

Event Economics: Running Sustainable Events

A Practical Look at Where Events Make or Lose Money and What Financial Sustainability Really Means

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Presenters



Peter Guadagni

9 year member of USMS Board of Directors (2017 - Present)

Past President of USMS

Chair of Pacific Masters (2011 - 2015)

Captain of Walnut Creek Masters (2007 - 2011)

7 time Meet Director of Pacific SCY Championships

Founder and 3 time Meet Director of Pacific Masters Relays



Kenny Brisbin

Chair, Southern Pacific LMSC

Vice President of Community Services, U.S. Masters Swimming

Captain, Long Beach Grunions

Experienced Masters Meet Director and former SPMS Sanctions Chair

USMS volunteer leader supporting coaches, clubs, events, and LMSC development

Experienced Pool Event Director

Developed and supported new Masters meets, clinics, and community events

Works with clubs and event hosts on funding, facilities, promotion, and event growth



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What Does a Sustainable Event Look Like?

- Financial sustainability means creating an event that can continue year after year.
- Financial: Fitting events to your local capacity
- People: Staff and volunteers don't burn out
- Participants: Swimmers want to come back
- Future: Hosts want to do it again



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Start With the Numbers

- Understand what the event will really cost before setting your pricing.
- Know your true costs
- Fixed vs. variable expenses
- Plan for unexpected expenses
- Set realistic financial goals
- How many swimmers do you need?



Break-Even & Pricing

- Know how many participants you need and what you need to charge.
- Participant cost of other sports events
- Know your break-even attendance
- Understand cost per swimmer
- Price based on actual costs
- Plan for lower attendance



Audience Discussion

You budget for 200 swimmers, but only 140 register.
What do you do?



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Where Events Make or Lose Money

- Identify the expenses and revenue that have the biggest impact.
- Facility rental and staffing
- Timing, officials and equipment
- Awards and hospitality
- Attendance and entry fees

Audience Discussion

What is the biggest expense or financial challenge for events in your LMSC and what are the possible solutions?



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Why Do Meet Hosts Stop Hosting?

- Understanding why events disappear helps us understand what sustainability really means.
- Financial losses or too much risk
- Too much work and too few volunteers
- Meet Director and volunteer burnout
- Facility problems or declining attendance



Audience Group Discussion

Why have meets or events in your LMSC stopped being offered?



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People Are Part of the Economics

- An event isn't sustainable if you're burning out the people who make it happen.
- Recruit and organize volunteers early
- Spread the workload
- Develop future event leaders
- Avoid relying on the same people



Audience Discussion

What has worked for you to recruit volunteers and meet labor needs?



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Participation & Swimmer Experience

- Attendance drives revenue, but swimmers need a good experience if you want them to return.
- Market early and reach new swimmers
- Run an organized, on-time event
- Make the experience worth the cost
- Give swimmers a reason to return



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LMSC & USMS Support

- Reduce the burden and financial risk so organizations want to host.
- Financial support and grants
- Equipment and officials
- Marketing and promotion
- Mentoring for new event hosts



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Measure the Results

- Look beyond profit to determine what worked and what needs to change.
- Budget vs. actual
- Attendance vs. projection
- Cost and revenue per swimmer
- Identify changes for next year



The Ultimate Sustainability Test

Do you want to
Host Again?



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Wrap Up / Q&A

Don't be afraid to ask. If
you're thinking it, someone
else is too!



Thank You!

Slides, Resource Links, and
Panelist Bios will be posted
on the USMS website