

## Competition Operations & Improvement

### Run a Better Competition

*Helping local contests become fairer, smoother, and easier to manage*

#### Does Any of This Sound Familiar?

- The venue wants you out by 10 PM and you're still running categories.
- Contestants question the judging.
- Volunteers aren't sure what comes next.
- Registration becomes hectic.
- Contestants, judges, and spectators are facing a late trip home because the contest is running behind schedule.
- The same problems seem to come back year after year.

If any of these sound familiar, you're not alone. Most fiddle contests are run by volunteers. Many organizers only put on one contest each year, yet they are expected to handle registration, judges, timing, scoring, volunteers, awards, questions from contestants, and a hundred other details. After more than 45 years involved in fiddle competitions and more than 20 years organizing and operating contests, I've learned there are practical ways to reduce stress, avoid common mistakes, improve fairness, and keep a contest running smoothly from start to finish.

#### This Isn't About Changing Your Contest

My goal is to preserve the traditions while making the contest easier to run. Every contest has its own personality. My job is to help your event run more smoothly while keeping the things that make your contest unique.

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#### How I Can Help

- **Review the Whole Contest:**  
Look at what is working, what is not, and where the contest could be improved.
  - **Plan Before Contest Day:**  
Review rules, schedule, categories, judges, staffing, and overall event plan.
  - **Stay on Schedule:**  
Build a realistic schedule and help keep the contest moving.
  - **Judge Support:**  
Help with judge selection, instructions, scoring consistency, and fairness.
  - **Scoring:**  
Review your scoring process or use the Normalized Scoring System (NSS).
  - **Contest Flow:**  
Improve registration, contestant movement, announcements, awards, and volunteers.
  - **After the Contest:**  
Review what worked well and what can be improved for next year.
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#### What You Will Gain

- Less stress on contest day.
- A contest that's easier to run.
- More confidence in judging and scoring.
- A schedule you can actually keep.
- Fewer last-minute surprises.
- A better experience for contestants, judges, volunteers, and spectators.
- Clear ideas for making next year's contest better.

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#### One Tool I Use: The Normalized Scoring System (NSS)

The NSS helps reduce the effect of naturally tough and easy judges, speeds scoring, and helps contests stay on schedule. It can be used on its own or as part of the Competition Operations & Improvement services.

NSS options include:

- Do-it-yourself software
- Software with setup and training
- Remote scoring assistance
- Complete managed scoring service—we do the scoring while you run the event

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#### Competition Operations & Improvement Services

##### Contest Review & Improvement

- Contest reviews and improvement plans
- Timing and schedule planning
- Rules and procedures reviews
- Judge process reviews
- Registration and contestant flow
- Scoring and results process
- Awards, announcements, and overall contest flow

##### Event-Day Support

- Remote event-day advisor
- On-site event operations help

##### Follow-Up & Ongoing Support

- Post-contest reviews
- Annual contest advisor services

*... and more. Services may be selected individually or combined into a customized package.*

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#### Why Work With Me?

- 49 years competing, judging, organizing, and operating fiddle competitions
- 20+ years designing and operating fiddle competitions at the local, state, and national levels
- Developer of the Normalized Scoring System, used in multiple state, regional, and national competitions
- Technology executive with 35+ years solving operational and process challenges
- Practical advice—not theory. I've been there, solved the problems, and learned the lessons.

**Thinking about creating a new competition from the ground up?** Ask about our **New Competition Development** services.

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#### My Promise

I understand that most contests are run by dedicated volunteers. **I won't overwhelm you with complicated ideas or expensive solutions.** I'll help you find practical improvements that fit your budget, your people, and your traditions. ***My goal is to help you run the best contest possible. And if your contest is already successful, my goal is to help make next year's even better.***

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#### Let's Talk

Every contest is different. Not sure where to start? Let's have a conversation. I'd be happy to learn about your contest and discuss ways I may be able to help.

**Ed Carnes, MBA**

**Competition Operations & Improvement and Normalized Scoring System (NSS)**