Eventbrite

Director’s Guide

TO

MULTI-CITY EVENTS
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The events industry is booming, and consumers are hungry for live experiences. In a recent study, Eventbrite found that more than 75% of millennials and 59% of baby boomers value experiences over possessions.

If your event is already the go-to place, imagine the impact you could have by scaling nationally.

But beware: Growing your event is hard work. You have to find an entirely new audience — and connect with them. You also have to build new partnerships in a place where your brand doesn’t hold much value yet. So how can you continue to scale your event and break into a new market? Is it even possible?

The answer is yes. Here’s what you need to know to move strategically, scale up, and expand to a new city... and beyond.
This guide is for event directors and owners who want to:

• Expand their event to a new market
• Grow their brand by telling their story in a different region
• Reach an untapped audience and develop a new event community

You'll learn how to:

• Scale your event to multiple cities
• Identify and address the logistical challenges of multi-city events
• Market your event to a new audience
In the past year, four out of five Americans attended a live event. You might be interested in capturing a bigger slice of that pie — but how do you know you’re ready to build your brand, and to scale your event to a different city?

According to Tommy Goodwin, Director of Field Services at Eventbrite, the tipping point for most organizers is their event’s actual capacity. “If you’ve maximized the number of tickets you can sell in a given city or metropolitan area, and you want to grow your business, you don’t have much of a choice,” says Goodwin. “You might be able to launch an additional event in the same city, but chances are you’ve already saturated that market.”

If your event brand is known for throwing an event once a year, upping that number in the same city can actually be higher risk — demand from your attendees might not be there. That’s when it’s time to think about expanding to a new city and connecting with a new set of potential attendees.

To recap, here are three smart reasons to expand your event to a new city:

• You’re not finding attendee demand for additional events in your current city

• You’ve exhausted growth options in your home market

• Your marketing strategy and event production can be replicated in a new city
You’ve watched your event flourish over the years, but you’ve maximized growth in your current market. It’s time to expand your event to a new city — so where do you start?

First, you need to decide where you want to expand. There are thousands of cities to choose from, and finding the right city for your brand might seem overwhelming.

Here’s what you need to do to identify your next city:

- **Research demographics:** Search online for cities that have similar traits to your home city. Use online city guides and government websites to look at information like age, gender, and income of residents. If these are similar to your current market, you might have a strong contender.

- **Determine demand for your event:** Your next city needs to have a community of people who are interested in the type of event you run. If you’re planning a large beer festival, you want a city where there’s a strong beer culture and fan following. Not sure if there’s a demand? Do a Google or Yelp search for establishments or groups that would be interested in your event.

- **Create your short list:** After you’ve done your initial research, make a list of your top three to five cities you think are strong contenders.
Once you have your list, it’s time to visit each city. Spend a few days in each location, and soak in as much information as you can. Here’s what you should be doing:

**Conducting field research:** The best way to understand the culture and feel of the city is by actually visiting that market. Walk around, visit local restaurants and shops, and meet with city representatives. From representatives to events professionals, local partners can help you with this research — and provide assistance on the ground when you’re not there.

**Confirming logistical practicality:** Does the city meet the basic needs of your event? If you’re in the fandom world and host your event at large convention centers, not having a convention center would be a deal breaker. If you’re hosting a wine festival, you might want easy access to public transit. Talk with local authorities about parking, public transit, and handicap accessibility.

**Analyzing the competition:** You’re going to have all new players in a new market. Ask locals about other events and get a clear picture of how you stack up with the competition. How saturated is the new city with events similar to yours? How well attended are they? Are attendees looking for an event like yours? You can also use online marketplaces, like Eventbrite.com, which provide you with a snapshot of other events in the space.
How The Yoga Expo grew from one city to eight cities

The Yoga Expo is a gathering that draws yoga and wellness professionals from around the world. Founded by Kyle Michaud in January of 2016, the expo rapidly expanded nationwide — from one city to eight.

“We produced The Yoga Expo successfully for the first time in Fort Lauderdale, Florida,” says Michaud. “When it was time to select a new market, we identified and sought city characteristics that led to the success we had in South Florida.”

Michaud’s strategy was a success. “We contracted eight new North-American cities that year including Vancouver, BC, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Denver, Houston, Portland, Washington, DC, and Philadelphia,” he explains. “Our team found that many of the same strategies and procedures that we used in Fort Lauderdale could be simply 'carried over' to our new markets.”

The Yoga Expo also used each new city as an opportunity to learn from local experts. Says Michaud: “On the way, we learned that new software and processes being used successfully by other event planners in these new cities could actually be implemented to our platform — which helped us grow tremendously.”
When you’re ready to scale your event to a new city, make sure you understand what made you successful in the first place. In most cases, that’s going to be your community of attendees and partners.

