
Chapter 5

Contractor management

Learning objectives

After reading through this chapter you will be able to:

- Explain the roles played by contractors in the event organization
- Discuss the role of human resource specialists in contractor management
- Identify some of the industrial relations issues emerging from the use of contractors
- Describe best practice in contractor management.

Introduction

Contractors make up a significant part of the labour force for most events, providing services such as staging, entertainment, technical production, ticketing, registration, catering, security, cleaning and waste management. For this reason, this component of the workforce is a major concern from a human resource perspective, necessitating the development of integrated internal and external customer relations (Rothwell *et al.*, 1998).

There are numerous and varied issues to consider here, including the different working conditions under which these contractors are employed, their health and safety on site, insurance and provision of meals.

In the event environment, integrating the efforts of these service teams is challenging, and for this reason it is essential that they are involved in event training, particularly induction or orientation training. From the consumer's perspective, everyone on site who is working has a customer service role to play and is a target for questions and complaints.

If the decision is made to take on volunteers, organizing committees can experience some backlash from potential contractor organizations and unions because they believe that the volunteers will take the place of paid staff. These organizations also argue that the volunteers are not appropriately trained or qualified for the work they are required to do. Ongoing and productive communication is therefore essential with these stakeholders.

Strategic decisions are generally made early as to which event services will be outsourced and which provided internally because there are many legislative considerations, such as appropriate licensing of riggers, forklift drivers, electricians and security

76 Human Resource Management for Events

staff. Insurance against workplace accidents is another important consideration with responsibility cascading downwards from the organizer to the smallest subcontractor. Contracts for event services are often renegotiated due to changing conditions in the event environment and this also needs to be taken into account in the planning stage (Allen *et al.*, 2005).

As Figures 5.1 and 5.2 illustrate, contractor staff comprises the biggest segment of the mega-event workforce – at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, 51 per cent, and at Athens 54 per cent.

