

Lessons Learned World Cup IV

Bidding Phase

So, you and some of your friends are crazy enough to think about running the World's largest Blood Bowl event? Good choice! Even though it might sound like a scaled-up regular tourney (which it basically is), there are a couple more things you need to consider before you can start. First off, you need to win the bid first. Many of the things you can decide in detail later, but when you get into the bidding process, you need to at least think about them.

- Get a core group of organizers together to work out basic role distribution. Key-roles are:
 - o Main organizer
 - o Spokes person
 - o Graphical person (best would be to have a professional artist or at least semi-professional)
 - o Book-keeper (person with good financial background)
- Set strict rules and expectations for your team. First rule: nobody will be participating in the event unless you need a sub. Make sure your local community is not playing either unless you need a sub. Get commitment from all orga-members that they will take most of their annual vacation around the event and get their employers to confirm this early.
- Select possible locations and get written quotations for comparison
 - o Limit size for 1500-2000 participants at most
 - o Ideal 1 big hall (but a split of 2-3 rooms does not hurt the event)
 - o Have plenty of space for vendors
 - o Have a separate quiet room for orga-members and refs
 - o Check for First-Aid possibilities
 - o Check the venues rules for caterer, if there is free choice, look for caterer who have experience with 1000-2000 people to feed in a short time
 - o Check if venue supplies chairs and tables (make sure they fit the new size pitch, if possible)
 - o Check for highest quality sound system (very important)
 - o Check for event insurance
- Look for sponsors
 - o Miniature vendors
 - o Dice vendors
 - o Pitch vendors
 - o Hobby related vendors
 - o Beer sponsors
 - o Local sponsors, which see a benefit for their business
- Talk to city and state officials for financial support (they are easier to talk to then you might think)
- Talk to local tourism office for logistical support (try to have them help you with hotels and local transportation)
- Decide on a date!!!!
- Set goals for what you want to offer either included in price or for extra cost
 - o Miniatures (single or team)
 - o Dice, dice cup, dice bag, etc.
 - o Event book

- Skill markers
- Shirts
- Pitches
- Special markers (Turn, RR, Fame, Bribe, Apo, etc.)
- Set up a website in several languages (at least in English, French and Spanish). Find native speakers who help with translation.
- Think about general transportation for coaches, i.e. which airport(s) are close by, what public transportation is available
- Think about what organizing body fits best in your country, e.g. sports club, limited liability company, not-for-profit organisation. Make sure you have professional advice in that matter.
- Think about App development and make sure you have highly reliable people, expect high cost if you want delivery on time.
- Think about creating a database for registration and other things
- Think about a special forum for World Cup
- Think about sight-seeing possibilities for coaches and family members
- Check local opening hours of restaurants and bars
- Think about a general schedule, e.g. registration start and end, roster submission, rough timetable for event and pre-event activities
- Think about opening and award ceremony show acts
- Think about hearing impaired people
- Think about fundraising possibilities
- Decide on a ticket price and add at least 15% on top for any eventualities!

Preparation leading to the event

It happened, you are in deep trouble now, you won the bid! Congratulations. First rule now: Don't get overwhelmed by the sheer size of the event your team is going to organize for the next 2-3 years. Always stay calm even if the storm around you gets louder by the minute.

First 3 months after winning the bid:

- Get flyers and/or business cards for distribution early on. Have your orga-members attend as many tournaments all over the world as possible to get the word and the invitations out.
- Get the core website going with as much information possible, you can add more stuff later when available. Make sure you cover at least English, French and Spanish languages. Make sure your website works on most common browsers and mobile devices.
- Get your organization on legal ground, found a club, legal entity or whatever is the best in your country
- Get a professional tax advisor involved early on to guide you through the tax jungle of your country.
- Get the development of the app started with clear requirements to the developers, including deadlines and possible tournaments where beta-testing can be done.
- Get the contract with the venue signed early to avoid losing the room(s). Try to get a person in your team, who is knowledgeable in regards of contracts.
- Get a bank account. Instead of Paypal Transferwise.com is a reliable, easy and less costly alternative (highly recommended).
- Gather a broader Orga team. Follow rule #1: no participation of orga-members in tournament.
- Intensify your search for sponsors.

