Title:
Learn from the Olympics How to Organize your Events: Part 1 of 3 - Planning
Event Logistics

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549

Summary:
Learn valuable lessons from the olympics about how to manage the logistics of an
event.

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Article Body:
With the Winter Olympic Games in Torino underway, on time and over budget, it
feels like a good time to take a minute and look at the lessons the Olympics
have to teach us about managing events. To be fair, the Olympics are a massive
set of groups with multiple venues hosting simultaneous events with visitors
from all over the world. To make matters worse, you only get to do it once, you
prepare for years leading up to it, when it arrives you try the best that you
can to control the chaos for just over 2 nonstop weeks and then, in a blink of
an eye, it is over. While there is a chance that your children or grandchildren
will be involved in hosting the Games again, for most people involved there is
no next time.

It is still too soon to look closely at what has and has not worked for the
Winter Games in Torino. It is not until all the smoke has cleared that they
will know how the event really went. I did however, have the good fortune of
being involved with hosting the Salt Lake Winter Games (2002) while I was a
college student in Provo, UT. Those Olympics are now four years old and time
has given us a great perspective to glean some valuable lessons from them and
the way that they were managed.

For the sake of learning, let's skip past the Olympic bid scandal and look at
the things that were done right for those games.

Let's start with logistics in this part of our series – I-15 was under
construction for years before the Olympic Games were held, but more importantly,
some one had clearly thought out the most popular routes to the venues and where
people would be going within the venues. The roads were modified to accommodate

the increased traffic and the venues were laid out with the fans in mind. I spent most of my time during the 2002 Olympics at Soldier Hollow, the Cross Country Ski and Biathlon Venue. You could tell that time was spent to design the venue in such a way as to give the fans the most access to the course while making it a great course for the athletes competing. Often times this is a detail that is overlooked for smaller events. The venue will be decorated in a manner that looks great, often times at the expense of functionality.

It is also important to take the time to think through how people are going to arrive and leave your event. Look for things that might make it harder for people to attend and try to handle those issues in advance. I was involved in an event once where there was construction on the primary route. Since the location was vaguely familiar to most of the people attending we sent out flyers warning people about the construction and advising them of alternate routes that were available. Printing little maps on the back of your tickets is also a great way to help people get to your event.

The goal is to make it as easy as possible for people to 1) get to your event and 2) do what you want them to do when they arrive.

Next: Planning a Profitable Event