
Preface

When I was asked why I wanted to write this book (rather than my novel or, more importantly, my thesis), my response was, 'because over the next few years London will host the Olympic Games; South Africa, World Cup Soccer; Shanghai, EXPO; and Australia has 800 000 Catholics visiting in 2008!' These are significant events, and they need people, they need trained people, they need motivated people, and in turn these people need visionary leadership. They need to be managed well, and this is the human resource management role. Every event supervisor is a human resource manager; his or her career depends on it.

People make events successful, and there are so many of them behind the scenes. There are ticket sellers, purchasing officers, technical assistants, media monitors, cleaners, cooks, accreditation experts, security officers, risk managers, creative designers, announcers, singers and sweepers. Mostly their skills are brought together for a very short time. There is no more challenging environment for human resource management than the event business.

Events celebrate our best moments: winning the World Cup, coming first in an Olympic 100 metre swim, Black Eyed Peas performing, receiving an award, holding a 21st birthday party, or a 90th for that matter. Small or large, events commemorate our most important moments, and they are significant in our lives and in our cultures. Because there is so much planning and organizing to be done – because the risks are high – event professionals are needed.

There are many books on event planning, on crowd management and on economic impact analysis. But to date, there has not been a book on human resource management for events. The challenge for me was irresistible. I had a background in human resource management as training manager and director of human resources in a five star hotel. This was early in my career, and I thought the hospitality industry was the most exciting there was. This was until I worked for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games and discovered the world of events. It was not a soft entry into the business; it was conflict ridden and stressful. But, hey, it was exciting. And as every event manager will agree, all the angst is worth it when the event is a success. So with the rosy afterglow of a flawless mega event, I continued to teach in this area and became increasingly enchanted with the event business.

This book is for anyone managing people at a festival, carnival, exhibition, show, competition, race, display, match, concert or convention. The work needs to be analysed and allocated, contracts prepared and signed, people hired, procedures developed, staff trained, uniformed and fed. Things change constantly; the structure (physical and organizational) is often not in place until days or hours before the event starts. In this controlled chaos, decisions are quick, clear communication is essential and people need to be upbeat all the time. I have to confess that when working as a volunteer for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games I became so tired of smiling, nodding and answering questions on my journey to and from work (two hours each way) that in the final days I went in mufti, carrying my volunteer uniform in my bag and saving my emotional energy for my shift. My hope is that the bonhomie of your events is such, too, that it wears you out! That's the measure of success: everyone around you is uplifted and energized, and you know that this event will be fixed in everyone's memory for a lifetime. During the 2000 Olympic Games it was said ad nauseam, 'This is a once in a lifetime opportunity'. If you are entering this profession, I hope that you have many such positive opportunities.

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