Setting up your organisation team

At this point you probably have a core team. Your core team MUST consist of highly reliable people you can trust blindly. The core team must be available at any time for the next 2-3 years. It should be mainly local people, who know the area, have lot of business contacts or at least know where to go. Besides your organization team you should have at parallel teams to take care of the following

- Referees: Contact Old_man_monkey or Old_man_draco to lead the referee team. They act totally independent but should be given regular updates about rule set and schedule of the event.
- Rules: Get a group of very experienced coaches and develop a rule set, which is competitive for veterans and rookies. You can introduce new things, but at the end the rules should be easy to understand and clearly written so you and the refs don't get many questions about them.
- App/Website: If you go for an app, find reliable and competent people, they may be even professionals, but be aware that a good app needs time and money and clear requirements. Make a plan with milestones with target dates when to have a certain functionality available and tested.

Your core team should meet regularly. The first couple of months is critical for planning and to get everything started, so meetings should be held more often. Same is true for times when certain milestones are coming up, such as start of registration, end of registration, end of payment period, roster submission, the event itself and several post-event meetings.

Distribute the roles in your team and stick to them until the end (unless something gets out of hand or some real-life issues happen). A committee board must be installed to have a core group making decisions at the end. These roles should be considered:

- Head organizer (HO): He/She needs to be informed about the status of everything happening, good or bad. He/She needs to be very good in delegating and crisis-management. He/She needs to trust every other core member that they can follow through with their jobs. Micro-management is killing the team spirit. On the other hand, all other team members must be open towards him/her and immediately report delays or other problems (do not wait until it is too late). He/She does not have to get too deeply involved in each task, but he should know about critical things, especially when it comes to timing and finances. He also reports to the NAF on a regular basis, i.e. he might get invitations to the NAF committee meetings to report the progress.
- Treasurer (TR): He/She needs to give regular updates on the finances towards the HO and the rest of the team to react early on deviations from the plan. IBAN, Paypal and Transferwise accounts should be under his/her supervision. High impact transactions should require a decision of a larger group (Committee board members). It is wise to have a co-treasurer (e.g. the HO) in case of absence of the TR.
- Logistics Manager (LM): A person who needs to be in contact with the venue and probably the caterer (the caterer and the venue should also be in close contact for food preparation/delivery/hand-out issues). LM must also be the contact for any deliveries and distribution of goods (promotional items, vendor activities) and also if bands or music acts are involved for the opening and closing ceremonies. The LM should have an empty garage or basement to store all the things, which will be delivered to the organisation, having several boxes of shirts, miniatures, coins, dice, pitches, etc. sitting in the living-room does not cope well with the significant other.

- Art Department (AD): The AD must oversee all the graphics and documents and other art involved in the project. For the bid document you already had somebody, who should continue with you all the way. A clear artwork strategy/concept with a brand logo and overall design (down to the font style) should be communicated early on. He /She should lead the communication with the miniature, dice, and pitch suppliers (etc.) as well as the printer of all posters, flyers, tickets, event books, etc.
- Tournament Organizers (TO): This person rules the tournament itself. He runs or supervises the tournament software, i.e. that he needs to be in close contact with whoever wrote the software used for the tourney (basically being that person's twin brother). He runs the draw, the data entry and the data processing before, during and after the event. He is the only person, who should never ever do anything else during the entire event and should not be bothered with anything else, except the questions "what do you need?" and "what food/drink can I get you?" (this is not meant to be a joke, by the way). He needs to gather a smaller group, which helps him with every thinkable and non-thinkable problem, he might run into during the event. The TO must have nerves of steel. He must be in close contact with the head referee, the HO and the CM.
- Communication Manager (CM): The CM is your face, your ears and your voice to the outside world. Besides have all common social media channels he/she should also be visible in the major forums in Spain, Italy, France, Germany, TFF, and of course the NAF-forum. The CM needs to be the permanent shadow of the TO and HO and filters the information for the public before and mostly during the event.

