can run where they normally can’t run. Requires strong municipality connections. Concept to sell to the city is that revenue generated from races generally offsets the cost to the city by 10X (in revenue and sales tax) – races can be a great economic boost. If you can afford it, do an economic impact statement so you can show the municipality how much \$\$ are brought in. It is advantageous to have a committee that networks to the municipalities that your race is in.
- In regard to children – for the first time in history, children born today are not expected to live longer than their parents did. Obesity in children has doubled and it is important for races to think about how to bring them into the racing format – they are the future.
- What goes into the brand of your race? The physical products, the image within the community, the look and feel of what you produce; how you deal with officials and volunteers; and the personality of the event: green, kid “friendly”, etc. – all of these things are what makes your race a unique experience for the participants.
- Changes to your race? Like the thought of going green? Don’t try to do everything at once. Pick a few area at first for recycling and then expand upon it each year. Have hand out regarding “green” if anyone is interested.

SPONSORSHIPS

- Think long term when you think sponsors. Portland has sponsors that have been with it for over 10 years
- Have a person in charge of sponsorship who has been empowered to make the deal. Sign contracts for 3-5 years in length.
- Offer exclusive marketing at the race only – not at any expo. Make sure the sponsor knows what they are getting exactly

- EVERYTHING is for sale
- Do some strategic planning – what do you want from your race and how are you going to get it; set goals and set up a timetable to obtain them.
- Divide opportunities into segments and market each segment where there is no exclusive or umbrella sponsor for that segment.
- Need to get the sponsors to spend \$\$ on advertising that they are a sponsor of the event as well as your sponsoring them as part of the event. They need to be active sponsors.
- Never pay for anything – find a source and add to it
- Always give more than you promise to your sponsors – helps the long term relationship with them but you need to let them know that it is an extra

CHARITIES

- Have charity involvement and help themselves with the event. At the Portland marathon, \$2.5 million raised thru it through Teams in Training, etc. Payout to charity for their help.
- Grandma's – started own Foundation : Has Young Athletes program \$300, 000 since 1990 and covers 5 counties
 - Has running shoe program which is run through the coaches; Coaches are given gift certificates for shoes to hand to those youths in their program that need them; have given away 1500 pairs of shoes so far
 - Has fund raising events to raise \$\$ for Foundation: Wednesday night at the races; get sponsors; ice skating;
 - Also has grant program to other organizations for youths to other non-profits
- Portland has a four tier charity approach:
 - Tier 1: Constituent teams: Teams in Training, Strides for Strokes, etc. They are provided with a media package. They “pay” the entry fee and then “sell” it to the fundraising runner.
 - Tier 2: Smaller charities; get charity recognition; help with ideas for fund raising; listed and participants can donate to them
 - Tier 3: Corporate Challenge – health wellness; goal for fundraising to get people involved to raise \$\$ for charity of choice
 - Tier 4: Pay forward: give \$\$ back to specific charities for their assistance at the race
- Try to get charities to help themselves by exposure at race

RACE ORGANIZATION

- Need bonding and ownership to the event to make it good; if you get volunteers to buy-in, never have a motivation problem; get people who are committed

- Race directors should not get lost in the detail; think like an army: Sargeants run the army but the officers command. If get lost in the detail, never get the job done. Also be careful not to create a crisis just so you can undo it.
- Empower your volunteers. Have coordinators for the various jobs. Be sure they know what their job and duties are and then get out of their way and let them do their work.
- Minimum of 2 meetings for preparation: 2 months before and 2 weeks before. Many ad hoc meetings with various committees.
- Have a critique meeting and make it a rule that you can't say anything good; just what you see was wrong or what you want to see changed
- Don't dump a problem; have solution. It might not be the right solution but at least it is a starting point for people to think about.
- Think of the event as a wagon wheel – each committee is a spoke supporting the whole.
- Have a “delta force” – a strategic reserve that is ready to step in where ever they are needed. If not enough volunteers show up, this force is at the ready to step up to the job.
- Always have a protocol for disaster. What should be done in the case the course has to be shut down or diverted on race day. You can never anticipate everything but you should have a protocol among 3-4 people, ready to implement and/or discuss if it is not a foreseen problem.
- When using radio or walkie talkies at race, be sure you educate the people who are using them. Need to be sure they know what should be said in the public domain. Limit radios to the essential people.
- Go to other races and study what they are doing
- Try to learn how your event can be better and always be looking at what you are going to do next year
- Know what is special about your event and build/draw on it and give the event that character

EXPOS AND TRADE SHOWS

- How: have Expo Coordinator. Only job is the Expo
- Should include charities; can also be source of exclusivity for sponsors if they are willing to pay for it – again only at Expo not at race
- It should be a profit center
- Design of Expo important: need to go thru the Expo to maximize for vendors; it is important to control the flow; don't let them get bored in line
- Expo is the first look at the event – the more professional it is, the better

- Purpose of an Expo:
 - 1st: administrative: registration; packet handout, etc.
 - 2nd: place to sell race-specific merchandise
 - 3rd: showcase for the sponsors
 - 4th: Expo booths are revenue source
- Get vendors by scouting other Expos
- Do contract with Expo vendors: signed contract with deposit; no upselling of booth
- Really is a sales job and needs a flair for it
- Is an Expo worth the effort? Even if small, can be a great way to support local community
- Also a great place to have panel discussion the afternoon before the race: use local runners or course record holder to take questions from runners. Also can include last minute race instructions from the police.

EVENT TECHNOLOGY

- Website: who has the domain name? Webmaster or club? Is there a contract with the webmaster? Have to be careful of cyber squatting, which is on the rise
- Websites can be used for “selling eyeballs” so you have to be careful someone isn’t cutting into your advertising revenue if you have them on your site
- Chip technology is changing rapidly; major changes expected in the next 8 months; current chips are disposable (attached to bib and removed by runner and inserted in shoe laces); and non-disposable.

PUBLICITY

- “Fish where there are other fish.” Get your race application out at other races and at stores where runners shop
- Check with TV – do you have public service ads; these are at no cost, usually 30 seconds in length. Send a dvd to the station for their use; these ads can be run about 2-3 weeks before the event
- Advertise that exercise is important: 1 hour exercise adds about 2 hours more to your life
- Role is to keep people healthy. Highlight healthy older runners – they are informational and inspiration for all runners
- Thank sponsors at the finish line
- Training programs: “he who owns the training program owns the event.” There are thousands of personal trainers; get your race information and applications out to them

KIDS

- Kids are the future. Need to target programs to them.
- One mentioned was the “Just Run” program. It is a computerized program where children log their miles to “run” across the United States. When they stop at a city, there is information about the city. Small rewards are handed out at specific milestones: 5K, 10K, ½ Marathon, etc.
- If anyone interested, I can provide them with a copy of the handout.

CONCLUSION

We got two DVDs at the race. We gave one to Nancy Briskie as the Race Committee Chair and also have one. Once the next few months, intend to go through it and pass along ideas. Feel free to ask to borrow if you want.