



Effective Codes of Ethics in the Events Industry

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Abstract

The events industry is burgeoning globally and events as such, are playing a very important role in the tourism industry and in elevating national GDPs. Consequently, there is a dire need for developing effective and efficient ethically oriented practitioners. While there are numerous very high-quality events associations, this article suggests that there be a universally recognised and workable code of ethics in order to mitigate the likelihood of unethical conduct impacting on the stakeholders of the industry and society in general. It is essential that whatever code/s have been crafted or are under construction, that these accurately reflect the positive values and behaviours espoused by the industry. The code/s which are purported to be in operation as well as new ones, should be then dynamically and virtuously practiced to the benefit of all, and should not be mere facades of good intention and added value. This article reviews relevant literature especially peer-reviewed and scholarly works on events management ethics and related issues. It discusses the issues that codes of ethics in event management should be considering in a world in which the ethic of self-preservation, greed and narcissism are becoming increasingly popular. Thoughts and recommendations for refining sustainable event management through an ethical code which is suggested as a framework, provide guidelines for event managers to follow, and for the promotion of organizational support concerning ethics so as to ensure a decrease in ethical anxieties on the part of stakeholders. Thus it is posited that ethical practitioners will lead to a more sustainable industry.

Keywords: Events, ethics, management, professional associations, codes of conduct.

Introduction

The extant event management literature is abounding with prescriptive theories on practical management issues but far less is written around the notion of unethical practice generated crises in the industry, nor the many opportunities which ethical practices create for event organisations to maintain a steady course on the path to sustainability. The purpose of this exploratory paper is to understand how events industry managers can use ethics codes to enhance productivity and service delivery and simultaneously build stronger customer relationships through doing the right things in their dealings with stakeholders.

The etymology of the word 'event' is of interest since this article delves into the theme of events. It is primarily derived from the Latin word '*eventus*' which means an 'outcome/ result/ success/occurrence/happening or issue'. Davies and Brown (2000:169) state that "festivals and events are special times in people's lives, they give us the opportunity to go outside normal experiences for a cultural, social or leisure experience". An event is essentially then a planned, temporary occurrence, that is outside the daily regular scope of attendance or schedules of people. Goldblatt (2008) speaks of 'eventology' as the study of planned events to promote positive social benefits, and this can only be possible through ethical practices.



The development of the events industry, when viewed domestically and internationally, has contributed meaningfully towards the marketing and development of tourism (Peters & Pikkemaat, 2005; Reid, 2007). Events by their nature include a range of activities and resources that represent substantial potential for risk, calamities and unethical practices (Tassiopoulos, 2005). Globalization is making the events market more competitive, dynamic, and customer driven and within this scenario, clients are demanding more diversity, improved quality, greater dependability and more efficient delivery based on ethical business conduct, thus prompting the events organisation industry to become more concerned about ethical practices.

The event industry is amongst the top employers globally and generates vast economic benefits to national economies (Theocharis, 2008). This necessitates that practitioners should be professional and ethical in their dealings. The desirable professionalism imbued with an ethos of moral action can only be attained by: “the development of different attitudes and behaviours and ...a reappraisal of professional values and ethics, professional education and training, the delivery of professional services and the evaluation of professional performance” (Middlehurst & Kennie, 1997). All events inherently have an element of many stakeholders cooperating to create a memorable and professional experience (Silvers, 2004). Event tourism is an important component of increased domestic tourism flows into South Africa (Rogerson, 2015) and thus important for GDP growth. The industry dealing with events, often referred to as the events sector, is highly individualistic and is largely influenced by a range of variables within the organisational setting, to a range of cognitive and effective issues.

Events are a dynamic part of a country’s tourism export economy, and they also deliver meaningful social and cultural cross-cultural encounters. The hosting destinations gain a competitive advantage but this is only if the events are ethically managed and successful. Event management is also important to public and private government agencies and also for not-for-profit organizations for a variety of objectives, including fund-raising, the nurturing of various causes, and community development and thus needs to be ethically sound. Crises and failures are relatively common for some events, and unethical practice is one such key source of failure which demonstrates a lack of strategic planning (Getz, 2002).

