

HOW ESPORTS CAN CHANGE YOUR GAME

Greg O'Dell and his team saw the rise of a new disruptor and decided to align their venue and destination with video gaming. He tells how this scores with leadership and innovation

WHATEVER your views on video games, there's no avoiding the fact that esports are big business. *Forbes* magazine, for instance, put the number of players worldwide at 165 million for 2018, with US\$1.6 billion in revenue by 2021.

Esports are a fairly new and disruptive phenomenon, but one that we at Events DC, the official Convention and Sports Authority for Washington DC, decided to embrace.

We broke away from the norm and set our sights on new market segments. We even sponsored a team – the first US city to do so – to let the world know that esports events, gamers and the community are welcomed to our nation's capital.

With new developments and emerging technologies, event leaders know that they must constantly pay attention in order to keep up. These changes also present great opportunity for us to improve and embrace new “outside-of-the-box” tactics.

Only through a “disruptive leadership” mindset and embracing the need to shake things up – to innovate, ideate, and execute – can we achieve the results we need.

INNOVATE

Each event comes with the challenge to outdo its predecessor, finding better ways to engage audiences – often by incorporating new technologies including mobile apps, crowd-sourcing, or social media tools – and turn them from passive attendees to active participants. Events are becoming more dynamic and interactive, and strategies must keep evolving to meet these needs. It is important to keep pushing innovation forward, even when you're already seeing success.

IDEATE

Strategic planning requires that we repurpose our existing assets, while also examining new opportunities. How can we extend our business and our brand beyond our venue? This is a question I often ask myself, while also considering how we can best “pay it forward” – an adage I believe all leaders should live and work by.

In addition to aligning ourselves with sports, we have strived to find ways to create greater community and economic benefits for the city and our partners. Since opening the doors to Walter E. Washington Convention Center, the neighbourhood in this part of DC has benefited with additional consumer traffic and new restaurants and retail.

EXECUTE

When executing any plan, it is important to recall the core qualities of the hospitality industry and provide a service to our clients that is helpful, trustworthy, courteous and kind.

We must always acknowledge our audience's presence,



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making each person feel recognised. Good leaders know that to accomplish this, we need to dare ourselves to break from the norms, to forge unprecedented collaborations and to invest in innovation, new ideas and initiatives.

We must become “disruptive” leaders who focus on thinking beyond our traditional operations. This leads to further actions and initiatives that will drive your organisation to greater success. ●