3 Easy Steps to Help You Plan Christmas Decoration & Marketing Campaigns

Having worked at Kmart Australia Ltd for 9 years as a retail assistant and in management roles, leading teams of 70+ staff, there were always two categories my team would fall into come October when listening to the in-store radio station:

- You **love** hearing Mariah Carey's 'All I Want for Christmas'
- You **hate** hearing Mariah Carey's 'All I Want for Christmas'

I fall into category 1 – I love Christmas and was excited to project manage and lead municipality wide Christmas decoration and marketing campaigns in collaboration with local business associations when working in Local Government. The thing for business associations is this, not only are you installing decorations and managing Christmas themed events and programs in your shopping precinct and online, but you also need to ensure that you complete all this by 1 December so that you can kick off the festive season in your main street. The downside for some associations is that you may always find yourself experiencing delays when it comes to getting permission or business permits from your Local Council to install decorations. The good news is this: now you too can make more progress on getting Council permits and permissions by following a 3-step proven method below. These steps include:

Step 1: Define.

Step 2: Engagement.

Step 3: Permissions and Permits.

Let's look at each of these steps in a little more detail…

Step 1: Define what Christmas looks like in your shopping precinct

This first step is simple. What you need to do is define what Christmas looks like to your business community? For example, your business association represents a huge range of businesses that operate in your local shopping precinct, which is situated in a leafy, green suburb of Melbourne, Victoria. There are a lot of native animals and plants that are celebrated and loved not only by business owners, but residents too. Celebrating the festive season is important in your community, but so is curating a suite of decorations that reflect the natural environment. So, you can define Christmas as a celebration of our native flora and fauna and reflective of the natural environment. Now a lot of people tend to end up either loving or not liking the Christmas decorations that are installed in shopping precincts or entire municipalities. Usually you (a business association) can avoid that by conducting an analysis of your local shopping precinct. For example, you can assess the public infrastructure in your shopping precinct to determine, if you can actually install any decorations. It's important for community members to know that installing decorations is a Council responsibility, not a

business association. To avoid this unwanted result, do your research on past campaigns, and don't be afraid to make changes. Once you've completed this first step, then move onto the next step…

Step 2: Engage your committee and the businesses that you represent

For this step you'll need to engage with your business association committee and most importantly, the businesses that you represent. You will need to engage your members and seek their feedback on proposed concepts. What you'll do is send advance notice to your committee and traders with all the relevant information and important dates. Provide them with plenty of time to complete a survey and share feedback. The committee will need to analyse and take action to ensure that Christmas marketing and promotional activities reflect the needs of traders. Let me share with you **three tips** for making this step go more smoothly...

> **Tip 1:** Create a survey. Delegate this task to a committee member that understands how to develop surveys. Your Marketing Manager or Coordinator should conduct the engagement and manage the collection and analysis of data.
>
> **Tip 2:** Send survey to your traders with a due date. Provide advance notice of your events calendar during the year and let the businesses that you represent get involved in the decision making.
>
> **Tip 3:** Refine and analyse data and take action that is reflective of the feedback businesses have provided. Your Marketing Manager or Coordinator should be able to analyse the data, report back to the committee so they can make a decision, and take action.

Once you've completed this step, then move onto the next one…

Step 3: Permissions and permits from your Local Council or State Government authority

For this step, you need to have a concept in place and begin seeking permissions or applying for business permits from your Local Council or relevant State Government authority. One word of warning: you've heard of red tape when it comes to getting permits? To avoid experiencing huge delays that can impact your Christmas launch and program being a huge success, start seeking permissions and applying for permits between July-October. Here are some other dos and don'ts for completing this step:

- Do provide a lot of detail
- Don't be vague
- Do fill out the permit application form properly
- Don't rush filling out the permit application form
- Do ask your Council for help getting permissions

- Don't ask your Councillors to approve permit applications (they are not allowed too)
- Do ask your Council if there is a cost
- Don't forget to ask if there are other groups or Council installing decorations

Conclusion

So, there you have it – a quick and easy 3-step process for launching your Christmas events, decorations, and program on time in your local shopping precinct. Let's recap the steps:

Step 1: Define. What Christmas looks like to your business community?

Step 2: Engagement. What kind of marketing and promotions do your businesses want over the festive season?

Step 3: Permissions and Permits. What permissions or permits do you need to obtain from your Local Council or State Government organisation?

Now there's just one thing left for you to do – take action! So go ahead and start defining what Christmas or any event looks like in your shopping precinct. And do it today, because the sooner you get started, the sooner you'll get to launch and celebrate the most wonderful time of the year! Wishing your business association every success!

About Rania Fayad, owner of Yellow Round Table

Rania Fayad is an award-winning innovator and a business, marketing, governance, business permit, and main street specialist with over 18+ years of experience in the public and private sectors. She founded Melbourne-based business consultancy, Yellow Round Table, in April 2022 and offers virtual consulting nationally. Yellow Round Table is the best place for incorporated business associations to learn how to maximise their impact with marketing, governance, and advocacy. If you would like to hear more or get in contact with Rania, visit Yellow Round Table. Photos supplied by Christmas Display Solutions – a full-service Christmas Display Agency.