While it is relatively easy to ascertain which behaviours are important to make an event successful, for example considerations such as service quality excellence, effective customer care and budget managing, risks, security, successful conclusions and so forth, it is harder to launch any constant industry-wide approach when it comes to ethical issues, and even the requisite education, and skills sets required by practitioners vary in scope. Given that the word ‘event’ describes a diverse selection of activities for different agendas such as for example, festivals, and music festivals and other activities it becomes difficult to put all the ‘eggs into one basket’ so to speak, when determining the what, how, and when of events (Argan, 2007). Nevertheless, events remain very important happenings in society and this is the case whether they are personal events in one’s life or local events which are celebrated and diverse times of the year such as for example music festivals, religious festivals and holidays, major conferences, awards events, heritage, art, folklore, weddings, birthdays, sport and recreation, leisure, political or commercial and other important occasions. Shone and Parry (2004:3) provide a very useful definition of special events when they state: “Special events are that phenomenon arising from those non-routine occasions which have leisure, cultural, personal or organisational objectives set apart from the normal activity of daily life, whose purpose is to enlighten, celebrate, entertain or challenge the experience of a group of people”.

Research Methodology

A qualitative research method was adopted, since an element of the phenomenological paradigm, seeks to describe certain “aspects of phenomena, with a view to explaining the



subject of study” (Cormack, 1991:29). Within this approach there is a deliberate interrelationship between the researchers and the subject which is explored, namely effective codes of ethics in the events industry. The researchers deliberately brought their knowledge and understanding into the equation and they reviewed the current relevant literature especially peer-reviewed and scholarly works, on events management ethics and related issues to inform their conclusions. While qualitative research also attempts to identify the practical world of the subject investigated and thus has an empirical component, this research focused on the causes behind outcomes rather than on the empirical measurement of the outcomes. It will use the evidence attained from literature as a crucial argument within the research and the method accepts that every act of investigating a reality has a consequence on that reality (Collis & Hussey, 2003:53).

Literature Review

Clearly, events vary hugely when it comes to size and complexity, so that there can be huge events such as the football World Cup tournament or small events such as a wedding anniversary or religiously significant happening. Either way, events need to be carefully planned in order for them to be successful which is why Loos et al., (2008:54) depict event management as “the coordination of all the tasks and activities necessary for the execution of an event regarding its strategy, planning, implementation, and control, based on the principles of event marketing and the methods of project management”. Researchers such as Tassiopoulos (2000), Silvers (2003) and Nicolaidis (2015) have recognized the importance of professionalism and ethical conduct as key critical success factors for event management to be successful.

When it comes to hospitality and leisure, the events assume special characteristics including their intangibility, so that having some small tangible item often serves as a memento of what was a pleasant experience. This often includes a programme which is sold for example at a sports event and similar items. Getz (1994) has defined events as “temporary occurrences, either planned or unplanned”. What makes events special is their uniqueness since each and every person may be similar to another, but nonetheless remains distinctly unique. Events are also perishable because they exist for only a short period of time and can never be repeated in exactly the same way. All events have some or other special ritual related to them which promotes the continuation of a tradition that may be inherent to them. In all events, there is a huge amount of personal contact and interaction between the event staff, the organizers and the hosts and a range of other stakeholders (Shone & Parry, 2004). It is important to create the right ambience and provide service quality excellence which includes working according to projected timescales.

All events require a strong organization behind them which *inter alia* manages activities, organizes funding, administers employees and volunteers, accepts the duties of marketing and public relations, arranges security, prints necessary leaflets and tickets, hires performers, arranges any decorations, sorts out parking issues (Tassiopoulos, 2005). Events are generally highly labour intensive and require a great deal of planning and organizing and especially control and monitoring of the related aspects in the operation, more particularly, delivering what is expected as an ethical imperative. Without careful planning, it is unlikely that service delivery will be effective. What is equally important is for the event to be ethically run from the outset to its conclusion. The client/provider relationship is thus identified as a key challenge within the industry. Where there is no conversation between client and event provider, and thus an uneven balance of customer contributions to what is expected the ultimate event experience may not be in line with a “constant quality assumption” (Grönroos & Ojasalo 2004:414) on either the essential input level or the anticipated output level, i.e. the individually expected service outcome and the satisfaction with the service that the event client will experience.



What is ideal is the notion of co-creation of an event between both the client and the event company but this depends to a large extent on individuals and their expectations and ethical slant. Irrespective of ethical stance, each person's individuality affects the co-creation process as well as the co-creation experience of an event (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004:14).