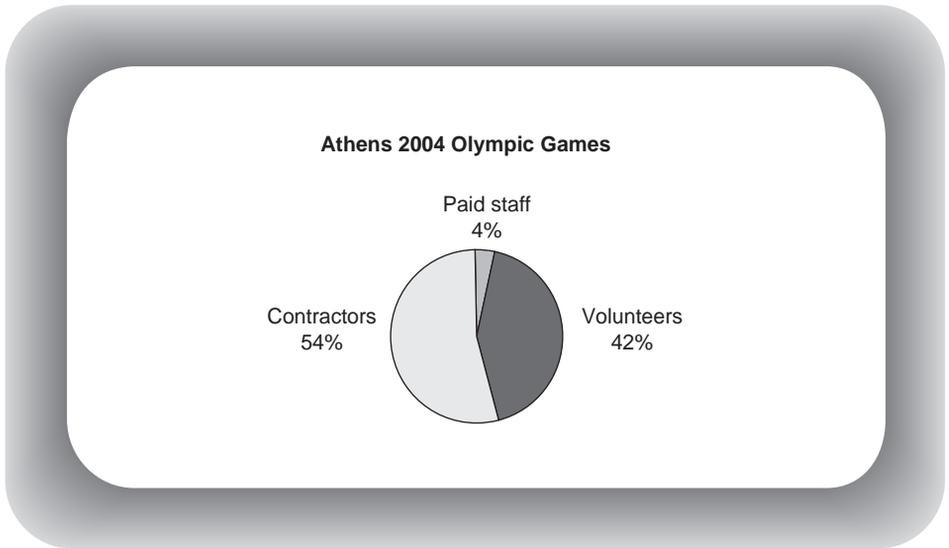


Figure 5.1 Athens 2004 workforce

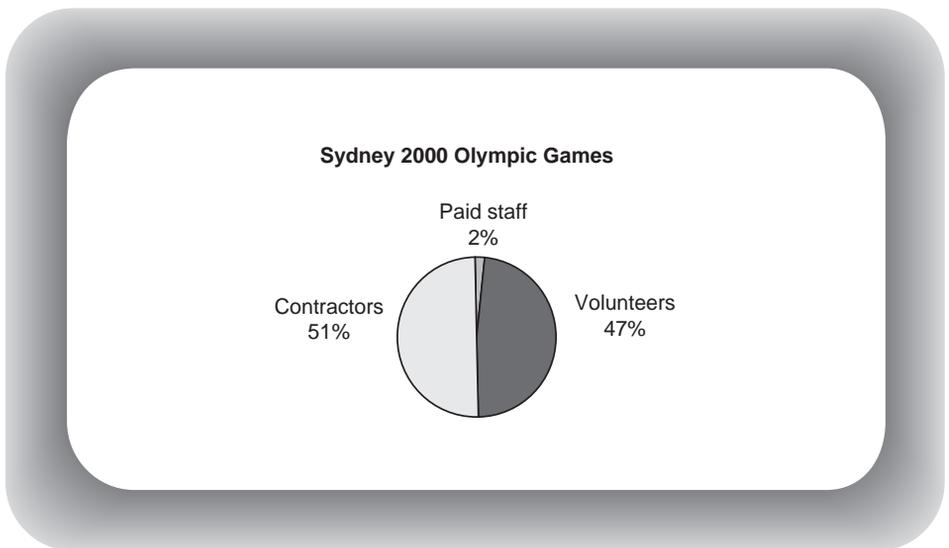


Figure 5.2 Sydney 2000 workforce

Common types of contractor services

The following services are most frequently contracted out to event services companies or suppliers. The list is not comprehensive, nor does it include suppliers of rental equipment or a multitude of different products.

Event design

Specialists in event design are briefed in the specifications required by an organization for a conference, awards ceremony, incentive or product launch, for example, develop the concept and cost it for the client.

Production

In a general sense, production means putting on the event – from concept through to implementation and evaluation. Sometimes production refers more narrowly to the performance component of the event.

Entertainment

Speakers, singers, dancers and musicians are just a few of the entertainers who might be contracted for an event. For a concert or music festival this is the core component of the event product and may involve promoters and agents. Entertainment contracts are complex and mostly include a 'rider', an attachment to the contract requiring additional payments by the event organizer (Allen *et al.*, 2005).

Lighting, sound, audiovisual and multimedia

All multimedia services can be outsourced, including the highly technical requirements of a sophisticated multimedia presentation. These services are often referred to as technical production.

Logistics

Organizing event operations may involve a logistics expert to transport and install all equipment and organize event elements such as crowd flow, communications, amenities, computer systems, sound and lighting systems, perimeter fencing etc., particularly in relation to temporary outdoor sites. Logistics may also be responsible for the transportation of performers and VIPs, as well as their equipment.

Registration

Large exhibitions generally use the services of a professional organization to take registrations online using specialized software and to take remaining registrations at the entry to the exhibition.

Décor

Décor requirements may include props, chair coverings, balloon art and flower arranging. In some cases, a themed event will require a complete design and build.

Printing

Printing requirements range from tickets to programmes, training materials and signs. Some events develop a 'look', which includes the colour scheme, logo, type font, etc., and this is used consistently across all printed material and signs.

Photography and video

Specialist photography and video services are common, with the results available in different formats and online after the event.

Staging

Preparing the performance space is a vitally important role and may include, for example, specific lighting effects and other stage design features. Staging can range from a simple stage and set to a state of the art, highly technical grand opening ceremony.

Catering

Most events require catering and there are numerous companies which provide these services, including menu planning, initiating appropriate food safety guidelines,



Cleaners sorting waste streams at a festival

and providing qualified and experienced staff. Catering can range from fast food to fine dining. In some cases, catering is allocated to concessions or stalls, in which case a separate contract is needed for each.

