

**Report on USA Swimming
Event Management and Marketing Symposium
Oct. 3-4, 2007
Colorado Springs, Colorado**

The two day Symposium given by USA Swimming was a great experience and a lot of fun. It was a great opportunity to hear from people on the USA Swimming staff, the USOC and several other guest speakers. I went into the conference with the primary purpose of looking for ways to make the 2008 Summer Zone meet the best it can be and the secondary purpose of improving PVS Championship meets. I have a lot of ideas and suggestions for the upcoming meets and the future of PVS.

The first two speakers, Beth White and Harold Cliff, discussed the planning of and implementation of the Olympic Trials. This was very interesting and everyone should be looking forward to a great experience at the 2008 Trials in Omaha. One of Beth White's biggest client in Toyota Motors and she works on their sponsorship with USA Swimming and will possibly be a great resource when pursuing sponsorships for Zones and Sectionals.

Next we heard from Bob Condron of the USOC and Audra Silverman a PR specialist, on the importance of promoting your club, team and/or EVENT. It is important to get support from the community when holding a large event like "Zones". One important aspect is to find human interest stories to report on throughout the meet.

What swimmers and coaches really want: In both cases the number one thing is FOOD. With a meet this size good hospitality for the coaches (officials & volunteers) and athletes is paramount! Good announcing and up to date music is also a must for swimmers. Communication is also a key to success, making sure that everything is communicated to the coaches, team managers, athletes and spectators in a timely manner. Keeping to the timeline without going to fast as well as fair and consistent officials is also high on both the swimmers and coaches list.

Pursuing sponsorships: In today's world, sponsors want to be part of the event itself, most are not interested in simply writing a check and having their name put in the program. When pursuing a sponsor ask "what can we do for you?" Give them ideas of what you are willing to offer and see what ideas they have. What ever is asked for should be relevant to the event. Some suggestions are;

- Kick off party at a car dealership, allowing the dealership to give a presentation
- Name the hospitality area after the sponsor (i.e. "Costco Café", "Bloom Hospitality", etc)
- Use the hotel as the "host hotel" and put link to the hotel on the website
- Ask sponsor to pay for items for goody bags, such as caps with the meet logo on one side and sponsor logo on the other. The same thing could be done with water bottles, cups...
- Water bottles with a company logo on the label

- Kid Zone; a space with activities for kids to do, coloring etc. (not babysitting-parent supervised)

Be respectful when asking for sponsorship, by giving them plenty of time. A well thought out proposal offering ideas and being willing to accept suggestions will also go a long way if forming a relationship.

Putting Butts in the Seats Some suggestions given;

- Theme meet
- Decorations (pipe and drape)
- Mystery heats
- Raffles
- Give-aways
- Goody bags for coaches, swimmers, officials, something for volunteers
- Throw stuff into the stands
- Anything we can give away free

Managing Risks

Manage expectations!

Risks:

1. Financial
 - a. Have a solid budget
 - b. Have contingency plan
 - c. Be ultra conservative
2. Liability
 - a. Waiver for swimmer?
 - b. Be sure swimmers are completely covered
 - c. Be sure facility is in compliance
3. Community
 - a. Your name and reputation is on the line
 - b. Try to get your community behind you
 - c. Try to track the business
4. Public Relations
 - a. Have a plan to get your story out
 - b. Spin your own story
 - c. Find a hook, something to connect to the community and/or special interest
5. Political
 - a. Need a leader who can make decisions
 - b. Set a clear path & strategy; be a leader who will listen to opinions, but be able to make decisions

OVER COMMUNICATE!

Meet Enhancements:

- Goody bags
- Outdoor misters, shade, plenty of water/drinks
- Decorate (pipe and drape banners)
- Nice award stand
- Athlete lounge
- Good sound system
- Updated music
- Audience games
- National Anthem Ceremony

Laptop for music, there is a music program: SOUND DIRECTOR

Volunteers:

- Create a LOC (local Organization Committee) for key positions with chairs and co-chairs, then find “general volunteers”
- Build the base
- Promote teamwork
- Achieve Excellence

Leaders should be enthusiastic and have a passion

The best people should be in the Admission/Registration/Hospitality positions; they need to be a good “people person”. First impressions are everything!

Be sure all volunteers are knowledgeable, provide training when necessary.

Clearly define expectations; write job descriptions, set age limits, educate