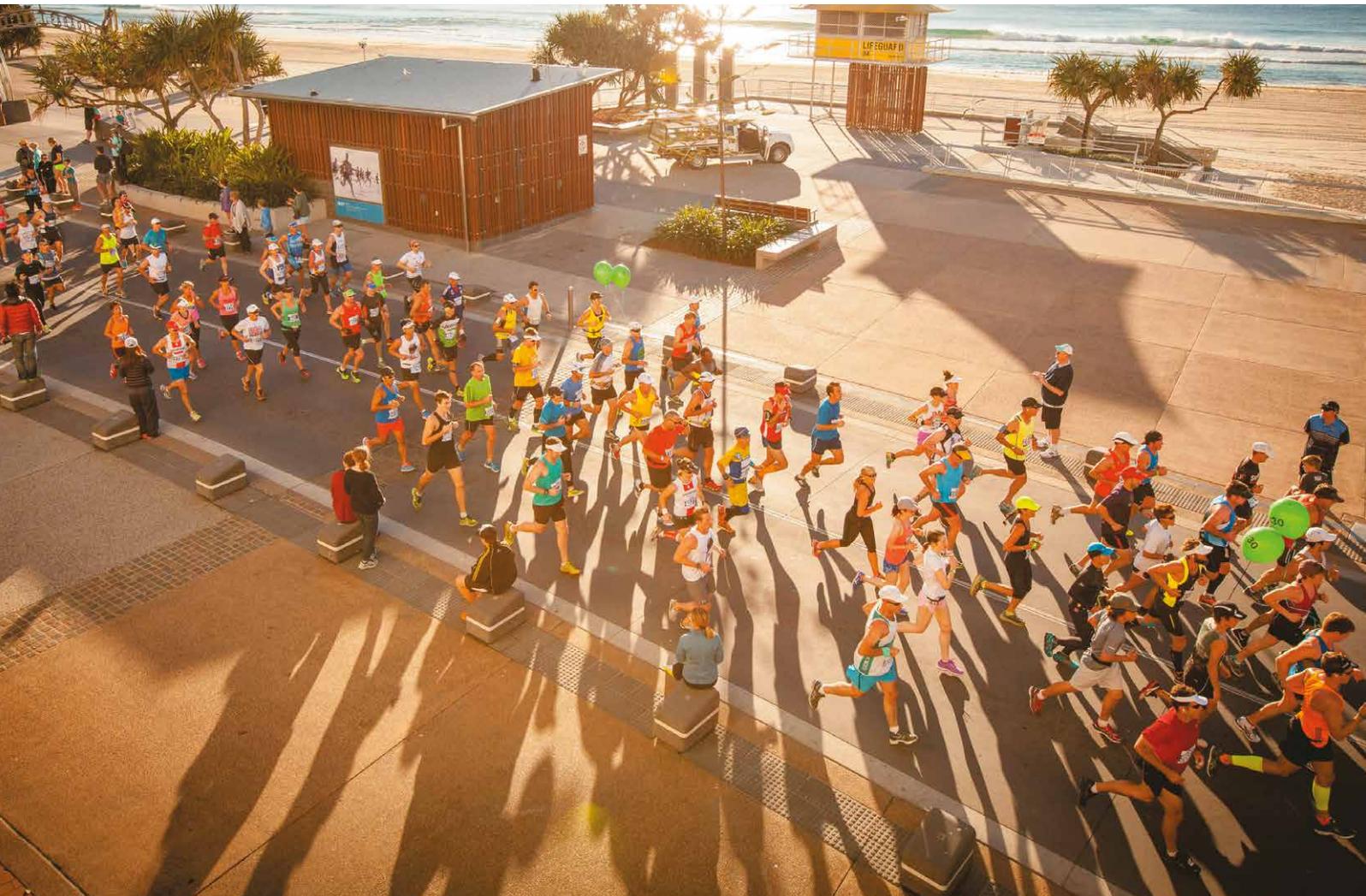


Working With Events

How working with events can benefit your business



Takeaways

- How to make the most of working with events
- What you need to do to prepare your product for event business
- The benefits of optimising relationships with event organisers and other partners
- An understanding of event sponsorship and partnership opportunities

