

Great Nights at Museums, Theaters & Attractions!

A few years ago, over 1,000 meeting and event planners were asked by an events organization, “What type of venues are you planning to work with this year?” The top two answers were expected: Hotels and Conference Centers. It was the third answer that caught my attention. Over half of these planners said: Unique Venue.

Do you consider your venue to be unique for private events? If so, have you considered the very real value that company events and meetings can bring to your property in the long term? Why do more than 50 percent of planners want to hold an event in a venue like yours?

In my businesses, I have worked at over 60 unique venues, including many museums and attractions, and have worked with many planners. Here are a few of the reasons that they shared with me about why they chose the venue that they did:

- “It’s different and unique. We need that for our events.”
- “The museum is a beautiful place to hold an event and it helps that it is a draw.”
- “Our company would like to support this jewel in our community.”
- “We want to introduce our people to it so that they can bring their immediate and out-of-town family and friends back for a visit. Maybe even become members.”
- “I love the history and stories that are attached to it.”

Yet, some organizations may not see the overall value and revenue stream that can be created by opening their museums to companies and organizations.

It’s a simple math equation at heart. For example, if 150 people come to the museum on a Wednesday evening (after closing) for a corporate sponsored product launch and the price to the company is \$16,000 (including the rental fee, security/staff, catering, bar, private tours, etc., how many of the event’s guests visiting during regular business hours would it take to equal the amount the company paid? On a typical Wednesday? Is your marketing of private events more prioritized now?



Another incentive for such events could be to offer membership discounts or reduced ticket pricing for those who would like to return at a later date. You can make this offer available to all guests or, if not, just to the planners of the event. Pre purchased gift shop item can serve as a keepsake, or open the gift shop to attendees if the event schedule and attendance allows.

Is hosting company events and meetings part of the strategic plan and initiatives of your museum or attraction? According to Mark Heppner, president and CEO of The Ford House in Grosse Pointe, MI, it can be and it can pay dividends.

“The strategic priority of corporate rental activities at a museum should connect with the main goals of any museum. Corporate events and activities introduce a museum to a new audience and potential constituents that might not otherwise be exposed to the museum”, says Heppner. This ties in directly with the aforementioned math problem.

While events do take time to plan and execute, they open your museum to people who have never been to it before, and in a setting that can be either formal or casual. If they enjoy themselves at that particular event, chances are good that they either will come back to the tour or invite others to tour. So, with one event there is an opportunity to double or triple the foot traffic that comes to your museum.

I believe that museums are in the storytelling business, and you should always be looking to tell your story, especially at a corporate event or meeting, even if it is only a welcome and a few minutes when the guests arrive.

Heppner agrees, “Exposing guests to the museum and its membership programs can increase individual and family memberships. Plus, following up with the business as a corporate sponsor for other programming is more meaningful and relatable now to the business leader. By being at your museum, they become more invested than before.”

Your venue may be more valuable than you think, especially when it comes to bringing companies and organizations into it. If company events are part of the plan, then there are other opportunities to expand goodwill, membership, and, ultimately, revenue. The value that they can bring to your organization extends much deeper than just an event on a Wednesday night.

By hosting corporate events Monday through Thursday nights, you can help to create memorable and wonderful experiences and start building relationships that will continue to grow and prosper.

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