The time in between

After finishing the essential things, it is now time to think about other things. Now can be the time to be creative and think more about fund raising and finding (more) sponsors. For the World Cup IV we sent the pitch and the miniature team on a world tour to raise funds with t-shirt sales and to promote the event. At larger tournaments raffles were held to raise more funds, but be not fooled, those funds were only a tiny amount compared to the overall budget. The funds were mainly used to finance immediate things. During this time the rule set might already be finalized and should be published so people can use it for their tournaments. Start gathering information about restaurants and bars (and their opening times), also talk to sight-seeing locations if they'd offer specials for your participants. In case you don't get support from the local authorities and tourism office, go to hotels and youth hostels and get discounted rooms during the event. In case you plan with shuttle busses to bring the people from the hotels to the venue, looks for bus companies and make plans on how often the busses should run and during what time slots. In case your venue is far away from the next international airport, don't even think about running a bus shuttle from the airport. Let other people organize this, or form a sub-team, who can be spared during the event and the few weeks before. As helpful as this was for many people at the World Cup IV (about 20% of all participants made use of it), it used up a lot of time and nerves on the orga team.

Last year before the event

The last year before the event is the shortest time, you will ever experience and with a blink of the eye the event will be two days away and you will feel not prepared at all. The tournament team building rules will be posted by now and the first tournament will have been playing with "your" rules. The feedback of these rules will not wait long, you'll think of tweaking the rules, Games Workshop most likely surprised everybody with some new rules or even teams and people expect

you to accommodate your rules based on this. Make sure you will have a deadline set up well ahead of the start of the registration when the rules will be carved in stone for the event. Be in close contact with the NAF TD when it comes to the rules. About a year before the event you should be very close to have the registration started and the first income showing up on your bank account(s). Make sure you follow all the tax rules of your country because you will most likely have to handle massive amount of money and every mistake can be very costly. Make sure you have your tax advisor ready to go before the first cents will show up on your bank account(s).

One key element is mass-mailings to all participants. At one point you need to send out information about the event to all coaches and captains. You might run into the problem that your email address lands on the blacklist of some email providers or mail programs (especially Outlook users seem to be affected more than others). We have not found a solution on how to fix that, contacting the postmaster of several mail providers did not do anything. So, we used several similar email addresses, which lead to some confusion among the captains, but after explaining the situation everybody was cool. Just be prepared that this may happen to you as well and that it will lead to extra work and time.

It might be worthwhile thinking about adding a special online forum for your event website and have several subsections, including one where only captains have access in order to relay important information to them. We did not do it due to lack of knowledge.

Registration part

When getting the registrations in and you send out your invoices, it is advisable to have a template ready to go to be filled out automatically with the data coming in for each squad. Microsoft Office has some really nice features to make your life easier, but I'm sure other software companies have also good solutions. Make sure you have one central database and make regular backups.

Setting up the database for your event is one of the most critical things during the time before and during the event. Make sure all your systems, which need access to the database are working hand in hand.

Once registration is over there will be a lot of requests coming in due to dropouts, late people asking for a seat in the event. Be prepared to handle all these things.

During registration we found it very helpful to ask for food requirements and any other medical issues, including handicap topics (e.g. wheelchairs), epileptic issues, hearing impaired or deaf participants. Be prepared to accommodate a huge variety of medical issues. Make sure you have medical professionals quickly available. There are several medical doctors and nurses or paramedics within the Blood Bowl community, which you can utilize, but you need to know who they are and you should contact them in advance if they are willing to help (usually they are even required to help due to their medical oath). Make sure your venue has a first aid kit and a quiet room with some kind of a hospital bed for resting available. In some countries there are laws in place that a sign language translator must be used for events exceeding a certain size. Be aware that sign language is not a single language but has also several language and dialects the same way as spoken languages do. But there is one international sign language, which most of the people will understand to some extent.

