



Amy Leyden, McNamara Alumni Center

Since 2000, Amy has led the event business of the McNamara Alumni Center on the University of Minnesota Minneapolis Campus. Handed a hard hat and blue prints, she began as a staff of 1, hired to build the event business from scratch. Fast forward to today, Amy leads a team of 6 staff who facilitate 800+ events each year while Amy drives McNamara's overall branding and marketing. The McNamara Alumni Center has received numerous industry awards including Best High-Tech Venue, Best Website and Best Print Ad by Unique Venues.

National Events Present Unique Conditions for Venues

In February of 2018, the Super Bowl LII was held in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The annual championship game of the National Football League, the Super Bowl is billed as a 10-day festival no matter the location in the US. This equates to many events that benefit the host city's venues. Representatives of Minneapolis venues gathered after this year's Super Bowl to discuss common experiences and challenges. Here is a summary of their top findings:

Most bookings came in very last minute

The pattern that many venues experienced was that inquiries came in a year in advance--Spring 2017, but few clients were willing to commit to contracts. Then, no word through Summer. The understanding was many contracts were held up by needing NFL approval. Clients returned calls just weeks before the Super Bowl, ready to sign contracts and dive into planning.

Cost did not seem to be an issue for many clients

Most clients came prepared for high priced contracts with venues who had confidently marked up their pricing. Requesting full payment up front is recommended and clients also found this reasonable.

Venue bookings averaged 3 days—load-in, event, load-out

Unlike what venues had expected, Minneapolis did not see many events early in the week of Super Bowl—really just Wednesday through Saturday leading up to Sunday's Super Bowl game. Large events required 24 hours for both set-up and tear-down for a total of 3 rental days. Therefore, in a 4-5-day window of potential Super Bowl weekend activities, a venue is likely to secure only 2, maybe 3 events. Some venues expected to "turn and burn" rooms but few venues experienced that--ample set-up and tear-down times provided smooth transitions.

Clients rented venues with the intent to fill with their own rented furniture—often lounge and reception formats

Most of the décor for events came from out of town in semi-trucks as chosen by event sponsors. Local rental companies with large inventories of furniture were maxxed out, often filling small orders of 2-3 tables or 20 chairs to complete the order of an out-of-state décor company. Some venues were offered the Minnesota specialty-themed furniture and décor to buy afterward that clients did not want to ship back. Although labeled, some venue's inventory was mistakenly packed up by the out-of-state rental companies!

Event producers came with the sponsor companies, traveling yearly with the event

Local planners offering creative services were not tapped into for their expertise as expected. Event producers came with the NFL sponsor companies, traveling yearly with the event. As a result, these planners knew exactly what they wanted and came prepared to ask for what they needed from venues to execute their vision.