You’ve probably already developed relationships and a loyal following in your home city, so look to those for inspiration. You need to forge a connection with your new attendees and local staff. If you don’t, the future of your event is at risk.

“The best events are trying to build community,” says Goodwin. “Those events are long lasting and stable because they think of themselves as a community-building effort.”

Goodwin says that the best way to build a sustainable event in a new market is to develop relationships with the attendees, the community, and the city itself.

“It’s important to create these relationships because those are the people who are going to work with you and help you when problems arise,” Goodwin continues. “It makes a huge difference when a city is supporting you when you’re creating your new event. They’ll guide you through everything from labor strikes to weather disaster. If you’ve been collaborative, your partnership will pay off.”

These are Goodwin’s tips for forging relationships in your new city:

**Reach out to law enforcement:** This team will help you think through problems in advance. How much security will you need? Do you need to enforce any street closures? What problems have other events run into in the past? Meet with local law enforcement, and send monthly updates about your
event. You’ll build rapport with that team and deepen your relationship with the new city for years to come.

**Meet with medical and emergency teams:** Connecting with local medical and emergency response teams is critical when you’re scaling your event. These teams can help you think through potential situations unique to that location. For example, if your home city is San Francisco, you might not be prepared for heat-related medical emergencies during a humid summer festival in Chicago.

**Team up with an event production partner:** You can waste time by doing the wrong thing, and a local partner can help steer you in the right direction. You might find yourself spending hours putting up posters for your event, only to find out that in this city, the law requires you to have the date and time in the lower right hand cover of your poster — and yours is in the top left. This partner can help you with everything from local laws to giving suggestions for the best local food to cutting a deal for regional sponsorships.
To better market in a new city, first identify what worked well (or didn’t work) in your home city. You can do that by defining what success meant for you — for example, conversations, retention, or reach. Then, measure how your marketing tactics (Facebook, email, paid media, etc.) performed. You should leverage those tactics that worked and replicate your strategy in the new city.

Want to make sure you’re spending your time and money wisely? Here are the best ways to promote your event when you’re scaling to a new city:

**Facebook event and advertising:** With 2 billion active users, Facebook is the advertising platform you can’t ignore. It’s where your ticket buys are, and you need to be there too. In your new city, you might not have much influence over your new audience, but your potential attendees definitely do. When their friends see they’re attending a new event, their fear of missing out is your best marketing tool. If you use Eventbrite, you can use the “Publish to Facebook” button to instantly create your Facebook Event. Facebook will then recognize your event as an “Official Event,” which may qualify for better search and News Feed recommendations. Combine that with paid Facebook advertising to ensure your most valuable customers are converting into paid attendees.

**Photography:** Photography is a key way to spark interest with potential attendees. In fact, photography can do more than spark interest — images are essential in getting potential attendees to commit to your event. Especially in a new city where your brand isn’t established, attendees are looking for social proof that your event is worth their time. According to our research, Google’s image search is one of the top two sites
potential attendees bounce to after visiting event pages. Why? Because people rely on photos to help them understand what to expect from your event.

**Video:** Like photography, video gives attendees in your new city a sneak peak into your brand. You don’t need to create highly produced videos to drive excitement for your event. Short videos pushed out via social media channels, like Snapchat, are an easy way to get in front of your new audience. Give fans a behind-the-scenes look at preparations before the event. Show food booths, performers and speakers, sponsors, swag, and the venue to get them excited. You need to prove that your event is a must-attend in your new city — and video is the way to do it.

**Publicist or PR team:** Although you might not be an expert at marketing in your new location, a local public relations team might be. They know how to connect with local bloggers and social influencers who resonate with your attendees — and can find an opportunity for a partnership. A PR team can also help you connect with reputable media sources. That will ensure potential attendees see your event advertised in their local media.

**Brand/sponsorship partners:** The reality is that when you’re breaking into a new market, potential attendees might see your event and think “Never heard of it. Why would I go?” Partnering with locally (or nationally) known brands builds your credibility. And those brands love experiential marketing at consumer events. These mini-experiences (in the form of sponsorship activations) add richness and unexpected elements to your event. If you already have sponsors in your hometown, see if they’re willing to expand their reach to your new city. That will help drive awareness of your event for attendees in your new city — attendees who might have otherwise looked right past your event.
Using Facebook to expand your reach

Drink Eat Play is an LA-based event production company, producing entertaining, memorable experiences. From 80s and 90s Prom, beer festivals, Tributefests and food events, they host events across the country, from Los Angeles, to Kansas City, to Miami. “Facebook is our number one marketing tool,” says Dan Silberstein, owner of Drink Eat Play. “When people see their friends interested in an event, it helps create a sense of FOMO and anticipation, and helps drive engagement.” Thanks to an easy integration, you can easily create an event on Eventbrite and immediately push it to create a Facebook Event in one click.
There are a number of reasons why expanding your event to a new city — where you’re seen as an outsider — is difficult. Thankfully, when you know some of the common challenges of expanding your event, you can work through them. These are a few potential challenges you’ll face when scaling your event to a new city, and ways you can overcome them:

**Permitting process:** Event organizers agree: securing permits, especially in a new location, is a headache. Whether you need special permission for alcohol licensing, fire zoning, or selling merchandise, nail down your permits as soon as possible. Not sure which ones you need? You can search this government website for city and state permits required for your event. Doing so early will save you time in the long run, and will better prepare you for hosting a successful event.

