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Managing Human Resources

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After reading this chapter you should

- Have an overview of the principles of human resource management as it relates to festivals
- Understand and be able to design an organisational structure and job roles and have a grounding in basic legal responsibilities relating to staffing
- Decide when and how to use team-working, and how to best motivate people
- Be confident about your approach to equality and diversity
- Recognise development needs
- Understand the strategic role of HRM within a festival organisation

Introduction

It used to be called 'personnel', or 'personnel management', and now has the title 'human resources management', usually shortened to HRM. Within large organisations it can be the least visible until people problems arise. It has to undertake the dull but vitally necessary tasks of ensuring that an organisation's 'people management' complies with the law and that the company gets the best out of the people it employs. So, what's this got to do with the comparatively small, lively, friendly, funky, chaotic world of festivals? No matter how small and cuddly your festival is, the management of people, whether full time or very occasional, will be crucial to your success. This chapter sets out the principles which will increasingly apply as your festival develops and grows.

What is HRM?

Definitions of HRM vary, but generally include some reference to processes such as recruitment, training and development, incentives, pay, staff contracts, equality and diversity issues, and performance management. Where companies have dedicated HR managers, they are also involved in developing long-term strategies related to people management that help the organi-

sation get the most out of its staff and for staff to feel fulfilled and to achieve at work.

As small organisations, in many festivals these jobs land on the shoulders on managers who are neither HR experts, nor have the time to dedicate solely to such issues. Nonetheless, it is worth spending time trying to get policies and processes right, as when it goes wrong, people management is upsetting for everyone concerned, takes up a huge amount of time and, at worst, can end in costly and damaging tribunal cases.

HR principles and practices don't just apply to paid staff. Your festival will probably need stewards and volunteers to run the various activities and good HR practices apply to these people just as much.

Human resource management in a festival context

The phrase 'people are our most important asset' is one that is heard regularly in business. It is particularly true for festivals. It is the taste of the artistic director that shapes the festival's programme, and individual artists who ensure the work is high quality. The venue or site design and atmosphere are dependent on choices made by individuals working for the organisation. And on the day, customer services staff are crucial. They have to be knowledgeable and approachable, calm and capable to make festival-goers feel welcome and secure. So, the role of HR is to do more than simply recruit the right number of bodies to undertake tasks on the right days. Who you recruit, and how they are trained and motivated are crucial to a festival's success.

Festivals have some specific HR challenges related to the fact that they are projects requiring rapid scaling up and scaling down, a complex mix of professional skills and types of contracts, all working in an intense environment to unmovable deadlines. This may make it sound like an impossible task, but festivals are part of the original 'gig economy' so there are industry-wide systems and processes to fall back on. There are professional norms that operate across subsectors, meaning that there are certain shared expectations of what a staging company or PR firm will do as part of their field of expertise. Some of the workers at a festival may well be freelancers or employed by a different company subcontracted to provide a specific service so these norms and skills become established practices that can be relied upon. There are also industry bodies such as The British Arts Festivals Association (BAFA), the Association of Festival Organisers (AFO), European Festivals Association (EFA) etc. who provide guidance documents for their members, and unions such as Equity (for actors), the Musicians Union and BECTU (for media and entertainment) who can advise on best practice.

That having been said, one of the traditional roles of HR is to oversee policies related to how the organisation manages its own people, those it employs

directly. Policies are statements of principle that guide practice and encourage consistency. They have to relate to the company's strategies, so there are some important decisions that can only be made internally. These relate to organisational purpose and ethics.

Organisational culture

Organisational culture is commonly known as 'the way we do things round here'. It is the unwritten rules that members of a group accept and work to. It is made up of beliefs and assumptions about the organisation's purposes and future direction; shared values – aesthetic judgments, acceptable behaviour and quality standards; and norms – behaviours such as time-keeping, communication systems, the ways people interact, dress code and safety practices. Cultures develop gradually as actions are taken and found to be useful or unhelpful so repeated or ditched. Does a weekly catch-up meeting ease good communication, or does it waste time? Each group will come to their own conclusions and so a culture is born (Schein, 2004).

Of course, festivals do not exist in a vacuum, so cultures are influenced by external factors such as wider sector norms. Staff move between organisations and bring best practice with them. Or staff may go on training courses offered by professional bodies like the Theatrical Management Association (TMA) or Arts Management Association (AMA) or one of the festival producers associations. Similarly, service companies that work with a number of arts or festivals will expect a level of consistency in the ways that their clients work. It is important to have some understanding of how the culture operates as it will influence decision-making across the organisation and, particularly, whether people feel comfortable and happy working at the festival.

Motivation

How to keep staff motivated is a perennial management question. It might be thought that because festivals are exciting environments for festival-goers, that festival production is one long party. But it never is! There are lots of boring and unpleasant jobs to be done, whether it's inputting data from the customer survey, or litter picking (and sometimes worse). So, finding ways to ensure workers stay on task is vital.

Ideas about motivation can be split into two camps. There are those that argue everyone is inherently lazy and need external motivators such as pay or threats of punishment to make them work hard. These are *extrinsic* motivation theories. *Intrinsic* theories believe that generally people will work hard at things they enjoy or to feel a sense of achievement. The two approaches lead to very different ideas about how people should be managed to get the