Case Study Summary

Political events are a unique aspect of events that are rarely studied in hospitality, event management, communication, or public relations courses. This case study introduces the unique challenges and triumphs in executing political events. This case study examines the 2020 Iowa Democratic Caucus, the first-in-the nation primary event in selecting a presidential nominee.

On the evening of the Caucus, February 3, 2020, the Iowa Democratic Caucus faced numerous challenges in the execution of the Caucus and delivery of the results. Reports from the local and national media stated many challenges stemmed from the utilization and adoption of an app that was recently created to streamline the reporting process of 1,678 precincts. The Iowa Democratic Caucus received great scrutiny due to its first in the nation caucus in selecting a presidential candidate. This case study discusses the challenges in executing political events, the differences between political events and other events, and the challenges of the 2020 Democratic Caucus from an event planning perspective.

Learning Objectives

The aim of this case study is to examine the unique challenges in executing political events and how the Iowa Democratic Party could incorporate elements of event management into future caucuses. Utilizing Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson, Krathwohl, & Bloom, 2001) the following learning objectives (LO) can be used for this case study:

LO1: Understand the role of caucus political events to the state of Iowa

LO2: Understand the major challenges and unique aspects of planning political events (parades, rallies, voter registration events, camping events, fundraising events, and other events)

LO3: Apply quantitative skills

LO4: Integrate political event skills to other events

LO5: Utilize oral and presentation skills

Target Audience

This case study would be appropriate for undergraduate students in an event management, destination marketing, and/or a political science course. Since the learning objectives use higher-levels of examining, it is recommended that this case be used in an upper-level course. Furthermore, this case study could also be used for practitioners in industry. Since there is a current dearth of resources available for event managers who plan political events, this case study could be used for political event planners, such as field organizers, local and station political party managers, and national political party planners.

Teaching Approach and Strategy

This case study could be utilized in three 50-minute class periods or two 75-minute class periods. Table 1 states the proposed teaching approach and strategy.

Discussion Questions and Answers

1. What are the challenges in executing political events?

    Political events differ from other events in that they may be pulled together in the space of days. Details, such as start time, format, guest speakers, venue, tickets, security procedures and more may change up until the last minute.

2. What were the key challenges with the 2020 Iowa Democratic Caucus?

    Key event challenges included an app that was not vetted properly, an inadequate training program for volunteers, complicated policies and procedures for aligning delegates, and crisis management.

3. Should the Iowa Democratic Party continue to utilize the event app?

    Answers will vary, but event managers should include time to test the app and provide a stronger training program for volunteers utilizing the app.

4. How should political events recruit and train volunteers in the state?

    Answers will vary, but political event managers can recruit volunteers from party delegates and local communities. Training should occur in a variety of methods, including face-to-face training, online training, and hybrid training. Political event managers may want to partner with local instructional delivery experts to facilitate training programs.

Table 1

Teaching Strategy

Class Period	Element	Activity	Length	LO
Pre-Class	**Pre-Reading**	**Instructor assigns the case study**	**45 minutes**	**LO1; LO2**
Class I	Class Discussion; Political Event Presentation Discussion	Instructor discusses political events (based on case study)	20 minutes	LO1; LO2
		Instructor discusses Political Event Presentation (Appendix A)	15 minutes	LO1, LO2, LO5
Class II	Physical Events Utilizing Apps Discussion	Instructor discusses Individual Assignment on Event Apps (Appendix B)	15 minutes	LO4
	Discussion Questions & Answers	Instructor discussion Individual Proposal (Appendix C) Political Event Presentations	20 minutes	LO1, LO2, LO4
Class III	Presentations	Political Event Presentations	40-45 minutes	LO5
	Reflection	Political Event Reflection (Appendix D)	5-10 minutes	LO1, LO2

Additional Reading and Resources

Teaching Note Reference

Anderson, L., Krathwohl, D., & Bloom, B. (2001). A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing : a revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives / editors, Lorin W. Anderson, David Krathwohl ; contributors, Peter W. Airasian … [et al.]. (Complete ed.). New York: Longman.

Political Event Planning

Elston, K., & Draper, J. (2012). A review of meeting planner site selection criteria research. Journal of Convention & Event Tourism, 13(3): 203-220).

Fekete, A. (2012). Safety and security target levels: Opportunities and challenges for risk management and risk communication. International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction, 2, 67-76.

Kim, E., & Cuskelly, G. (2017). A systematic quantitative review of volunteer management in events. Event Management, 21(1), 83-100.

Pate, P. D. (2020). Elections 101. Retrieved 1 April 2020 from https://sos.iowa.gov/youth/elections101.html.

Political Party Websites

Democratic National Convention. https://www.demconvention.com/.

Democratic National Party https://democrats.org/.

How to Organize a Political Event. (2020). Retrieved 1 February 2020 from https://traindemocrats.org/organizing-political-event/.

Ilowa Democrats https://iowademocrats.org/.

The Republican Party of Iowa. https://www.iowagop.org/.

Republican National Committee. Retrieved from https://www.gop.com/.

Republican National Convention https://www.charlottein2020.com/.

Political Event Presentation

Prepare a four- to five-minute presentation on a political event: rallies, debates, national political conventions, voter registration events, parades, campaign fundraising events, events as social change, town hall meetings, protests/marches, and inaugurations. Examples of topics to include in this presentation are the following:

1. Definition and examples of the political event;
2. Objective of the event and target audience;
3. Typical speaker/content at this type of event;
4. Major challenges of planning the event;
5. Common forms of media used to promote/cover the event.

Appendix B

Individual Assignment

Conduct an Internet search to find a recent meeting or event that has utilized an app to substantially transfer the physical activities of the event to occur through the app. Be prepared to answer the following questions in class:

1. What was the objective(s) of the meeting/event?
2. What were the advantages/disadvantages of using the app to transfer the physical activities of the meeting/event?
3. What challenges do event managers have when they transfer physical event activities into the virtual world utilizing an app?

Appendix C

Individual Proposal

As an event management consultant to the Iowa Democratic Party, you have been asked to submit a proposal to highlight changes to planning and executing the political event of the Iowa caucus. In the proposal, identity specific event management changes, an evaluation of those changes, and final recommendations for improving the event.

Appendix D

Reflection

During the past few class sessions, we have discussed and analyzed the case study, "Political Events: The 2020 Iowa Caucus." This self-reflection assignment will assess your knowledge of the case and major implications to your own career. It is vital for event managers to continually reflect on the execution of events. This reflection should be about 500 words. Please utilize the following questions to commence your reflection.

1. How important are political event to society?
2. How can transferable skills of event management be used to better impact political events?
3. What key "take-aways" did you learn from this case study?