

## TIPS FOR RACE DIRECTORS AND EVENT MANAGERS

If you have decided to get into the business of directing races or organizing community events you have certainly picked an interesting field that is growing. The need for trained and experienced event managers is on the rise as more and more events of all kinds continue to come on line.

Municipalities, provincial and federal governments as well as numerous non profit organizations continue to grow their inventory of events making the need for experienced managers a definite requirement.

The need for people in this area has prompted many local colleges and universities to develop courses to help new people interested in getting into the industry. It would be a good idea to investigate courses in your area.

Please note that this tip sheet is to serve as a broad overview for the requirements of organizing a snowshoe event. For more detailed instructions and guidance you should refer to our sanction document.

The beginning stages of organizing an event can be the most difficult as it takes a considerable amount of time and effort to get the event off the ground.

- 1. Market Determination:** In the beginning stages the most important component to determine is the level of participation that you can generate for your event. The most important revenue source for your event is the registrations of the athletes so you would be well advised to make an accurate determination of how many people you can expect to attract the first year.
- 2. Your potential sources of athletes for a winter endurance sports** can come from a variety of sources including, running clubs, cyclists, cross country and downhill skiers, triathletes, hikers, climbers, walkers and of course snowshoers. You should make connections with these various groups, indicate your intentions and gauge their interest in attending your event. You want to have a commitment at least verbally that they would support the event.
- 3. Acquiring a Venue:** Once you have determined that there is a reasonable amount of interest in your area to stage an event your next task is to find a suitable venue. There are certainly no shortages of snowshoe trails across Canada but many of them would be unsuitable to stage a mass participation event in the middle of winter. The requirements center around logistics of dealing with a large group of people, safety and the availability of an indoor facility. The facility should have an existing trail network or be willing to build a trail. There should be the availability of a heated indoor facility with hydro near the start of the trail in order to provide for pre race check in and post race awards. There should be adequate parking and the availability of public transit. Roads to the facility should be maintained in winter and plowed regularly particularly on race morning.

Cross country and downhill ski areas typically have adequate facilities as do local municipal, provincial and federal parks.

The cost of renting the facility should be determined and factored into your decision.

4. **Funding:** In the early going of your planning process you should investigate all external funding sources in order to provide enough revenue to stage the event. Typically there is funding of some kind available from local municipal, provincial and even federal sources that are aimed at getting people active and healthy. Local tourism boards are also a good source of possible funding particularly if your event will draw people from outside your area. Private funding from family foundations or corporations can also be a good source of revenue. These foundations were set up to aid various causes of which health, fitness and wellness are typically included. You would have to investigate the requirements of these possible funding sources and complete the necessary documentation to apply.
5. **Municipal and Regional Support:** Political support is very important in getting your event off the ground and keeping it going year after year. It is advisable to make contact with your local municipal councillor and or mayor and let them know that you are planning this event. They are often positive towards these sorts of things and lend support and advice that can be helpful. The same goes for your local provincial and federal representatives. Their advice and influence can help open doors and pave the way for a variety of advantages that would otherwise prove difficult. If you are seeking a provincial, national or even world title getting political buy in early is a benefit in your favour.
6. **Forming a Committee:** You can't pull off an event of this magnitude alone so you will need the assistance of a committee to be successful. Forming a committee should be something you do early on after you have established that there is market for the event and viable venue to stage it. Depending on your available funding you may choose to have your committee operate on a volunteer basis, honorarium or paid format. You should seek out a small organizing committee empowering them with the key elements of race organizing and then in turn let them form sub committees that execute the details in their assigned area. Some of the key areas to consider would include revenue generation, online registration, website, advertising, sponsors, media, volunteers, race course set up, financial management, equipment allocation, race morning set up and post race awards and food.
7. **Budgeting:** Your next step should be the formulation of a budget which will include projected revenues and expenses. If this is your first time at this it would be advisable to seek the assistance of the venue manager or local parks authority who has some experience in organizing events and can give you some advice as to what items to include. The budget is a guideline and will undoubtedly flex as you move toward race day. However the sooner you can nail this down the better it will be going forward.
8. **Choose A Date:** The choice of a race date is a key marketing strategy and there are number of factors that come into play including ideal weather conditions, availability of snow, availability of the race venue and the potential best date to attract participants.

9. **Launching your Marketing Plan:** Going back to tip #1 the most critical component of race planning is getting the people to show up and participate. You are asking people to invest their money, time and energy in your event so you have to have a solid plan to get them to commit.

You should endeavor to formulate a marketing plan and engage it as soon as possible in order capture athlete interest early in the planning stages. Your marketing plan should contain the following components. Web site, on line registration page, various social media platforms, email campaigns, sponsor package, flyers and posters, media releases and talks with local clubs and associations.

Your campaign should endeavour to touch as many people as possible as often as possible in order to generate maximum interest in your event. Often it will take several touches using a variety of methods before a person is ready to invest their money and time in your event so make this priority and stick at it.

10. **Engage a charity:** As a community event it is always a good idea to make a connection with a local charity. This will be seen as positive attribute of your organization and will help attract participants, sponsors and important stakeholders. In addition charities can often help with providing volunteers and can engage their own marketing campaigns to increase participation.
11. **Volunteers:** The key component to pulling off a successful event is the acquisition of committed volunteers. Getting volunteers is never easy and keeping them year over year is always a challenge. Finding an influential person in your community who can help recruit and train volunteers would be a real boost. Volunteers can come from a variety of sources including local clubs, companies, schools, seniors centers and municipal government. People will volunteer because they connect with the activity you are staging and or the charity that you have committed to. It is important to make it clear that their services are important and valued. Make sure they are given clear instructions and have adequate say in the planning process.
12. **Insurance:** Events cannot be staged safely within the framework of any community without adequate insurance. Any time you engage a private venue or a local municipality or government institution you will need to provide evidence of insurance. There are local insurance brokers in your area that have contacts to commercial insurance companies that will be able to provide quotes on coverage. The basic coverage should include \$2 million general liability including participant liability and participant accident coverage. If you need help navigating the insurance issue please contact me directly.
13. **Planning the Details:** The nitty gritty details are critical to pulling off a successful event. Sweating the details during the race planning stage will help insure a smooth running event on race day. The old saying “ What can go wrong.. will go wrong”. So plan your event meticulously for success. Many of the details of race planning are dealt with in our sanctioning document. In addition when you sanction with SC you get our mentoring and our 35 years of race management experience to help you along the way.

14. **Race Day Execution:** The big day has finally arrived and all your planning is ultimately put to the test. Your best bet is to formulate a detailed action plan from start to finish listing all actions that must take place during the day. That list becomes your marching orders and will guide you and your team through the day. Communications with all parties is key. Staying cool under pressure is essential. Keep it light and keep it fun!!
15. **Post Race Follow up:** Your final task in the days immediately following the conclusion of your event is to clean everything up and set the tone for next year. You should immediately issue a wrap up thank you note on your web site, social media and email blast briefly wrapping up the day and acknowledging all those that contributed. You should post the results and make sure all the media outlets get a wrap up story.  
This is also a good time to set the date for next year and get buy in from all your key stakeholders for their commitment while the event is still fresh in their mind  
Be sure to pay all outstanding invoices and correct any problems that might have gone wrong with any of your suppliers. This will continue good relations with the local businesses in the area. Don't leave anybody hanging. Bad news travels fast.  
If you have committed to charity announce the donation and issue a cheque for the amount.