Developing the Most Effective and Efficient Fundraising Events

Megan Fine
Events and Logistics Manager
Prior to 2006

- Multiple departments overseeing events at the Zoo
  - Marketing – 30 events
  - Development – 10 events, including fundraisers
  - Education – 10 events
  - Membership – 10 events

- Multiple teams not focusing on their specialties.
  - Creating events was taking more time
  - Primary focuses were not getting enough attention
  - Teams creating activities that were not under their department's umbrella or specialty
Denver Zoo’s Events Team

Streamlining the Process

• Team of three event professionals

• (70) Events throughout the year
  – Public Events: Zoo Lights, Boo At The Zoo
  – Fundraiser Events: Do At The Zoo
  – Donor Events

• Setting deadlines, budgeting, fulfilling requests, vendor relations, event set up, day of event logistics and event tear down.

• Work with departments Zoo wide to plan events and help building programs.

• Overseeing post event evaluation with Zoo wide input.

• Assists with setting annual calendar of events, programs and Zoo wide activities.
Brew At The Zoo

By The Numbers

- General Admission - $85
- Preview Admission - $100
- Designated Driver - $30
- Attendance: 3,566

Net proceeds from Brew At The Zoo will benefit the Denver Zoo Scholarship Fund, which makes it possible for all individuals – no matter their economic circumstances – to discover the wonders of animals through participation in Denver Zoo education programs.
Do At The Zoo

By The Numbers

- VIP Ticket - $300
- General Admission - $175
- Attendance – 2,308

Net proceeds from Do At The Zoo historically have gone to programs based on the most current needs – capital campaigns, sustainability initiatives, conservation funding, etc.

Event Admission Includes:
- (60) Restaurants
- (5) Full Service Bars
- (7) Specialty Liquor Booths
- (5) Stages
- VIP Party
- After hours access to the Zoo
- Up close animal encounters
Brew At The Zoo

A Bad Fit and a Lack of a Plan

- Event didn’t match Denver Zoo’s mission –
  
  Secure a better world for animals through human understanding.
  
  – Unable to share Denver Zoo’s story during the event
  – Viewed as a great event, not a fundraiser

- Brew At The Zoo did not have a five year strategic plan –
  
  – No life span plan
  – No exit strategy
  – No plan to handle competition
  – No plan to make it unique
  – No pricing plan
  – Never thought about event capacity or price cap
Brew At The Zoo

Additional Challenges

• Price Point
  – Great American Beer Festival costs $80 with more than 3,000 beers to sample

• Community Events
  – Beer tasting events occur weekly in Denver

• Presenting Sponsor
  – Challenging to find a sponsor wanting to lend its name to a beer event - $30,000 value

• Limited Space
  – What is a safe attendance number for an after hours event
  – True capacity for vendors

• Hard Costs of the Event
  – Cost of booths vs benefit of increase number of available tickets
Do At The Zoo

- Ticket Revenue - $199,250
- Sponsorship Revenue - $446,125
- Expenses - $127,132
- Additional Contributions - $1,685
- Net Revenue - $519,132
- Staffing Costs for Planning
  - 257 hours ($5,621)

- Expense Percentage: 20.5%

Brew At the Zoo

- Ticket Revenue - $166,720
- Sponsorship Revenue - $36,000
- Expenses - $86,607
- Net Revenue - $116,112
- Staffing Costs for Planning
  - 191 hours ($4,169)

- Expense Percentage: 53.3%

* Denver Zoo Events Team Expense Percentage Goal: 30%
Events focused committee was formed made up of trustees and executive staff.

All information gathered was shared with the committee.

Committee decided Zoo resources would be better spent towards other fund raising efforts.
Communicated to staff and volunteers
Evite sent to 2014 Brew At The Zoo guests
Next Steps

Now What Do We Do?

• New event to raise $60,000 net revenue, while increase net revenue from other fundraising activities.

• 2015 Do At The Zoo net proceeds benefit the Zoo’s education initiatives, such as classes, camps and outreach programs to bring informal science education to life.

• Incorporating (20) breweries into this year’s Do At The Zoo

• Creating new events to engage adult demographic to come to the Zoo
Food for Thought

Take Homes

- Do you have a five year plan?
- Is it okay to host events that don’t directly tie with your organization’s mission?
- What is your organization’s event philosophy?
  - If it makes money do you continue to do it?
  - Is your organization willing to invest in resources for non-mission driven event programming?
- What is your organization’s bottom line financially?
  - Minimum revenue
  - Set expense to revenue percentage
- Are you tracking staff resources and taking the cost into consideration when doing events and programming?
Questions and Conversation

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2015’s Do At The Zoo
Thursday, June 18
7 – 10 p.m.
Tickets start at $175