Event managers are required to be passionate in what they do and in driving the excellence that is expected of them as they proactively tackle obstacles (Nelson, 2004). Goldblatt (1997) asserts that event managers must be driven by carefully crafted strategies, a good sense of controlling, including top-notch marketing, personnel management and high levels of productivity and utter dedication to the tasks at hand. Anything less would be considered an unethical cop-out. Mxunyelwa (2011) affirms that events potentially serve as catalysts for social capital gain. Problems arise when it is evident that majority of the people in the industry did not plan to work on events and consequently did not study event management in any shape or form as a distinct area of operation. Gummesson (2008:15) asserts that an event customer and the event company need to marry their resources to co-create value so that the event supplier's contribution is a value proposition while the client's contribution is value actualization and each of these requires an ethical dimension which builds trust.

What is missing from the industry is a globally accepted code of practice and while there are numerous associations and other bodies driving such initiatives there is an urgent requirement for a consolidated uniform method in dealing with stakeholders. This brings us to our suggestions for a framework, which provides some guidelines and avenues for event managers to follow if they have not done so, and for the promotion of greater organizational support concerning ethical practices. We believe this will help to safeguard organisations and minimize risks due to ethical apprehensions, leading to a more sustainable events industry.

The skills required by event professionals, especially the managers, are somewhat of a contentious issue. There are those according to Perry et al., (1996), who maintain that a strategic mindset, good leadership skills, adaptability and good organizational skills are the indispensable qualities, that successful event professionals need to possess. It is thus important that there be at least a measure of industry-wide accord as to which aspects are essential to consider in driving an event when viewed from an ethics perspective. It is equally important to identify key behavioural characteristics that event managers and employees should display on a consistent basis. Nelson (2004) asserts that event practitioners feel elated and fortunate to be working doing what they enjoy immensely. While this may be the case they do not always deliver quality service.

Nelson (2004) revealed numerous traits and talents that industry employees have in common. The most interesting finding was that the majority of practitioners planned on a career in some other field and entered the profession through serendipity. Given the wide range in education levels of practitioners, the majority were innovative beings and very susceptible to adopting new practices and ideas when presented with these. Most practitioners also work instinctively and share the common long hours workloads and limited scope for upward mobility in their organisations, that are part and parcel of the industry. They all share a desire to make others happy and make dreams a reality for their clients (Nelson, 2004). While all these are admirable traits, do they also do apply themselves ethically?

The client and service provider relationship was acknowledged by Nelson (2004) to be a key challenge in the events industry. Where there was a shortfall in the make-up of most event planners, was their reluctance to be involved in researching how they could enhance service quality excellence. For example, when the planners omit to consider local residents, this is problematic for event success to be guaranteed as they play an important role in the process, since if residents welcome a particular event, sponsors may be more willing to apportion additional monies to fund the event (Preuss and Solberg, 2006). All events need to consider



local residents at the host destination and also factor in how hosting an event at a destination may ultimately impact upon the quality of life of the local population (Fredline, 2005).

Despite the warm nature of most event managers and their employees, there is scant social recognition for the events industry. This highlights the need for a single body to be created to control and regulate the industry. This will be difficult to achieve given the vested self-interest element that exists in the universal variety of event associations. The framework we suggest for a universal code of ethics should go some way to at least inform common ethical considerations. Given that it is people who drive the events industry, our concern is primarily and necessarily with human resource issues and ethical considerations and additional concerns, and follows below.

Events Management Codes of Ethics – the human factor

A number of event sector associations exist which are forging professional codes of conduct that will deal with a range of issues. We have unpacked below what we consider to be essential issues but these are not all the considerations.

A major problem is the lack of professionalism in the events arena. Criteria which need to be considered are licensing and certification of employees who we maintain should thus be accredited by the appropriate governing body and possess knowledge of standards that are required to be upheld, and also the value of ongoing education in their chosen field of work. Ideally all event employees should undergo some certification based on the attainment of a level of education relating to events management (Nicolaidis, 2015).

The majority of employees in the industry did not intend to be employed in it and lack a necessary skills and knowledge underpinning. Both fulltime employees and volunteers require an ability to reflect, and be adaptable and even given the volunteers' spirit of service, they need as much management and organization as fulltime employees (Tassiopoulos, 2005). We also need to bear in mind that a company cannot simply hire anyone. What is required is a strategic vision for the event company with careful recruitment and selection of employees from all genders, with suitable personalities, skills and education and above all a passion for the industry and serving others.