**Venue:** Securing a venue in a new city can be difficult. If you’re hosting an event in that city for the first time, venues might charge you higher rates and raise their normal rental fees. A local partner can help identify potential spaces and negotiate price on your behalf. Dan Silberstein of Drink Eat Play suggests looking for venues in your new city that provide special access for attendees. “Whether you’re at a new museum or backstage at a movie studio, attendees love being at a place they normally don’t have access.”

**Limited staffing resources:** Chances are, you don’t have the budget (or human power) to send your entire staff to a new city for an event. So how do you make sure that you reliable, trained staff that can manage logistics onsite? Contractors are a great substitute for full-time staff. Tommy Goodwin suggests hiring verified freelancers from shiftgig.com. These contractors have already been background checked and trained on your event, so you can spend less time stressing about logistics, and more time selling out your event.
Tips for selecting the right venue

- Look for spaces that provide special access to attendees. Attendees in your new city will be excited if they can get into a limited exhibit at a museum or get backstage at a historic venue.

- Determine which permits the venue covers. Some take care of all the permitting — some expect you to cover everything.

- Nail down timing. Most clubs book out their venue 3-6 months in advance, and larger venues (that might support your beer festival) reserve their space a year out.
Pricing your event for a new market can be tricky. You found the right price for your home event, but striking the balance between affordable and worthwhile for a different city isn’t as easy.

Although there’s no “right” answer when it comes to the best pricing for your event, there are a few things you should know upfront to help determine your price. First, understand the difference between your new city and your home market. What’s the average household income? How much, on average, are people willing to pay for a ticket? What’s your competition charging?

Here are a few other tips for setting your ticket price in a new market.

**Talk to potential attendees:** One of the best ways to determine your price is to survey people in that city. When you’re visiting the location, walk around and ask people on the street. Go to events and ask attendees what they’re willing to spend. Or send a survey via your Facebook page. What are they comfortable spending? Are they willing to pay more for early access? What aren’t they willing to pay for?

**Apply discounts:** You’ve already solidified your brand in your home market, but now you’re the new kid on the block. That means that you still need to build your brand, which should influence your price. Lean into discounts, giveaways, and early bird pricing to boost excitement about your event.

**Experiment with your price:** “One of the biggest mistakes event creators make is not spending enough time on pricing,” says Nels Gilbreth, VP, Pricing & Monetization at Eventbrite. “People are afraid to charge for things like VIP tickets or early bird tickets, but these are so common to the consumer.” Gilbreth suggests experimenting with different types of tickets and tiered pricing. Most organizers increase ticket prices three times throughout their onsale, so incorporate those tiers into your strategy.
The value of your ticket price

The Bacon & Beer Classic has hit cities across the country, growing to seven cities in just two years. Part of their success? Delivering a great experience for their attendees at the right price. The Bacon & Beer Classic uses tiered pricing for their events, offering presale tickets at a cheaper price. They also vary the price in each city to align with that market.

And with each ticket, they promise to deliver a unique, memorable experience. “For the price of a ticket, attendees can sample from 80+ regional craft beers, enjoy unlimited bacon snacks, and take part in original activities like a giant Jenga game and a bacon-eating contest,” says Kate Levenstien, CEO of Cannonball Productions, the brand behind the event.
Take the Next Step

Millions of tickets are sold in the U.S. each year. And as more Americans opt for experiences over things, your event has an opportunity to grow along with this trend. With the right strategy, you can expand your festival, and reach a whole new audience.

As you know, your event — including your needs and resources — is unique. Research potential cities and develop partnerships in your new location to help simplify logistics, drive traffic, and maximize sales.

Ready to sell out your event?

Find out how you can scale your ticketing technology as fast as your business by getting in touch here or calling 866-902-2531.
Eventbrite brings the world together through live experiences. More than 700,000 organizers used Eventbrite in 2017 to drive ticket sales, promote and manage events, handle on-site operations, and analyze results across multiple sales channels.

Powered three million events in 2017.

Grow your event
More than 200 million tickets were issued in 2017.

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Promote, manage, and analyze your event from any device.

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