Ordering goodies

Make sure you get information from your suppliers (dice, boards, miniatures, tickets, food, shirts etc.) about when their deadlines are to ship their goods in time. Make sure you have enough storage

available when things are starting to come in. Your venue might offer you storage place for a certain time before the event, but this must be clarified well before the event. In case you have to carry all the things to the venue make sure you have a small lorry at your disposal and of course enough people to carry all the things to and from the lorry. If somehow possible, get a few prototypes from whatever you have ordered before the mass production starts, so you have time to review them to see if all is to your liking or you have to change something because it is not legible or not working properly. When you create the contracts, make them waterproof so the risk is not solely on your end, but on the supplier's side. Of course, that will most likely increase the price, but the risk will be much lower.

Media coverage

One of the things, which has worked extremely well during the World Cup IV preparation was creating the hype through social media and other media channels, only topped by a live press conference and draw of the first round. This is something, which is highly recommended and was well perceived by the community. Having the press conference and video stream setup handled by a professional TV team makes it much easier on your end and you can concentrate on the content of the conference. Make sure to include your entire team at the press conference and involve them as much as possible. After the press conference, take your team and make a short review about it and align everybody for the last days and weeks leading to the event.

The EVENT

The event is closing in, only a few days, maybe a week to get the last things done. Make sure your team is fully available and all of them are off of work and solely focused on the event to come. Have morning meetings to align the tasks for the day. All the goodies, bags, shirts, tickets, etc. are available and packing participant-bags is in full swing. Start setting up the game tables at the venue, have table numbers prepared, hopefully you have an event booklet where all necessary information for people to get around is included. Put up signs, prepare the booth and stage, put up decoration, incl. national flags (you can use the ones from World Cup IV, they are in good shape). Prepare shift schedules for your team to work at the information desk, runners, backstage, etc. Set up your backstage area with all the computers and printers, etc. Have plenty of drinks and snacks available for your staff. Have a sound check made with the technical team of the venue to verify that announcements are clearly audible in every corner of the venue. In case you have two or more halls, make sure the sound quality is fairly equal in all halls. Repeat a final sound check when the hall is filling with people on before the opening ceremony.

During the event the software group has to get a quiet room where they can work without getting disturbed by anyone in case of an emergency. Have an information booth equipped with 3-4 people and have them being in contact with the orga team on a regular basis several times per day. Assign the responsibilities within the orga team before the event and stick with the chain of command. If a topic can't be addressed by one person have the team discuss it and take a decision and share this info. In the backstage area, have a pin board or white board where topics can be written down and categorized and mark them if completed. This board should be monitored by at least one person to distribute the issues to the team. The HO should stay out of any time-consuming topic and make sure to delegate topics to the team members and can judge who is loaded with work and who has time available. There must be a constant connection between event security and catering and the technical team of the venue to address upcoming topics quickly and as much in advance as possible.

For the final moments of the event, have the certificates filled out as much as possible and have the tournament software be created in a way to show all award winners on a single page to make it easier for the people who fill in the award certificates. Allow plenty of time for this task, 30min is not sufficient. If you have hearing-impaired or deaf participants make sure you hire a sign language interpreter but pay attention that the sign language is also different in different countries, but there is a general "standard" sign-language, which is somewhat understood by most people. At least for the opening ceremony and the closing ceremony such an interpreter should be available (sometimes even required by the country).

General rule of thumb: try to stay calm and don't panic!

After the event:

Make sure you have plenty of people available to help with the tear down. Get the financials done in time. Expect several lost & found items to be handled. Take photos of each of them and post them somewhere on your website for people to contact you. Have a team closing meeting after the event to discuss the event and write your own lessons learned document for the next World Cup hosts. Celebrate your achievements and stay away from social media!