The event industry is still offering only reduced employee benefits which in itself is counter-productive to an ethos of service and commitment to others and their employer. It is also failing to acknowledge the very special contributions that all employees make to the successful conclusion of events and very often fails to give credit where credit is due. Such an approach is destructive and leads to organisational unsustainability and it is thus considered to be unethical. Bhe et. al., (2004) maintains that events organisations have no clear objectives for managing events, the assigned roles and responsibilities of employees, ownership of tools and processes, the critical factors leading to a successful event, which standards to employ and strive for, and even the most rudimentary event-handling procedures. Synergy between different departments of an event company is a rare commodity and it is miraculous that some events succeed at all.

The theoretical knowledge on the industry does not effectively mirror the level of expertise that is required within the event industry and event managers concentrate on acquiring mainly practical knowledge (Raj et al., 2008). There is hardly any worthwhile training material which one could read to learn how to be better in the industry, in whatever role one operates. There is in any case very little local content in the literature to inform local needs in events hosting and its many challenges. This reflects unethical conduct from education institutions who are teaching event management and also the industry, and there thus needs to be constructive collaboration from both industry and education providers to drive the creation of relevant curricula to inform practice. Only in this way can there be any hope for a positive workplace



ethos and an industry culture and ambience exuded of commitment and collaboration which will lead to sustainability (Wagen, 2007). There are very few standardised procedures and this impedes the introduction of a commonly recognized event management information system being implemented. The varied understandings on what event management entails has also hindered the development of universally recognized standards for events, both micro and mega (Tassiopoulos, 2005).

Generally speaking, the average event management employee has very little skill relating to ethical issues and how to deal with them. Even event managers, when faced with moral dilemmas do not usually know how to deal with them. Employees who may be hired with basic skills, have very spare time to indulge in needed studies to improve their ability to serve the industry better, and this is in itself places an unethical pressure on them when managers lambast them for making errors. Silvers (2008) recognized that different types of events are exposed to diverse risk factors and the severity of risks will vary according to their unique context, and this is where employees require wider skill sets to be able to cope with different issues that arise.

An effective code of ethics for the industry should include aspects relating to the upholding of archetypal standards of professional conduct at all times and in all events irrespective of the scope (Nicolaidis, 2015). Event managers thus need to promote the vigorous integration of ethics into all aspects of the performance their organisations roles and responsibilities. They should thus contribute to the creation of a successful event environment based upon their actions before, during and after the event. It would be unethical to offer services to drive an event when suitable employees are not available. It is thus imperative that events companies recruit and train staff and volunteers effectively, as well as managing amiable personnel relations. We thus suggest that all events companies develop suitable selection criteria and select candidates who are likely to serve the industry well. Once appointed, employees should be given a period of orientation and training, be well supervised and managing in the methods of teamwork that is critical to success (Nicolaidis, 2015).

The industry requires high levels of professionalism and this implies that every employee engages in professional conduct and maintains standards of behaviour that are acceptable to all stakeholders, particularly when it comes to virtue based expectations related to demonstrating ethical behaviour in practice. The event manager must define stakeholder interests, pressing issues, and priorities while determining the various opportunities and challenges that each stakeholder presents when considering an event. It should be determined to which activities will be needed to meet the needs of stakeholders and as such they need to be acknowledged and monitored regularly (Tassiopoulos, 2005).

While not all stakeholder needs can be met, it is important to establishing good working relationships with all stakeholders. We consider certain aspects such as integrity, honesty, truthfulness, competence, fair play, loyalty, commitment, responsibility, care, confidentiality, abiding to laws, service quality excellence, respect and ability to deliver on promises as non-negotiable aspects (Nicolaidis, 2015).

The legal, ethical and regulatory obligations of an events company must be in line with a wide range of legal and regulatory issues in the host town or city. Where an event manager has doubts about certain issues, there must be consultation with other stakeholders of relevance, such as for example contractors, security employees, clients and others. There needs to be a careful evaluation of the risks, latent hazards, threats, and other vulnerabilities associated with the geographic location of an event and of course relevant insurance. The absence of any of these aspects should be considered to be unethical practice as lives are at stake when such considerations are simply negated as being of little or no importance. There is also a dire need for potential and actual conflicts of interest to be disclosed.



