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The Design, Operation, and Management of a Wellness Event

This chapter discusses how to design, operate, and manage a wellness event. It starts with introducing the Sedona Yoga Festival. It defines event management and how to design a wellness event. After defining stakeholders, it explains the importance of the identification of stakeholders for a wellness event. It also covers human resources planning, budgeting, marketing, safety, and managing a wellness event. Finally, it discusses what happens after a wellness event.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, students should be able to do the following:

1. Introduce the Sedona Yoga Festival.
 2. Define and discuss event management and how to plan and design a wellness event.
 3. Discuss the basic requirements of designing a wellness event.
 4. Identify key stakeholders for a wellness event.
 5. Discuss human resource planning for a wellness event.
 6. Discuss how to develop a budget for a wellness event.
 7. Explain how to market a wellness event.
 8. Explain how to manage a wellness event.
 9. Discuss the role of safety in designing, operating, and managing a wellness event.
 10. Discuss what to do after a wellness event.
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Case study: Sedona Yoga Festival

The Sedona Yoga festival has been held annually since 2012 in Sedona, Arizona, with the exception of 2020 and 2021 during the Covid-19 pandemic (2020 ticketholders were given a credit to attend a future event). The goals of the 2022 event were to “nourish our collective soul, address the wounds of a difficult couple of years, and spark joy to encourage the continued sharing of yoga’s wisdom and healing.”

Attendees at the annual festival receive not only the physical benefits from doing yoga, but also a focus on mental and spiritual growth and recovery from the past years, including the effects of the pandemic. The organizers also offer “a variety of guided land excursions that foster meaningful immersion in Sedona’s breathtaking natural beauty.” Socially and environmentally conscious vendors are in attendance at a free expo attached to the event, which welcomes friends and family not attending the conference itself. Music, kids experiences, and trainings are offered throughout the conference, and pre- and post-conference immersions into various components of yoga are available as conference add-ons.

One day at the event could look like:

7:00 am – Morning meditation sangha

7:45 am – All levels community practice: rise and shine yoga

8:00 am – Trauma informed yoga training, or kids yoga: yoga happiness

8:30am – On the land experience: Cathedral Rock

Throughout the day – courses, yoga practice, chanting, reiki immersion, etc.

2:30pm – Group panel discussion

6:15pm – Concert sunset satsang

(Sedona Yoga Festival, 2022)

Discussion questions

1. What is unique about this festival?
2. What does the Sedona Yoga Festival offer its attendees?
3. What does the Sedona Yoga Festival offer locals?
4. Are there similar festivals where you live?

Planning and designing a wellness event

Event management is a term often used synonymously with event planning, but in reality, it is more than just the planning phase. **Event management** includes planning and building an event, promoting it across multiple channels, managing attendee information and communication, executing the actual event, and measuring its success (Layman, 2019).

A **special event** is a one-time event staged for celebration, typically a unique activity. A **special events company** is, therefore, one that is contracted to put on all or parts of an event, and a **special events production company** may present special effects and theatrical acts for the event (Fenich, 2018). Wellness events are usually small events that do not necessarily require the assistance of a special events company or a production company. However, some large festivals do use them to increase the “wow factor.”

An **event planner** is someone who coordinates all aspects of professional meetings and events. This person must understand the goals, needs, and desires of their client must work within the parameters of the location, and needs to have a basic understanding of the community infrastructure, merchandising, promoting, developing sponsorships, and working with media (Fenich, 2018).

How to design a wellness event?

First, it is essential to know the target audience for the event. Some critical questions to ask in order to find out who the target audience is:

- Who is the customer/potential attendee, and what are their needs and wants?
- What other options or choices do they have for wellness events?
- How can they be defined?

Once these questions are answered, the planning, programming, scheduling, and expenses can be directed toward that group. To be more specific, here are some typical steps that are taken to design a wellness event (Fenich, 2018):

1. **Set Goals and Objectives:** Objectives are the basis of the planning process and drive the planning of the program, from site selection to food and beverage, transportation, room layout and setup, and of course, the programming. Goals and objectives, therefore, should be clear, concise, and measurable, or **S.M.A.R.T.** (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based).

Some specific questions to help guide the identification of these goals include:

- a) Why would people attend your wellness event (i.e., what is the purpose of the event? Education, health improvement, networking, or conducting business)?
- b) Who is most likely to attend your wellness event? Recent studies show that apart from the classic methods of marketing research, social media platforms can be analyzed to understand users' preferences by examining their activity such as posts, likes, and shares. Therefore, it is possible to observe what kind of tendencies users are inclined towards. For example, Akbari et al (2016) examined the social media content of Twitter users and identified which wellness events they followed. Such technological data can be very helpful for wellness event planners to define their participant groups for future events.
- c) What segment are you mostly trying to attract?