

*Memorial Union Events: Staying relevant and sustainable***Summary of the Case**

The Iowa State University (ISU) Memorial Union is a 316,713 square foot facility with over 25 events spaces that serve ISU student organizations and departments, along with public rentals such as weddings and conferences. The Memorial Union has been in operation for over 90 years but funding will be getting cut. The Director of the ISU Memorial Union has tasked Aubrey Sabin, the Event Management Manager, to make \$300,000 in net sales for the upcoming fiscal year 2021. University events and university venues, such as memorial unions, represent a unique event venue that is not discussed in the academic literature or association education. This case study fulfills such gap and provides a unique and robust approach in understanding the challenges of event operations in memorial unions.

Teaching Objectives

Utilizing Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, & Krathworhl, 1956), the following learning objectives (LO) have been created for this case study. After reviewing the case study and participating in all learning activities with this case study, students will be able to:

- LO1: identify the challenges in operating events in Memorial Unions, a university venue that hosts a plethora of events (university, academic, social, student, and community events)
- LO2: use quantifiable information and data to generate options for attracting new market segments
- LO3: select the most appropriate segment
- LO4: reflect on learning and assumptions challenged in the case study

Target Audience

This case study is suitable for undergraduate and graduate students in event management, business management, or student affairs, as it covers several areas within event venue operations (specifically memorial unions), facility operations, business model development, and customer relationships. This case study could also be utilized by practitioners of memorial unions.

Teaching Approach and Strategy

It is recommended that at least two 80-minute or three 50-minute class sessions be dedicated to the case study. The first portion can start with an introductory lecture about market segmentation, stakeholder analysis, and customer relationships. Students can be assigned to read the case study and propose an action plan with recommendations for the second session where groups can arrive at a shared vision and implementation plan for a segment of new revenue. Class Instructions

- Session One and Session Two states the suggested outline of the case study and the appropriate learning outcome.

Class Instructions – Session One

1. Students assigned reading, "Memorial Union Events: Staying Relevant & Sustainable Case Study" (40-50 minutes) (this activity may also be completed before the first class session)
2. Instructor reviews case study terminology, four categories of market feasibility (market feasibility, operational feasibility, financial feasibility, and human capital feasibility) and proposed segments of weddings, non-university conferences, non-university career services events, non-university social events, and non-university business meetings (30 minutes)
3. Instructor discusses team assignment presentation (Appendix A) (15-20 minutes)
4. Before Session Two, students should work on team presentations; instructor should be available for consultations

Class Instructions – Session Two

1. Each presentation will present their recommendations for 5-7 minutes (30 minutes)
2. Instructor will discuss case study discussion questions and answers
 - i. Should Sabin shorten the reservation policies and increase pricing for student organization and university departments? If so, how will this impact customer relationships?

There are pros and cons to this decision. If Sabin shortens the reservation policies and increase pricing for student organization and university departments, this could increase revenue for Memorial Union. However, stakeholder relationships may be strained since these stakeholders are used to current reservation policies and minimal pricing for events held at the Memorial Union. Furthermore, the Memorial Union is in a unique environment in that it should be perceived as serving the University based on its unique heritage and history.

- ii. Which non-university events (conferences, career services events, social events, or business meetings) should she focus on? What would be the advantages/disadvantages of each of these segments?

Answers will vary, and the instructor should highlight and discuss the student presentations and recap the various

segments by focusing on the four categories of market feasibility (market feasibility, operational feasibility, financial feasibility, and human capital feasibility).

- iii. Should Sabin invest in advertising for more corporate events?

Increasing advertising for corporate events will be a cost for the Memorial Union. However, increased advertising may also result in more corporate events, fulfilling the current financial gap. Sabin may also want to cultivate relationships with a variety of stakeholders across campus through various departments and centers to see if marketing and advertising costs could be shared across various departments.

- iv. Is there a market segment Sabin is missing? What additional data and research is needed to obtain more information?

Answers will vary, and the Instructor should highlight any new market segments for events and meetings that was discussed during the student presentations. Additional data and research could be derived from industry association reports, academic research, trend and forecast reports, and federal/state government economic reports.

- v. What can Sabin do to attract more weddings to the venue?

There are a variety of marketing activities that Sabin could engage to attract more weddings to the venue. Examples of marketing activities include social media, targeted direct marketing, open houses, participating in regional wedding expos and tradeshow. Sabin could also engage in marketing of LGBT+ weddings, proposals, rehearsal dinners, wedding showers, wedding announcement parties, and other wedding celebrations.

- vi. Think about events that you have attended and occur at your own student union. What similar challenges does your student union face in terms of event production?

Answers will vary, and the Instructor should highlight similar and different challenges from this case study and compare/contrast answers discussed in class.

3. Student will complete reflection (Appendix B) (15 minutes) (note this activity may also be completed on course learning system, such as Canvas).

Additional Readings and Resources

Event Planning

Allen, J. (2009). Event planning: The ultimate guide to successful meetings, corporate events, fundraising galas, conferences, conventions, incentives and other special events. John Wiley & Sons.

Fenich, G. G. (2013). Meetings, Expositions, Events & Conventions: Pearson New International Edition: An Introduction to the Industry. Pearson Higher Ed.

Wolf, P., Wolf, J., & Levine, D. (2005). Event planning made easy. New York: McGraw-Hill. Liite, 1(1), 3.

New Business Development

Hassanien, A., & Dale, C. (2012). Drivers and barriers of new product development and innovation in event venues. Journal of Facilities Management.

Jones, A., & Navarro, C. (2018). Events and the blue economy. International Journal of Event and Festival Management.

Event Management Associations

International Live Events Association (<https://www.ileahub.com/>).

Meetings Professionals International (<https://www.mpi.org/>).

Professional Convention Management Association (<https://www.pcma.org/>).

Teaching Note References

Bloom, B. S., Englehart, M. D., Furst, E. J., Hill, W. H., & Krathwohl, D. R. (1956). Taxonomy of educational objectives: Handbook I. Cognitive Domain. New York: David McKay.

Appendix A

Group Project

Imagine that you are the Event Management Manager for the ISU Memorial Union and have been tasked with bringing in \$300,000 in net sales for the next fiscal year. The aim of this group project is for your team to examine new potential revenue streams of events for the Memorial Union and to create a five to seven minute presentation that highlights your responses. After reading the case study and examining the tables in the case study, your team should discuss the four categories of market feasibility, operational feasibility, financial feasibility, and human capital feasibility for each of the proposed segments of weddings, non-university conferences, non-university career services events, non-university social events, non-university business meetings, and other events your team may think of that would be appropriate for the ISU Memorial Union.

After conducting the analysis, your team should create a five to seven minute presentation that can be presented in class. You may organize the presentation by the following: (a) introduction/background; (b) discussion of business development ideas; (c) quantifiable information from feasibility analysis; (d) final recommendation(s); and (e) any other pertinent information.

Appendix B

Reflection

Draft about a 300-500-word reflection response regarding what you learned from this case study and how can you apply these learnings from this project to your current or future role/job/career/industry.