Once contracts are signed between participating parties there needs to be a maintenance of the relationships with sponsors and also donors and a careful ethically infused adherence to contractual obligations. Concerning the employees, it is vital to seek their inputs when it comes to what is expected of them and this means they need a well thought out summary of their duties and this should also be in line with their level of responsibility, authority and accountability (Tassiopoulos, 2005). They need to be trained to do what is expected of them and be suitable attired, and so the issue of dress codes is important as well (Robinson et al., 2010). The event company will be acting unethically if it alters the hours or days expected of employees upwardly, for any particular event, and then keeps the wages at a pre-agreed rate without giving an increase of any amount.

The event manager must communicate the expectations and guidelines to employees long before an event and not at the last minute (Nicolaidis, 2015). There should be systems of control that are able to identify all responsibilities that must be accomplished and such tasks must be allocated to either teams or individual employees. Employees should be able to self-verify that tasks have been completed satisfactorily and make feedback available to the event manager when such tasks are accomplished. Employees should also provide feedback if there are any problematic aspects that prevent a particular task from being completed timeously. Other additional useful guidelines for what is required to make events ethically and professionally sound may also be accessed in the information provided by the International Special Events Society (ISES) (ISES, 1996) and also the Events Industry Council (IEC).

A Proposed Events Ethics Framework

The events ethics framework, shown in Figure 1, shows the main components. These components are viewed as set of processes that illustrates the interaction between the event organisation and other stakeholders so as to achieve the desired ethical service delivery which leads to event delivery success. The framework could be applied for bring the domains in Figures 2 and 3 together. Clearly there would be a need to evaluate event organisation performance regularly while having an effective action plan to do so involving data collection and analysis, result reporting and review and feedback resulting in continuous improvement and monitoring.

The event manager plays a major role in determining the future and the success of the events company, while he or she also prioritizes existing assets to monitor the current achievements in order to measure success (Nicolaidis, 2015). In addition, the feedback between the event manager and employees who are fulltime and part-time or even volunteers, will give light to addressing problems from different angles so that future events run more efficiently.

Given that there is no universally agreed framework of ethical best practices for events management we propose one below. An event industry-wide code of conduct and ethics, would undoubtedly lead to greater social recognition, and heightened reward for events professionals. This would also speak to the notion of a united endeavour in event management and enhance the actual and perceived competence of professionals. The principles in this framework provide an indication of what needs to be in place so that sound, ethical decisions are made by a events manager which will ultimately enhance client and employee satisfaction.

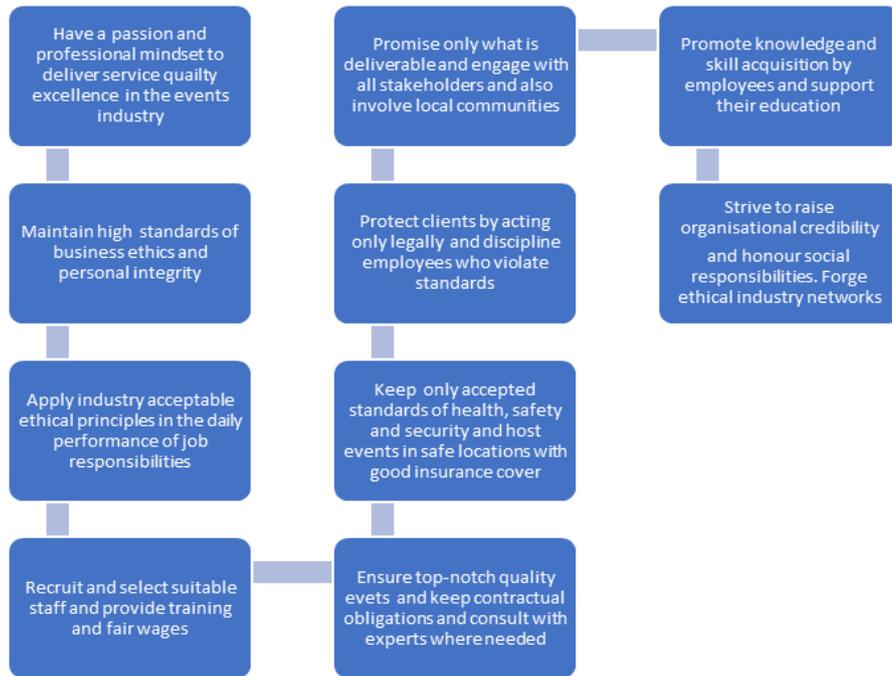


Figure 1. A Code of Ethics and Business Conduct framework for the Event Manager
 (Source: authors' own compilation)

While the proposed framework is basic, it still requires the integration of the values of the organisation, the individual employee and stakeholders to be aligned. However, without any framework to follow, events organisations will be navigating rough seas without any rudder to steer them to a good place. We should remember that event management is careful planning, effective co-ordination and execution of all features and team players that come together to create an event, whether it be a micro or mega event in scope or scale. Interestingly, many event managers feel pressure to display a readiness to plan for risk, aligning with organizational behavioural theorists as their guide (McKenna, 2006), thus stressing the value of human conduct research for the events industry.

