

TOP TEN PRELIMINARY NEEDS TO CONSIDER for 2012 Camp, based on 2011 planning:

1. Staff/volunteers (can we attain critical mass?)
2. Location/venue
3. Date(s) (based on single- or two-day event)
4. Branding direction (includes role of publicist)
5. Size and scope (geographic plus tracks)
6. Grant income (may waive admission fee for first block of n attendees, and help set a price for the rest)
7. Sponsor income (includes tangibles and in-kind)
8. Keynote speaker(s) . . . let's reach for the (rock)stars
9. Planners' communication system (was BaseCamp; needs alternatives)
10. Camp website infrastructure (was COD on D6; needs alternatives)

TYPICAL ROLES:

- Head honcho (must own a calendar; should not assume every single other role, but may have to at times)
- Marketing/publicity (including LI, Twitter, FB, etc.; may also handle charity tie-in)
- Piggybank/checkwriter (ideally an LLC; must report to the Drupal Association)
- Grant and sponsor wooer
- Program coordinator and speaker liaison
- Website author and maintainer
- Venue and accommodations wrangler
- Food and beverage chief (catering experience is a definite plus [Thanks Darla!])
- Swag and giveaways wizard (also in charge of nametags)
- Volunteer coordinator . . . not to be underestimated!
- Driver/gopher
- Event emcee / media contact
- BoF director and documenter (also handles business card exchange board)
- AV person/live video streamer
- Photographer/videographer

. . . which is a lot, but every task will need doing at one point or another.

RESOURCES TO CONSULT for best practices:

1. Drupal Event Organization
2. Drupal User Group Best Practices
3. ?

SAMPLE PLANNING SESSION with our initial marketing whiz, Mike Gastin:

Mike made a point of the need to emphasize two factors in making the WNY D-camp work:

1. Brand
2. "Butts & Seats"

The biggest challenge being how to get the word out. Possible solutions:

1. Solid Web presence with online registration (and possibly a payment form)
2. Twitter - to get the word out
3. Networking with colleagues and friends

On the topic of sponsorship, we could use:

1. A printer
2. Swag
3. A sponsor's mailing list, maybe incentivized to make them want to help us promote

Finally, we covered the notion of having the D-camp segmented to reach more than solely programmers. The best outcome would be to expand the reach of the D-camp to the public, in general, and specifically to companies with no Drupal solutions in place so far. One possible session could be "Converting to Drupal":

- The concept of Frankensites and what to do about them
- WordPress . . . it's great for blogs.
- A need for custom content types and taxonomies that begs "This is perfect for Drupal."

GENERAL CATEGORIES TO PLAN (an outline-in-progress, inspired by the Montréal D-camp's page)

Admission donation /* explicitly state that any admission you pay is a donation */

- lunch
- expenses

Number of attendees

Registration

- T-shirt
- lunch orders
- name tag

Voting on proposed D-camp sessions

Sessions for all user levels

- Newbie
- General
- Advanced
- Set session submission deadline (~2 weeks in advance)

Sponsorship/Benefit levels /* Suggested levels only; not final */

- Platinum \$1,500 (?? available) Named room (?? available on a first-come, first-served basis); most prominent ad placement between sessions; guaranteed session (rooms will be determined based on popularity); dedicated vendor space; customized logo; all Silver benefits.
- Gold \$1,000 (?? available) Guaranteed session (rooms will be determined based on popularity); dedicated vendor space; customized logo; all Silver benefits.
- Silver \$500 (no limit) Use of common vendor space; logo on site and promotional materials; recognition during the camp and in feeds/Tweets.
- Bronze \$250 (no limit) Logo on site and promotional materials; recognition during the camp and in feeds/Tweets.
- Tin \$99 (no limit) Recognition during the camp and in feeds/Tweets.
- Lead \$19.95 (no limit) A poke in the eye with a blunt stick -or- a special piece of leftover swag.

Venues

- meeting
- late-night

Travel (includes intermodal, plus parking)

Dining (must include dinner for speakers and planners/volunteers)

Sleeping accommodations

- hotels
- Kayak.com
- CouchSurfing.com

Opening night event

- music
- drinks
- snacks

Keynote speaker (their travel expenses may be underwritten by grant/sponsor)

What to Bring (list borrowed from Montréal D-camp)

- Laptop and power adapter
- Surge protector or extension cord
- Business cards
- A Lanyard (we may have a limited number available)
- Snacks or cash in case you need a pick-me-up
- All your Drupal passion

Also allowed (list borrowed from Montréal D-camp)

- Camera or video camera, with the flash turned off
- Headset for podcasting
- Your cell phone or smartphone, set to silent please

Send thank-you notes to all sponsors, suppliers, media, other helpers and volunteers

LEARNED-THE-HARD-WAY after the initial WNY D-camp wrapped:

- Staffing is key, and having a backup person for each planning role is essential up front, throughout the event and even post-event.
- The budget will over run by a not-so-subtle factor. Big thanks go out to Brian Fending and his Monster Assembly business for their credit card.
- Having a backup venue can't be stressed enough, but all venues need to meet fire codes, carry insurance, those kind of things.
- Public agencies and boards (convention and visitors bureau, Service Corps of Retired Executives, etc.) will not understand the nature of our event, its potential to bring outsiders into the region, or the need to solicit volunteers from the public to assist with day-of-event needs.
- Signage helps. Especially when the event draws in late registrants.
- Custom T-shirts are a PITA, and may or may not end up a hit with attendees even after all the work. Consider other clothing? . . .
- Designating a charity to support sounded good at the time. I think we gathered three canned goods total.
- People love giveaways (merchandise, certificates, you name it) and getting sponsors to donate and deliver in advance is a job in itself.
- The website ought to practice what we preach. It has to be mobile-first and complete, well in advance. Inevitably the most vital part (schedule) will draw criticism once it changes last minute and any printouts get stale.
- Wi-Fi has to be bulletproof and free, and contracted in time for the event.
- Attendees also need sofas. Some of the best conversations take place around them. Getting a furniture sponsor would make real sense.
- Many food and beverage runs to the supermarket will take place just before the event. Select candy works better than fruit.
- Hardly any of the local promotional fliers will get picked up; out of towners just want to know the best malls and sightseeing.
- An outside photographer/videographer who knows where to be has to be recruited; one of our own did the keynote last time. Thanks Steve!
- Angels like the ones who helped us with catering, sign-in, cash handling and cleanup show up as if by miracle . . . but don't assume it.
- The reward of a well-run camp will linger for days, and it's then that the investment of time and effort pays really nice dividends.

Who can morph this all into a legit plan & timetable?