



PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN: LESSONS FROM GEORGE TOWN FESTIVAL

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This case was written by Raslinda Mohd Ghazali, Gelareh Abooli and Azilah Kasim, Universiti Utara Malaysia. It is intended to be used as the basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a management situation.

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Prologue

With over thirty years of experience in the world of culture and creativity, Mr Joe Sidek had established himself as one of Malaysia's leading advocates of the arts. An industrialist by trade and an entrepreneur by nature, Mr Sidek had organized countless cultural performances across Malaysia, including government-sponsored events. His innovative expertise and business acumen as well as his visionary passion had inspired his appointment as Festival Director of the George Town Festival (GTF) in 2010. Apart from the GTF, he was also involved with other projects and initiating an international campaign titled, "Arts for Humanity", as a fund-raising event to support the arts. The world of events became increasingly competitive with the new demanding, fragmented, and perceptive audiences. Accordingly, marketing and promotion currently had a substantial share of any event's success. Given that he was the Malaysian Governor of the Federation for Asian Cultural Promotion as well as a festival director of the Rainforest Fringe Festival and the GTF, his primary responsibility included targeting an accurate promotional campaign. This case study aimed to highlight the strength and lessons of such practices.

About Joe Sidek Production

Joe Sidek Production (JSP) was an event production company that had been creating, curating and developing special events for the creative industry since 2010. The company was the official secretariat of George Town Festival (GTF) in Penang, Malaysia from 2010 to 2018. Between 2014 and 2017, GTF showcased more than 15 ASEAN and SEA premieres. In 2014, JSP presented the first-ever Tropfest in Penang, Tropfest SEA, which was the largest short film festival in the world and continued to do so in 2015. In addition to Tropfest, JSP created and produced Rainforest Fringe Festival, a commission by the Sarawak Tourism Ministry in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

Over the years, through the festivals, JSP had the privilege of hosting spectacular events spanning the arts from world-class performances to cross-cultural creative collaborations, experimental art, traditional and contemporary performing arts and exciting local community initiatives and public installations. Furthermore, JSP had been planning and executing successful promotional campaigns. This case study focused on JSP's promotional strategies in creating a successful campaign for GTF.

GTF was held annually within the city of George Town in Penang, Malaysia. The festival started in 2008 in celebration of UNESCO heritage listing of the town. In 2010, Mr Sidek started his journey in bringing this festival to another level. The effort paid off as it had been recognized as a major Asian arts event by New York Times in 2014 and managed to attract about 250,000 visitors in 2015. Mr Sidek emphasized that his early journey with GTF was not clear and easy in the beginning. He indicated that the first few years were difficult. He was given only six weeks to prepare for the event, thus, he was relying on day-to-day operation without having the ample time to think about the real plan. It was only after the second year, he started looking at a five-year plan.

The first step he did to a successful promotional campaign is a careful planning. He realized that JSP needed to assess the market and competitors, set objectives, and develop a promotional message.

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