The event management industry was fashioned to leave all event organization fears in the hands of experts with the ability to deal with any kind of situation that arises and with the skill and passion to make an event a huge success. By following honest and transparent operating practices an event management professional, especially the manager, leads the company to success. The event management industry invariably does have its own share of ethical issues but managers must be aware of the issues that can cause problematic situations and so all concerns must be addressed effectively (See Figure 2). The organisation chart below (Figure 3), taken from *Online Learning for Sports Management* (2017), specifies the scale and multiplicity of the team required to run a major event, in this case a sports event. Each of these aspects have an ethical component that also requires careful thought by the event manager.

An important barrier towards the implementation of a strong effective ethical culture and good planning practices and behaviours exists in the form of numerous small operators that have little time, money, or motivation to emphasize on event ethics practices (Tassiopoulos, 2005). In addition, the events industry requires useful education in the form of short ethics courses and workshops designed to enhance the knowledge of practitioners (Nicolaidis, 2015). The time factor required to establish the desired ethical ethos and workplace ambience in which moral action is exuded in plans, policies, and strategies is a limiting factor for the widespread implementation of ethical action practices, beyond the need of the automatic need for legal compliance and minimising of risks.

Personal interaction between event organisation employees and between them and customers, is receiving far greater attention than was previously the case (Bettencourt & Gwinner, 1996). There are marked differences between people in terms of culture, language preference and styles of communication and it is thus critical to know something about these aspects. Having a culturally diverse workforce enables a business to serve a far broader base of customers with ease as the employees are able to relate to customers who are just as diverse as they are. Event organisations thus need to create culturally diverse teams that work in culturally diverse environments. Event companies which have relevant cultural diversity policy guidelines in place find that the management of cultural diversity is not as complex as it may appear. First and foremost, the development of cultural diversity training programmes needs to be intensified if hospitality and tourism businesses are to create harmonious and efficient work relationships amongst employees. Failure to be pro-active in this regard can be catastrophic (Nicolaidis, 2015). Only by promoting a supportive diversity culture can disrespect, intolerance, discrimination, and pre-conceived notions be eradicated in the event team workspace (Richard, 2000). It would be unethical for an events organisation business not to compromise with employees which it does not understand or have empathy with, and compromising and toleration are the correct things to do in any decent society.

Event managers in pursuit of ethically sound practices in their organisations, additionally need to proactively create event management teams to tackle critical items systematically as they relate to a successful event. These include inter alia, co-ordinating the event programme, the venue, equipment, a range of promotions, officials to consider using, the hospitality aspects, merchandising and of course the usual health and safety and security issues. Conflict does arise in teams from time to time. Hellriegel et al (1998), define conflict as a process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or adversely affected by another party. According to Spreitzer (1995), employees feel empowered psychologically when they feel able to shape their work role and context and this implies, once trained, event employees should be empowered to do what they know they should be doing.

Additional event management issues for event managers to consider



Figure 2. Additional issues of importance to event managers
(Source: Authors' own compilation)