Cleaning and waste

Cleaning and waste management is a specialized service, particularly in the event environment where a waste management plan is almost compulsory for outdoor events. The waste output from Manchester is illustrated in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Waste streams and tonnages by venue – Manchester Commonwealth Games 2002 (11. 7. 2002–6. 8. 2002)

<i>Venue</i>	<i>Residual</i>	<i>Cardboard</i>	<i>Plastic</i>	<i>Glass</i>	<i>Paper</i>	<i>Ferrous</i>	<i>Aluminium</i>	<i>Total</i>
Sportcity	175.24	0.3	1	5.8	2.6			184.94
Velodrome	24	1.2		2.6	0.4			28.2
Belle Vue	28							28
Salford Quays	6							6
G-Mex	20			1.2	2.6			23.8
Aquatics	33.6							33.6
MEN Arena	16			1.5		31.09	3.11	17.5
Rivington	6.4							6.4
Bolton Arena	30.3			1.5				31.8
Wythenshawe Forum	11.2							11.2
Heaton Park	28							28
Athletes' Village	135.22	17.86	1	4.7	3.4			162.18
Bessemer Street	48.8	22.48	0.42	1.2				72.9
Town Hall	2							2
IBC Other	56.8				7.5			64.3
Total	621.86	41.84	2.42	18.5	16.5	31.09	3.11	701.12

(Manchester City Council (2003), Manchester Commonwealth Games Post Games Report; for further information see www.gameslegacy.com)

Security

Searching bags and premises and providing supervision of people (crowd management) and property are some of the roles of security staff, many of whom are trained for emergency management as well.

Recruitment

For the larger event, a recruitment company might be used to manage the process of recruitment of paid staff, including headhunting locally and overseas for appropriately experienced event professionals.

Training

Training is sometimes outsourced to a training organization. For example, Holmesglen TAFE in Victoria provided training for the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games.

Responsibility for appointing contractors

For a small event, the organizer would find contractors on the Internet, in the *Yellow Pages* or through a recommendation. At the next level up in size, an expression of interest may be circulated by the organizers, for example, for the provision of catering services at a venue. This could lead to the appointment of preferred providers, thus excluding all other caterers from that venue, regardless of the type of event. Finally, the service can be put out to tender, leading to a formal selection process. In European Union (EU) countries there are rules about invitations to tender for event services, covering the amount awarded in the contract specifications and the process of selecting contractors.

Stages in contract management for event services

The process of contract negotiation through to service delivery and evaluation is outlined below, mainly from a human resource perspective:

- 1 *Project scope and work breakdown*
 - Scope project, conduct job analysis
 - Develop project specifications
 - Conduct labour risk management analysis
 - Review external labour force issues, numbers and expertise
 - Develop human resource specifications, such as staffing guarantees and service level indicators
- 2 *Tendering and evaluating proposals*
 - Evaluate tenders against criteria and weighting system
 - Check references of applicants
 - Evaluate tenderers' understanding of external and internal HR constraints on meeting service requirements
 - Check compliance with industrial legislation and awards
 - Determine ways to handle potential termination
 - Negotiate outcomes and sign contracts
 - Prepare for variations
- 3 *Lead-up phase*
 - Develop and distribute operational manuals, procedures and checklists
 - Organize participation in induction/orientation training
 - Monitor delivery of job specific training by contractor
 - Check roster planning
 - Organize accreditation and uniforms
 - Organize contractor staff meal requirements
 - Check transport arrangements (this can be problematic for staff who need to travel extremely early or late)

4 Event delivery phase

- Implement operational planning
- Monitor service delivery
- Solve problems by trouble-shooting
- Communicate and motivate
- Monitor attrition
- Involve contractors in reward and recognition programmes

5 Evaluate service provision

- Check incident reports
- Evaluate service levels provided
- Develop recommendations
- Close out contract
- Send thank you letters and commendations

While human resource departments are generally not responsible for contract management, there is a need for HR input when outsourcing event services since contract employees are often the bulk of the labour force.

Industrial relations issues

One of the more complex aspects of contractor management is the problem of different working conditions under different industrial agreements. While it is the responsibility of the contractor organization, and not the event organizer, to manage this, it can nonetheless be problematic. In order to deliver seamless service at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, an industrial agreement (award) was developed that covered everyone employed on site ('inside the fence'). This had the advantage of enabling staff to cross over from one function to another and for all staff to be paid loyalty bonuses on completion of their allocated shifts. With all paid staff on the same wage scale, contractors were able to budget more accurately too.