HOW WORKING WITH EVENTS CAN BENEFIT YOUR BUSINESS

Introduction

Everyone adores a good event, whether it's an Outback rodeo, a quirky watermelon race, a fun pumpkin festival or a city art gallery launch. In Queensland, we're extremely blessed with a wide range of eclectic and exciting events which lure tourists to our destinations. Our annual calendar is jam-packed with regular events and it is not only travellers who enjoy the benefits of an event. As a tourism operator, there are scores of ways in which you can not only embrace and enjoy an event in your region, but also ways on which you can capitalise. So, what are some of the benefits to you, when the show comes into town?

Events contribute to the local economy bringing people that need goods, services, accommodation and entertainment. They attract visitors, enhance the profile of the destinations and foster community pride. The most successful events are those that engage the local community in which they are held. In October 2014 Tourism and Events Queensland unveiled the [It's Live! In Queensland](#) events calendar, featuring events throughout the state. The calendar of events is expected to generate \$380 million in direct and incremental spend to the state.

Benefits of holding events are far and wide. As well as involving your local community, many events attract visitors from outside the region and in some cases, these are people who may not ordinarily visit the destination.

Events create employment in the local community and can provide a positive impact in both social and cultural realms to a region. They provide the opportunity for people to interact with one another and they create a sense of belonging and social cohesion within a community.

Savvy tourism businesses can reap the benefits of repeat visitation and extended nights in the region. Leveraging off events is a terrific way to stamp your business or product firmly onto the tourist trail at a time when your destination is pumping. An event can expose you to new customers who you may have never considered before, as well as give your loyal customers even more reason to return to your business.

Events also add content and experiences for visitors who are already in the region, encouraging them to stay longer and spend more money. In most cases the visitor will book in advance and if they have a quality experience they will rebook again to attend the event again or come back to the destination for a holiday.

Often, the cost of leveraging off an event will be minimal and all that's really required is a creative and can-do attitude to value adding.



What can you do to gain more market share from events?

It is important to become familiar with your region's events calendar and be aware of any events that will be taking place in your destination. Ask yourself how you can leverage off the key events as well as the smaller ones.

Visit queensland.com/events for details of Queensland's It's Live! events calendar where you can search by location, date and genre. Connect with the event organiser for more information or with your RTO.

Find out as much as possible about the event, who will be attending, where they are from (domestic or international) and who is the event's target market. Once you have established from where, work out why they are coming and how you can reach them through your business.



View Queensland's It's Live! events calendar at queensland.com/events

Operator insight

"Be proactive. Check with event organisers to see if there are any specific requirements that attendees, participants or spectators require for their event.

See if there are any supporting events that you might be able to provide, subject to event type, such as a team dinner/function, themed dinner/function, event launch, media launch, after party or entertainment that supports/compliments the event.

Event organisers are often open to ideas and suggestions of activities that may support and promote their event. Don't be afraid to approach event organisers with ideas. They might not want (or have the capacity) to organise additional activities, but they may be happy for you to do something in support of the event. This might be a Chamber of Commerce initiative to do a window dressing competition/promotion in the town themed on the event. It could be every business in town displaying a welcome to the xyz participants.

Be aware of events. Ensure that you have up-to-date information about events that are happening in your area and advise guests as to what is coming up. If you have guests staying in accommodation on Thursday or Friday night and there is a food festival on Saturday, make sure they know about it. They may be in a position to extend their stay if the event is of interest. This could lead to additional room nights. Be aware of the main event seasons such as sporting events and carnivals, seasonal events such as food, harvest, celebration events, and be prepared for them.

"In addition to RTOs, LTOs, local councils and visitor information centres can also provide information about upcoming events. Some of these may be smaller events that still could provide opportunities."