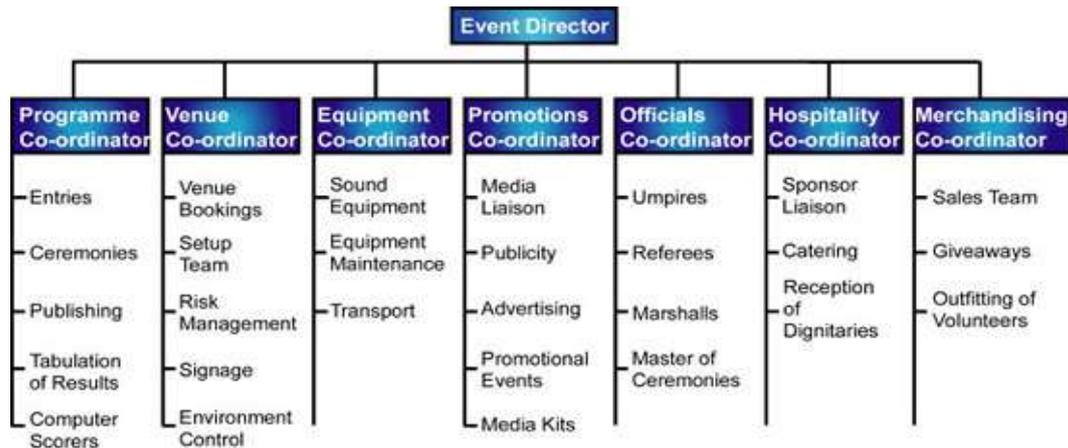


Figure 3. Structure of an event management team (Source: Online Learning for Sports Management)

Recommendations

There is a huge need to suitably develop professional event employees to be in a position to deal with the challenges that are manifest in the industry (Arcodia & Reid, 2008). Event managers who are skilled are highly sought after. Silvers (2003) a global expert on events management, has crafted an 'Event Body of Knowledge' in which she succinctly and accurately defines an event manager as an individual who is capable of effectively overseeing and arrange every aspect of an event, including researching, planning, organising, implementing, controlling and evaluating the event's design, activities and production. The skills required for one to be effective as an event manager should be taught extensively in tourism and hospitality courses and also in management (Getz, 2000), and should be characterized by five related spheres of knowledge namely legal and financial, management, public relations and marketing, economic and analytical, and also ethical and contextual, so as to create a knowledge base for future event managers. Perry, Foley, and Rumpf (1996), identified the knowledge needs of event manager as areas such as project management, budgeting, time management, media relations and business planning. Interestingly, ethical practice was omitted from their list.

Event managers generally fulfil a wide range of roles and should take the lead in, as well as coordinate and control the activities in the day-to-day operation of their event management. They may thus be involved, to a lesser or greater extent, in the many activities of numerous departments. Event managers do not all follow any meaningful and supportive systematic process in the management of events and some display lack of knowledge on which tasks are important to undertake first and foremost so as to end up with a successful event (Tum et al., 2005). Many event planners are incapable of providing quality service ethically and often make promises they can't keep and do so with impunity. Goldblatt (2000) was familiar with the many complications faced in professionalizing the event industry and he states that the event management occupation has shaped a climate that is unclear, and lacking in integrity when compared to other professions, and this is disadvantageous for its efforts to be sustainable. Huh et al.'s (2009) proposes that attitudes of event managers and other employees are the consequence of their individual beliefs. This is problematic to an extent, as the attitudes to risk management they then have concerning safety, compliance, decision making, and professionalism all vary, highlighting the need for universal codes of ethics. A good code of ethics will speak to the issue of conflict and how to deal with it.

Given that there are very high and unacceptable rates of employee turnover in the events industry, it is imperative to minimize the role of conflict as a causal effect. Although conflict does and in some cases, should occur, it should not lead to an employee seeking to terminate his or her employment, even if it is a volunteer helping out. Conflict does tend to impact on



performance but managers need to be careful not to allow deep conflict to de-motivate employees who are in event already stressed by the very nature and demands of the event industry. Each case of conflict is unique and has its own situation, dimensions and behaviours. The events management development process needs to be conceptualized as an ongoing, and highly dynamic process which should be designed to maximize both the potential of employees and the business, in terms of competence and capability however conflict in the workplace is a major obstacle to this objective.

A code of conduct will be predisposed to the core objectives of the organisation and its mission and vision and thus its strategy and ethical culture. Whatever codes are developed should be intelligible to the layperson and written succinctly and state in positive language what is expected of employees including the management cohort. In any case, the application of a code should be monitored regularly and ethics should be a standing agenda issue at all meetings (Harris et al., 2000). Employees require regular workshop training and support to empower them to deal with situations which may threaten the values their organisation wants to endorse and their own values, which should be in alignment with those of the employer.

Conclusions

Honesty and integrity are essential qualities in the event management business. An event organisation is sustainable provided a confidence is established between it and its clients. Unfortunately, there is not enough emphasis laid down on building trust with the clients in view of establishing a long-term relationship which enhances sustainability. Yet doing business means laying the foundation for a long-term strategy and not just a short-term contract of a weekend event in some or other destination.