Few events are able to create such agreement across the board. This leaves most event organizers and services suppliers with the headache of having to work with multiple workplace agreements. The following extract from the *Cleaning and Building Services Contractors (NSW) Award* (Australia) illustrates specific roles, rates of pay and a wide range of other conditions not shown here (40 other clauses) for cleaning employees (Office of Industrial Relations). One allowance is for cleaning offensive substances, which is quite understandable. From this it is immediately obvious that a more generic role description would lead to greater flexibility.

Event Cleaning Stream

- (a) *Event cleaning means all work in or in connection with or incidental to the industries or industrial pursuits of cleaning, repair and maintenance services in or in connection with the staging of sporting, cultural, scientific, technological, agricultural or entertainment events and exhibitions of any nature. Event cleaning shall not include regular maintenance cleaning and shall be for a specific event and limited in duration to not more than three weeks.*
- (b) *'Event Services Employee Grade 1' means a casual employee who performs general cleaning duties before, during and after an event (as defined above), and shall include, but not be limited to, duties such as: operating hand-held powered equipment such as blowers, vacuum cleaners and polishers, wiping of seats, cleaning toilets used by the general public, picking up rubbish, vacuuming around and under*

82 Human Resources Management for Events

seats, sweeping under and around seats, vacuuming and cleaning table tops, and other work of a manual nature and is subject to direct supervision.

- (c) 'Event Services Employee Grade 2' means a casual employee who performs cleaning duties before, during and after an event (as defined above) and who, in addition to performing, when required, all of the duties of a Grade 1 employee, drives/operates ride-on powered sweeping and scrubbing machines, mobile compaction units, vehicular rubbish collection; operates steam cleaning and pressure washing equipment; is responsible for the distribution and ordering of stores and supplies; is responsible for the supervision of Grade 1 employees in the performance of their duties; delivers on-the-job training and is subject to general supervision.
- (d) 'Event Services Employee Grade 3' means a casual employee who, in addition to performing, when required, all of the duties of a Grade 1 or Grade 2 employee, is an operations trainer/work co-ordinator ...

Table 3B – Wages – Event Services Stream (7(iii), (v))

The following rates shall take effect on and from the first full pay period to commence on or after 1 July 2004:

Total Hourly Rate Casual Employee	\$
Rate 1: Monday to Friday	
Event Services Employee Level 1	17.41
Event Services Employee Level 2	18.29
Event Services Employee Level 3	19.66
Rate 2: Saturday, Sunday and Public Holiday	
Event Services Employee Level 1	24.46
Event Services Employee Level 2	25.75
Event Services Employee Level 3	27.80

As this award illustrates, a base level cleaner can do only manual cleaning and cannot operate cleaning equipment apart from blowers, vacuum cleaners and polishers. These classifications are extremely limiting, particularly when cleaning needs to be done between sessions, which means all hands on deck, including the supervisor.

Further, this award makes specific reference to the principal contractor contracting out to subcontractors who in turn must comply with these conditions. As mentioned previously, this is an important risk consideration. The event organization sits at the top of a pyramid of contractors, and thus carries responsibility right down the line. For this reason, contracts must include up-to-date insurance certificates for public liability and workers compensation.

During the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games there was close co-operation between the contractors/services providers, human resource department (workforce planning), the unions and the venue managers, with union representatives on site to resolve immediate issues. This level of co-operation was unprecedented for an event of this scale. As Webb points out, 'the Games organizers brought together the public and private sectors and the trade unions to create a unique set of industrial agreements that, over time, built mutual respect, trust, honesty and openness in the personal relationships between many of the key players.' He goes on to recommend that the following questions should be asked of contractors:

- Where is your information on workforce numbers and skills coming from?
- Your casuals, how will you hold onto them when they are also being recruited by others?
- How will you get people to work if travel time is longer?
- How many of your regular people won't be available

(Webb, 2001, p. 78)

In addition, we might ask what level of attrition is expected, as on any given day some staff will not turn up due to illness or other reasons.

Collaborative planning in partnership with suppliers is vitally important. This sounds easy in principle but, in practice, it is often the case that contractor organizations are appointed too late for this level of collaboration to occur.