Brent Randall, Tourism Development Officer, Scenic Rim Regional Council

The way forward

It is important to consider the following steps when planning to work with events:

STEP 1 – MAKING THE DECISION TO BE INVOLVED

- Will the event provide the opportunity to create sales for my business?
- Are you willing to put in effort and are there any risks?
- Do you have the time, staff and finances to be involved?
- Are there other opportunities such as running a food stall or selling souvenirs or arts and crafts at the event?

STEP 2 – WHO CAN HELP ME PLAN FOR THE EVENT?

- In the first instance, contact your RTO as they may be able to provide you with contacts or offer existing opportunities around the event
- Check the event website and get in touch with the event organiser
- Can you attend a meeting to find out more about the event?
- What worked well with past events?
- How has the event worked with tourism operators in the past? Are there any operators that can share their experience?
- Develop good relationships and networks associated with the event. Work with your RTO.

STEP 3 – DEVELOP A PLAN TO PROMOTE MY BUSINESS

- Who are the event attendees? Where are they coming from? How are they travelling?
- Are they travelling as a group, family or single? How are they likely to book?
- When do tickets go on sale and when are event attendees likely to book? It may be months in advance
- How long is the average event attendee likely to stay in region?
- How can you reach the consumer to promote your business? Is it through a marketing campaign through your online partners?
- Can you offer a special rate? How can you promote this to your target audience?
- Ask yourself what products and services you can deliver prior and during the event (e.g. eye-catching window display posters, a special menu themed around the event, stock for sale at discounted prices)
- List promotional and advertising opportunities prior, during and on the day through local newspapers, vouchers and joint promotions
- Is there an opportunity to package with or work with other tourism operators?

STEP 4 – PLANNING FINANCES

- How much budget is required for promotional advertising?
- What is your financial target?
- How much do you need to generate to meet expenses and what do you need to sell to reach your target?
- Record planned turnover, consider how many additional staff are required during peak and off-peak times and what costs are associated with having more staff and whether any additional stock required
- Consider event sponsorship and look at cost-effective marketing opportunities

STEP 5 – BE ORGANISED

- Consider in detail what to prepare before, during and after the event (e.g. additional storage, preparing flyers, pre-cooking meals)
- Create a contingency plan if the event cancels, there is poor weather, or a problem with staff or stock
- Ensure you have adequate signage
- Train your staff about the event and what to expect while visitors are in the region

Operator insight

"We saw an opportunity to welcome cyclists as part of the Cycling Welcome Project. As a small business, we wanted to tap into this emerging market. We spent \$12,000 on a wash-down bay, a cycling stand and a coffee machine for cyclists staying with us. Business has never been better."

Patrice Fletcher, Owner, Woodlands Caravan Park

Hot tip

Remember to ensure your Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) listing is up to date. Consumers who are searching for events in Queensland will be looking for accommodation options and things to see and do while they are in your region.

Visit: req.queensland.com/atdw

Operator insight

"I've been involved in both mountain biking and road riding on the Atherton Tablelands for the past 10 years. During that time, we have seen a huge increase in the number of locals and visitors who are riding on our roads and trails each week. The Cycling Welcome Project was developed to assist businesses to cater to this growing market, to meet specific needs for themselves and their equipment.

Our community has actively embraced this initiative. For example, local businesses have invested in the opportunity to welcome cyclists to their premises by:

- Sponsoring bike events (local, state, national and international)
- Providing wash-down facilities
- Installing bike racks outside their shop
- Investing in secure bike parking
- Providing directions and trail maps
- Networking with other bike-friendly businesses

Many businesses are already reporting great returns on this investment. Riders will return to bike-friendly regions like ours because they have great rides supported by friendly locals and businesses that look after them."

