



CASE STUDY: BEST PRACTICES

Midsummer Revels

A Collaborative City-wide Celebration

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By John Copeland

I. Background

Organization Name/Location:	Revels, Inc. 80 Mount Auburn Street Watertown, MA 02472-3930
Year Founded:	1971
Year Incorporated:	1974
Annual Budget:	\$1.35 Million

Mission Statement:

"The mission of Revels is to celebrate the seasons and cycles of human life through performance and participatory experience, and to cultivate an understanding and appreciation of traditional music, dance, drama and ritual drawn from the world's cultures.



We pursue this mission through music, theater, educational programs, recordings, publications and community celebrations, in Greater Boston and across America. We engage people of all ages and backgrounds in activities which are designed to entertain, to nourish the spirit, and to build bridges across generations and cultures."

II. Project Description

Revels, Inc. sought to position itself as the premiere provider of wholesome "family edu-tainment" by providing a free celebration for the city of Boston. In collaboration with **The Children's Museum of Boston**, they mutually agreed to provide a free celebration on the grounds of the Museum to be held on the longest day of the year – the summer solstice. On June 20, 2003 from 7:00pm until twilight the 1st Midsummer Revels was held.

Midsummer Revels created a family-friendly atmosphere on the Museum grounds all day leading up to the event, with special art workshops held inside the Museum; street performers, Morris dancers and a giant Oxen-led parade outside the Museum;

and with popsicles and other goodies given out for free. All of this activity took place prior to the 90-minute outdoor stage show that featured an 80-member multicultural cast of adults and children, sing and dancing in celebration of the summer solstice.

The primary objective of this new undertaking was to introduce a strong and faithful existing Christmas Revels audience to a new event held during the summer – and to develop a growing untapped younger family audience.

III. Strategies for Implementation

Promotional and marketing strategies consisted of several key points to potential customers:

- 1) Midsummer Revels is fun for the whole family – just like Christmas Revels
- 2) Midsummer Revels is more than a production, it's a "family celebration"
- 3) Midsummer Revels is supported by **American Express** and other recognized corporations and family-friendly organizations
- 4) Midsummer Revels is *FREE*



Publicity Mediums:

- **Public and commercial radio spots:**
 - i. \$3,000 worth of commercials purchased through local affiliate plus donation of 50 tickets to Christmas Revels 2003 (\$2,000 value).
 - ii. Radio station matches \$16,000 marketing grant to become official media sponsor.
 - iii. Local NPR affiliate comes on board late – offers to run 17 spots the week before the event.
- **Newspaper ads**
 - i. Newspaper sponsor runs 2 highly visible 4-color Page 3 banner ads that appear the day before and day of the event.
 - ii. Boston's free counter-culture weekly paper increases purchased ad size as a donation.
- **Signage on MBTA** (Boston's subways and buses)
 - i. MBTA donates \$5,300 worth of space for 150 sign cards
 - ii. Revels pays for printing of cards only.
 - iii. Signage concentration on "Red Line" subway system that travels between Christmas Revels location and The Children's Museum as well as buses in the downtown areas.
- **E-mail promotions**
 - i. Sent twice a month to growing database.
 - ii. Always sent Wednesdays at 12 noon.
 - iii. E-mail sign up cards distributed/collected at the event.
- **Website development**
- **Direct mailings**
 - i. Incorporation of Midsummer Revels into existing Revels Newsletter.
 - ii. Midsummer Revels marketing piece
 - iii. Special Children's Museum marketing piece for distribution by the Museum.

IV. Results

Midsummer Revels produced the following results:

- **Attendance:** 3,500 – 5,000 base on estimates given by Boston police detail working the event. Museum President estimates 500 watching from windows inside.
- **Website:** Traffic on www.revels.org significantly higher than previous year.
- **Phone Traffic:** Numerous calls from families concerning activities and workshops held during the event.
- **Audience Demographics:** Midsummer Revels produce a major change from typical Revels' events. Crowds were more family based with a greater influx of multicultural diversity. Many presumably in attendance due to the inner-city Boston location creating a reflection of the surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Volunteer/Participants:** Many people inquired about becoming involved in the Revels production as either volunteers or performers. Names were collected at the event. Many parents wanting their children to become more involved.
- **New Professional Contacts:**
 - i. The Children's Museum - have solidly committed to future participation and will assist in expansion of event into 2 nights.
 - ii. Radio Station Sponsor – personal relationship with Business Development Manager, Revels becomes part of station community outreach program.
 - iii. Mayor's Office – has promised to guide effort to establish Midsummer Revels as an annual urban event.
 - iv. Newspaper Sponsor – Sales Director agrees to increase future support by more than 30%.
- **Local Business Impact:**
 - i. McDonald's – Restaurant inside Museum runs out of food during event.
 - ii. Hood Milk Bottle – (local vendor) runs out of food during event.
 - iii. Bruger's Bagels – (local vendor) runs out of food during event.



V. Conclusions

Revels, Inc. has a long standing tradition of excellence for its famed Christmas Revels productions. This venture into new and un-chartered territory has proven immensely successful for the organization, meeting its primary objective of attracting a new and diverse audience while continuing to provide high edu-tainment value to an existing audience base through this new summer programming. The unique collaboration with the well-established, high-profile Children's Museum combined with the free, community atmosphere of the event has attracted a variety of sponsors, supporters and advocates.

Residual results of Midsummer Revels have yielded substantial increases in sponsorship dollars. Where Revels staff once looked at this event as an outreach program that will always lose money; it is now viewed as a prime selling point to potential financial supporters to Revels' annual programming. As major sponsors become involved, the process snowballs as more and more community supporters want to become a part of the excitement.

The image of Revels, Inc. to the citizens of Boston has taken on a new light as an organization that is committed to "serving" the community and providing a strong cultural and educational resource at absolutely no-cost. Midsummer Revels has introduced audiences to the unique cultural experience of community celebration. The future involvement of the city of Boston as well as the strong collaborative ties to the Children's Museum will help this event continue to grow.



The finale: chorus and audience sing
Wild Mountain Thyme

ABOUT THE WRITER: *John Copeland joined the Arts & Business Council, Inc. in June 2004. As Program Manager of the National Arts Marketing Project, his primary responsibilities include managing the content of www.ArtsMarketing.org, and the managing of NAMP Nonprofit Marketing Training.*