Recruitment and training of contractor employees

Event organizers explain the problems associated with large events in tangible operational terms such as 'We had to hire every piece of technical equipment in the country and even had to fly in some components from overseas.' Human resource issues are similar. Very often the city does not have the required labour pool to meet the needs of a short-term event.

Catering contractor Spotless Services describes the problems of recruiting 8000 staff from a very shallow employment pool and the strategies used to meet labour shortages:

- 1 Borrowing competence. *This includes borrowing staff from their other international operations, and specific event placements for staff and students from colleges who may be on holidays during the event.*
- 2 Buying competence. *This involves recruiting people without experience and providing certified and government-funded training.*
- 3 Building competence. *Staff are seconded from other projects and provided with training to meet the needs of the new project.*

(Webb, 2001)

Recommendations from previous events also indicate that contractors gain considerable benefit from attending the same orientation and venue training as paid staff and volunteers. This is more likely to lead to a more cohesive workforce and seamless customer service. However, following the Commonwealth Games in Manchester some contractors expressed a need to have specific programme material to meet their needs: 'there was a bit of a sense of being "bolted-on" rather than "rusted-on" (Tourism Training Victoria, 2002).

In their study of major sporting event organizations, Hanlon and Cuskelly (2002) point out that contractor employee participation in generic event training needs to be spelled out within the tender brief, as this can add to labour costs for contractor organizations: 'in doing so, outsourcers would be more prepared for the high expectations and amount of induction time required' (p. 237). These authors also stress the importance of induction and onsite operational manuals as training resources in the event environment. Most events have an operational manual and these are frequently underutilized as a training resource.

Contract supervision

Goods and services specified in the contracts need to be monitored during the event by functional area managers. For example, the functional area manager for cleaning and waste management (a paid staff position) would have ongoing responsibility for cleaning contract management, including fine tuning as the event draws near.

Volunteers carrying checklists can be utilized to monitor levels of service by, for example, checking the cleanliness of event venues. If, as a result, the functional area manager has nothing to do during the event except monitor quality, this is an indication of good contract negotiation during the lead-up period. However, as Maund (2001) points out, it is important to acknowledge that contractor employees are not employees of the event organization; otherwise this can lead to uncertainty and confusion about reporting relationships. Issues relating to service standards need to be raised with the contracting organization (management and supervisors) and not directly with their staff on the ground.

Contract specifications and service standards

Writing the tender specification for an event supplier requires a detailed understanding of the service standards expected. In the catering area, for example, the types of meals and the number required are minimum requirements in the catering brief. There are different styles of food service (fast food to silver service) and vastly different levels of quality (ranging from a hot dog to an à la carte meal). The determination of service quality, in specific terms, is essential. Depending on the size of the event, and the degree to which planning has to occur prior to calls for tender, the level of work required in preparing the specifications will differ. For the smaller event, without formal tendering, the process of negotiating menus and services levels can be undertaken collaboratively. This, however, is one area in which misunderstandings can occur very easily. Is the menu to be à la carte or is it to be banquet style, i.e. two choices served to alternate guests? How many courses will there be? Is the food prepared from scratch or pre-prepared in frozen commercial quantities? Is a buffet a consideration? Is there provision for vegetarians? Is the alcohol billed on consumption or is it a fixed price? Can guests order spirits? Is the coffee filter or espresso?

Taylor (2005) suggests that the effect of tender procedures for catering in the public sector is to limit choices, leading to bidders coming in with low-cost and low-quality bids. Quality and cost configuration need to be evaluated in detail. For this reason, he suggests that this type of bid should be conducted in two rounds. This would certainly be recommended for the type of event at which food is an important feature, expensive and linked to the theme. A gala dinner is an example of an event at which the quality of the catering is vitally important. Where food is not central to an event, such as the provision of informal fast food, a contract containing specifications is still required, the most important being food hygiene planning if the event is to be held outdoors.

A catering contract for a food vendor at an outdoor site could include any of the following specifications:

- Menus and prices
- Staffing levels
- Food safety plans
- Waste management plans (recyclable cutlery and plates)

- Infrastructure requirements (water and power)
- Equipment brought on site.