Leasie Felderhof, owner BikeLinx Cairns, involved in the Cycling Welcome Project



Tips for accommodation providers:

- Provide visitor maps and if required directions to and from the event
- Let travellers know the other things to see and do while in your region – they may extend their stay or come back again for a holiday
- Consider whether the attendees have specific requirements around the event and if your business can arrange this, e.g. a cyclist may consider accommodation that has somewhere to store their bike and possibly clean it
- Think of your loyal customers and whether they are returning year on year
- Reward visitors with a gift or a kind gesture for choosing your business
- Find out if the event will require your guests to arrive or leave at odd times and ensure your accommodation supports this
- Ensure you allow for specific dietary requirements of guests
- Remember that events taking place in nearby regions also offer an opportunity for your business, as the bigger events may require accommodation outside of the host region
- Think of your customer in a professional sense. Ask questions as they could potentially bring more business to you in the future.
- Plan for when the event will be at its busiest. This may be an opportunity to extend your offering with transfers to and from the event
- Give discounted accommodation for VIPs, event sponsors, partners and clients and inform the event organiser
- Offer to make bookings for your guests to some of your region's hidden gems
- Think of value adds to include in your accommodation package
- Put yourself in the visitor's shoes and think about the little things they may require eg. as mosquito repellent, sunscreen and rain ponchos
- Consider signage to welcome event attendees
- Offer accommodation to the Event Organiser at a special rate
- Brief your staff about the event and the type of questions some of your guests are likely to ask

Tips for retail/restaurants:

- Think about what season the event will be held in, e.g. hot weather creates opportunities for operators to sell more cold items
- Ensure you have enough staff and stock for catering in busy times
- Theme your meal times in line with the event and dare to be creative
- Be flexible with opening and closing hours during the event
- Brief your staff about the event
- Offer great customer service – even if they are visitors they can become loyal customers and word of mouth can go a long way
- Embrace the theme of the event – dress your staff or business in a particular way to highlight the event
- Consider a special offer to event attendees, e.g. if they show their event ticket they receive a free muffin with the purchase of a coffee

General tips for tourism operators and businesses:

- If your business is not typically open when an event is on (e.g. Sundays or on a public holiday), then consider whether a special opening of your business would be worthwhile
- Consider adapting or theming your product towards the event, e.g. offer a massage after an endurance event or a happy hour with a special tropical cocktail during a surfing event
- Think about what you can do to promote return business, e.g. loyalty discounts
- Promote your business through goodie bags, eNewsletters, websites and PA announcements during the event
- Investigate sponsorship opportunities for greater exposure
- Look at any specialised equipment you could loan to the event
- Hire specialist staff such as interpreters for international events
- Promote your entire destination in a positive light and recommend other businesses and tours

Packaging

- Talk to your RTO about opportunities to be involved in domestic marketing campaigns and event packaging
- Consider creating appealing event packages inclusive of transport, tickets, meals and/or accommodation
- Work with your RTO or the event organiser on discounted ticket prices to include in your package
- Convert day trippers to overnight visitors by offering them a special accommodation deal they cannot resist and ideas on what to do in region the next day
- Consider affordable advertising which will have the best return on investment
- Work with your partners to share advertising costs
- Promote your package to your customers via your e- newsletters, social media channels or your RTO

More information on packaging can be found in the [Domestic Marketing](#) section of this guide.

It's not just the event itself which is on display, but the entire destination and those who live and work there - from the warm welcome event visitors receive at check in to the friendly service at the local cafe.



Event Sponsorship & Partnership

An effective way of leveraging tangible value from events in your region is to formally support an event by becoming an event partner or sponsor. Event sponsorship typically involves an entity agreeing to provide an event with some form of support in return for the provision of certain rights or benefits throughout the event. Support provided by the sponsor typically ranges from direct cash investment to the provision of products or services considered as 'value-in-kind' to the event (e.g. discounted or complimentary accommodation, venue hire or entry passes to your tour or attraction). For tourism operators, sponsorship provides a way for your business to be noticed above other similar businesses in the region which should result in event attendees selecting your business over others.

Tips to consider before sponsoring an event:

1. Make sure the event represents the values you want associated with your brand

Know the event's core audience, their interests, their opinions and what they care about. Do these align with your business?

2. Make sure you know how the event is run

If the event is not run professionally the participants may associate and extend their disappointment with your brand.