Inspirational leadership is inextricably central for the ethical functioning of any event management organization. Ethics principles or standards of expected employee conduct must govern the behaviour of all individuals as well as groupings of peoples with whom the events organisation is dealing. Event managers need to impart organizational values which are in evidence in a code of ethics or conduct, and also the mission and vision of the organization and the personal values of a manager who is ideally also a leader need to be carefully assimilated into the culture of the organization.

Well-crafted codes of conduct are essential for the industry. While these may differ across a range of event companies, they should seek to inculcate ethical behaviour and promote virtuous practice by painstakingly setting out the values, ideal expected behaviours and business practices that employees and other stakeholders need to possess or adopt. Codes of conduct should be workshopped with employees and made available on an organisation's website and also mentioned transparently in the annual financial statements and corporate social responsibility reporting. There are a variety of course diverse codes of ethics, but each should speak to moral action based on virtue which is promoted in employee training sessions.

If there is to be any change at all for the better in the ethical aspects of event management, there needs to be a robust cooperative motivation for ethical issues to be addressed. The likelihood of such an eventuality is hard to envisage given the contemporary industry lethargy, structure and disorganization. A desired ethical professionalism can only materialize if the industry speaks with one voice on the human resources, structure, purposes, educational needs and expectations that it needs to have in place. Events management companies need to tap into the skills of stakeholders in the local community where events are to be hosted and collaboration should be in evidence (Quicke, 2000). This is where functioning and consistent transparent communication with stakeholders emphasizing ethics is essential. Events managers must not promise what they cannot hope to deliver, misrepresent their organisation,



spin-doctor their clients and fail to meet their obligations to stakeholders in general. They should not overestimate their capabilities and always be truthful in their dealings.

Without ethical codes of conduct, organisations face greater risks not least of which are legal and financial liabilities to injured parties. They also risk budding asset loss and so there needs to be careful strategic planning leading to effective and efficiently run events. All potential risks must be proactively dealt with and contingency plans should be in place (Silvers, 2008). Effectively developed implemented and monitored organisational codes of conduct must become the norm or unethical practice will rise, due to intentionality or lack of knowledge. Events managers must encourage an ethics-based culture in their operation and stress the importance of ethics regularly while being exemplary role models for their employees when it comes to ethical behaviour. When developing and implementing the accepted code of conduct the organisation needs to understand how the code will affect the individuals' decision making and actions (Bhe et al., 2004).

Employees must be able to construe and apply the code to a variety of situations they may face and while many may be principles or rules based, it is more effective to appeal to the employees' sense of virtue when seeking ethical practice and promote the notion of virtuous behaviour as a norm. While a universal event management codes of ethics is desirable, there is no one-size fits all code of conduct given the nature of the industry, but basic rules apply when dealing with other people. This is where the event manager needs to be a leader. We could of course argue that not all leaders are managers, neither are all managers leaders, but managers do influence others based upon their managerial authority vested in their positions (Nicolaidis, 2015). Leaders on the other hand, are individuals with both decision-making and personal power who can and should greatly influence employees to perform actions beyond only those that may perhaps be uttered by those who are formal managers.

The ethical event manager/leader will demonstrate kindness, generosity, courage, compassion, fairness, broad-mindedness, patience, prudence, honesty, dependability, self-discipline, an appetite for the job, justice, loyalty, stability, civility and especially thoughtfulness when dealing with all stakeholders. Organizers of events should also increasingly be looking to demonstrate their environmentally friendly credentials and this aspect also has huge ethical overtones if not handled correctly (Bergsteiner and Avery, 2010).

Whatever code is implemented it needs to be a true reflection of the desired values and behaviours that the organisation wants the employees to uphold. At no time should a code be a mere façade to placate clients and community stakeholders. The most pressing need is for the events industry to develop a clearly articulated global strategy to serve stakeholders ethically. It is proposed that more intense studies are required to further explore the dynamics of South African event management challenges from an ethical vantage point, as well as employees' interactions with their managers. This is especially necessary given the diverse nature of the workforce in the events industry and the fact that events are increasingly changing places of work. Perhaps a major task for further investigation, is to ascertain appropriate models for the recruitment and selection of suitably predisposed and skilled event management employees in South Africa, as well as a deeper analysis of the organizational structure and job design in events companies.

This article is dedicated to the memory of my good friend Dimitri Tassiopoulos who has passed on. May God rest his soul!

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