Contract management is highly problematic if standards are not met. Therefore the more detailed the specification, the less likely that a misunderstanding will occur. For a one-off event, if the contractor does not deliver, then it is too late to find another! Menus should be tested and quantities discussed prior to the event.

The following detail should be included when drawing up contracts:

- *Written.* All agreements must be in writing. With most organizations this occurs as a matter of course in the early days of the negotiation. However, as the event draws near, small requests are added and things change. Contract variations must be clearly noted and agreed in writing.
- *Specifications.* The contract should clarify expectations on both sides so that products and services are clearly defined. As an event organizer you don't want to be embarrassed by a contract caterer who runs out of food. People will blame you! Furthermore, the event organization wants to hold the vendor fully responsible for the standard of product or service provided, which may include entertainment, décor, floral arrangements, seating, audiovisual, etc.
- *Insurances and licences.* As mentioned above, the contractor must carry the appropriate licences or permits and must have insurance. Verbal agreement on these matters is not sufficient; copies of workers compensation and public liability insurance policies should be provided by the contractor before contracts are signed.
- *Indemnification for damages.* The event organization needs to be indemnified against loss or damage caused by the contractor. For example, organizations responsible for outdoor parklands can issue severe fines for damage to grass and trees, and these fines will be passed on to the offending contractor. This should be made clear in the original specifications.
- *Payment terms.* Agreement on payment terms must be negotiated, including upfront payments prior to the event and completion payments after the event. Payments can take the form of commissions or percentages, such as a percentage of gross sales of merchandise. Rent may be charged to a vendor using space for a stall. Deposits may be required, refundable when the event is over, equipment has been removed and the site returned to pristine condition.
- *Regular meetings.* Ongoing positive negotiations conducted in good faith can lead to long-term business relationships. When problems emerge, they need to be resolved quickly. Positive working relationships in the lead-up to an event can reap rewards when extra commitment is needed.

McCabe *et al.* (2000) in their text on convention management suggest the following four ways in which service quality can differ:

- 1 Technical quality – what is delivered? This can include food, lighting and other technology.
- 2 Functional quality – how is it delivered? Are the staff trained and competent? Do the systems and procedures work?
- 3 Process quality – judged during service. Is every element integrated for seamless service from the customer perspective?
- 4 Output quality – after service is performed. This is the post-service customer evaluation, very often conducted by using questionnaires.

In summary, the management of contractors involves careful selection of suppliers, vendors, etc. Following this, contracts need to be negotiated, with clear specifications included. Ongoing positive relationships in the build-up to an event will have a payoff if problems occur, as integration and effort are often required from everyone on site in the last frantic moments. Case study 5.1 presents some of the issues from the contractor point of view. However, from the customer perspective, there is only one contact, the event organizer, who is responsible for all aspects of service provision. Besides, the customer is generally unaware that the operation is supported by a number of contractors harnessed for the duration of the event.

Case study 5.1

Game plan has silver lining for Aussies

Australia is cleaning up at the Olympics in more ways than one, writes Roy Masters in Athens.

Athens has twice the number of expected garbage trucks, carrying Olympic rubbish, but all are half full. It's an apt representation of the two major problems at the XXVIIIth Olympic Games: too much security and not enough people. The security protocol dictates trucks travelling between venues must reseal plastic sheeting with each new load and punch in a different code. It's easier to go straight to the tip. Loads are down because spectator attendance is the lowest in recent Olympic history, below Barcelona in 1992. Still, Cleanevent, the Melbourne company which heads a consortium handling the €50 million (A\$85 million) cleaning contract, will do well out of Athens because of the bottom-line nature of the contract.

Not so fortunate is Concept Sports International, an Australian company which holds the merchandising rights to the Games. The 3500 sq m Super Store adjacent to the main Olympic Stadium sells merchandise from €500 sterling silver Greek worry beads to €1.50 pencil cases, all with the Olympic rings displayed, but no one can enter without a ticket.

Unlike Sydney, where people could freely wander around Homebush and buy merchandise, entry to the Athens Olympic precinct requires a pass to an event.