3. Understand what you will receive for your investment

All sponsorship, whether cash or value-in-kind, is an investment, so you must ensure you know what you will get in return. Different events will offer different levels of sponsorship. Speak to your event contacts and know exactly what you will receive and if you're looking for exclusivity within your business category (e.g. accommodation) make sure you get it!

4. Decide if your brand adds something meaningful to the event and the event's participants or attendees

What is it that you can offer? Maybe it's a product, experience or resource. For example, event attendees from outside the region will need accommodation during their stay. They will also need places to eat out and things to do in down times before, during and after the event. Does your business offer a service or product that event visitors will need during their stay?

5. Plan to engage

While simply paying for your sponsorship should deliver a certain level of return, activating your sponsorship beyond the agreed cash or value-in-

kind contribution will help you leverage far more value out of the event. Speak to event organisers about other opportunities to profile your business. For example, the event may be bringing in loads of staff interstate for weeks prior and during the event. If you're an accommodation operator consider offering them a special rate.

6. Think about the community impact

Events drive economic growth to your local community - accommodation can be sold out, restaurants busy and shops flat out. Your investment is helping to support the event and your local community.

Questions to consider before you decide upon an event sponsorship:

- ▶ Will you get access to the event audience to promote your brand? How will the event organiser promote your product or service to their database – via electronic direct mail (eDMs), on their website or via social media?
- ▶ Are there business-to-business opportunities available? Can you leverage unrelated business after the event through event contacts?
- ▶ Are there any other event sponsors that are competitors? Will you be an exclusive sponsor or simply one of many of the same type of businesses?
- ▶ What formal guarantees will be put in place to ensure your business receives the rights, benefits and value you are promised in return for your cash or value-in-kind support? e.g. event contracts, or agreements.

Set goals/action plan

Now that you have completed your planning, it is time to set your goals and develop your plan into actions.

Goal – this is what you want to do (e.g. seek out other businesses for shared advertising)

Action – to achieve this I will: (for each goal, write down the action – what you need to do to get there, who will do it, by when, and what they need to get the action done)

Use the template below as an example.

GOAL 1: Seek out more information from businesses who have worked with the xyz event in the past.

ACTION	WHO	WHEN	WHAT IS REQUIRED	COMPLETED
Attend RTO networking function, speak with local businesses to get their feedback regarding the event	Manager & Sales Coordinator	x May 2015	RSVP to the function organiser, order business cards	Completed x May 2015
Send follow up email to businesses involved with the event; request to meet with them in person for more information	Manager	x May 2015	Business cards	completed x May 2015
Arrange a meeting with the RTO to discuss their feedback on the event and existing opportunities	Manager	x June 2015	Business cards Notepad	Completed by June 2015





Operator insight

"Jumpers and Jazz is a platform for the arts and a celebration of all that is wonderful about winter. The festival's success is due to the Warwick community embracing the chill and the opportunity to be inspired by vibrant music and art. The first festival was in 2004, since then, the growth and appeal of the festival has been remarkable. The number of trees 'wrapped in art' has more than doubled.

It is important that we work closely with local businesses and our community to ensure our event attendees have a wonderful experience while they are here. Last year, some of our local businesses embraced the event by:

- Dressing their shop-front windows in jumpers and jazz style
- Creating jumpers and jazz-themed menus
- Offering value adds to their existing products and services with jumpers and jazz theming
- Selling local produce and arts and craft so that visitors could take a little piece of Warwick home with them
- Displaying the official event program at their business
- Liking and sharing the Jumpers and Jazz Facebook posts and reposting to their own Facebook profile to promote the event to their customers
- Taking photos and using the festival hashtag to share on Instagram what was happening in and around the event
- Encouraging staff to be festival ambassadors by staying informed about the festival and where to direct those seeking more information
- Playing jazz music through their business sound system
- Inviting customers to escape the winter chill, which encouraged them to stay and spend"

Tracy Vellacott, Jumpers and Jazz in July