Often overlooked is the fact that Greece is a poor country by European standards and while people can't simply afford the IOC-levied ticket prices, they would like to buy the memorabilia. Enter the network of Australian businessmen whose companies basically present, guard, clean, accommodate, train, entertain and sell to anyone at the Athens Olympics. Gary March, chief executive and majority shareholder in CSI, says of the 'Aussie Mafia' which has helped get these Games up on time, and assist each other in the process: 'In true Greek fashion, they are talking about letting the people into the shop without an event ticket but I don't think they'll get their act together on time. Let's hope my Aussie mates can do something.'

The 70 000 people watching the track and field programme this week might not have seen close-ups of the action on two giant screens if the Aussie business brigade had not intervened. Greg Bowman, managing director of Great Big Events, has the contract to provide the announcer, music, video system, scoreboard operation and cuing the athlete introductions and medal ceremonies at eight venues, including the Olympic stadium. He was allocated a large control room at the stadium but the technical equipment used to operate the screens and sound system at the Opening Ceremony was in an outside broadcast van. Providing spectators with pictures of the athletics programme's simultaneous events – jumps and throws in the middle and running on the track – is not suitable via outside vans. 'It's essentially a TV production where you broadcast inside the stadium but managing to convince ATHOC (the

Athens Organizing Committee) that this is best done inside was not easy,' Bowman said. 'So I emailed and phoned my Australian colleagues here and managed to get it through the back door. The result is a room with a large state of the art digital console, a full display of monitors and technical equipment to manipulate the screen, integrated with the activities at the stadium.' Bowman describes his contract as 'not brilliant', but said: 'You've got to be in Athens for the ongoing business.'

He provided all the audio-visuals at the Sydney Olympics, Manchester Commonwealth Games, Rugby World Cup, Goodwill Games in Brisbane and has the contract for the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne. Cleanevent had the cleaning contract at the Atlanta, Sydney, Salt Lake City and Manchester Games and heads the Athens consortium with a Greek company and a Spanish company.

'We're in the senior advice role,' says Cleanevent part owner Craig Lovett. 'Because everything was running so late we walked into a construction zone. The main stadium was handed to us four days before the opening ceremony. Despite the attendance, we'll do in excess of one million man hours, employing 2500 workers, using €2.5 million worth of cleaning equipment. We'll shift 6500 tonnes of waste, less than Sydney. Sydney ate heaps but they drink more here. I wish the caterers would put up the price of a bottle of water (half a euro) because there are so many plastic bottles lying about. Forty per cent of the waste should be recyclable, down from 87 per cent in Sydney. There's enough tomato sauce being sold on their souvlakis to fill up an Olympic swimming pool.'

(Masters, Roy (2004). Game plan has silver lining for Aussies. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 August. Reproduced with permission.)

Reflective practice 5.1

- 1 This case study presents contractor viewpoints. Discuss the difficulties associated with predicting the labour force requirements for an event from the perspectives of both parties, the event organizer and the supplier.
- 2 Provide three suggestions for improved negotiation and collaboration between event organizers and contractors.

Chapter summary and key points

This chapter has looked at the role of contractors, or suppliers, in the event environment and has stressed that it is quite common for the number of contractors on site to exceed the number of staff employed by the event organization. An exhibition company, for example, is highly reliant on contractors to build the exhibition and manage registrations. In the process of appointing contractors there needs to be discussion about whether they have a reliable source of skilled labour. Contractor employees also require event specific training in order to fit comfortably into the event environment and answer questions from the general public. Cleaning staff, it could be argued, play a more important customer service role than many other staff on site. For this reason, in order to provide optimal service, everyone on site (including contractor employees) should undertake event-related training such as orientation training and venue training.

Revision questions

- 1 List and explain five examples of contractors/suppliers and the services they provide.
- 2 There are several phases in the management of contracts. Explain these briefly.
- 3 'The planning, selection and management of contractors is the role of the venue manager.' Discuss this statement in light of this chapter's suggestion that there is a role for human resources to play where multiple contractors are appointed and that their staff form a significant part of the workforce.

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