

9

Stakeholder engagement and leadership

Learning objectives

On completion of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Understand the roles played by the broad range of internal and external stakeholders that exist in an events context
- Discuss issues associated with power and influence and explain the key sources
- Appreciate the value of a systematic approach to stakeholder analysis
- Provide an overview of the various approaches to engaging, communicating, liaising, and negotiating with event stakeholders
- Recognise the importance of networking and explain the associated skills and techniques
- Discuss the skills and techniques required for the development of sustainable, ongoing stakeholder relationships
- Understand the benefits of leveraging stakeholder relationships via co-branding activities.

An essential element of an event manager's job involves the development of sustainable working relationships with a broad range of stakeholders. Event stakeholders include all of the organisations and individuals who have an interest in the staging of an event and may have some impact on event outcomes. These stakeholders may be internal or external to the event business and while the importance and influence of stakeholders varies

significantly, it is essential for event managers to have a sound knowledge of their interests, needs, and potential impact. So too is the capacity of event managers to effectively, engage, communicate, and negotiate with all key stakeholders.



Which internal and external stakeholders do you believe have the greatest potential impact on event outcomes?

Internal stakeholders

The event business itself and the event managers are the first and most obvious internal stakeholders. Other internal stakeholders include:

- Employees of the event business. They may be employed on a full-time, part-time, or casual basis.
- Volunteers that regularly take part in the broad range of volunteer tasks for one or more of the events that are staged by the event business.
- Contractors and consultants that are engaged on a regular or semi-regular basis to carry out specialist tasks for the event business.

These internal stakeholders are essential to the planning, design and staging of events and have a major impact on event outcomes. While employees, contractors and consultants are paid for their services, volunteers generally become involved as a result of a passion for, or interest in, the type of event being staged.

External stakeholders

External stakeholders are outside the event business but still have an impact on outcomes and an interest in the staging of the event. They include:

- Sponsors who provide cash or other resources that support the staging of events. The level of sponsorship varies, as does the profile or other benefits that are provided by the event business to the sponsor in return.
- The media, stakeholders that may have a positive or negative impact on the running of an event and so must be given a relatively high priority.
- Event attendees or the customers of the event business that pay for the experience that they gain from attending the event. They include:
 - The spectators at a sporting event
 - The audience at a music or entertainment event
 - The guests at a business event.
- The event product which includes:
 - The athletes or competitors at a sporting event

- The artists or performers at a music or entertainment event
- The speakers or presenters at a business event.
- The host community, which includes the residents in the immediate area surrounding the venue and the businesses that operate in that location. Their impact may be positive or negative but their views, needs and desires need to be taken into account.
- Event suppliers that specialise in the provision of event-related equipment, supplies, and technology.
- Venue providers, both in-door and outdoor.
- Government departments and agencies at all levels, local, state and federal.
- Emergency services: police, fire, ambulance, SES.
- Transport providers.
- Competing events, which generally have a potentially negative impact.
- And even the general public needs to be considered.

The potential impact of the abovementioned external stakeholders varies considerably. However, event managers need to be cognisant of that potential impact, as well as their needs and interests, and respond accordingly. Key factors that need to be considered are:

- The type of stakeholder
- Stakeholder expectations, particularly with regard to their need for event-related information and ongoing communication.
- Existing and emerging relationships between various stakeholders.
- The level of influence that stakeholders have, both in terms of direct influence over the event or event business, and in terms of influence over other stakeholders.
 - Or conversely, their level of dependence.
- Cultural issues, particularly when operating in an international context.
- The capacity to engage with particular stakeholders, and any associated barriers or limitations.
- The legitimacy of particular stakeholders.
- Their knowledge and understanding of event-related issues.

All of these factors may impact on the priority that is given to various event stakeholders, as well as the manner in which they are engaged and managed. The capacity to effectively engage with stakeholders will also be determined by issues associated with power and influence.



Which external stakeholders would you give the highest priority? Why?

Leadership and power

Leadership is required from event managers in terms of leading and managing employees and volunteers, but also in terms of influencing the other internal and external stakeholders that were identified earlier.

In an events context, key leadership roles include:

- The maintenance of high levels of energy, focus and motivation amongst employers, volunteers, and contractors. This generally involves:
 - Creating a vibrant, achievement-orientated work environment.
 - Maintaining a collaborative, team environment
 - Creating an environment that fosters continuous learning and personal development
 - Demonstrating high levels of energy and passion
 - Communicating a clear and inspiring vision for the future.
- Recognising, appreciating, and rewarding effort, particularly the effort and creativity that stimulates organisational performance and ultimately, enhances event outcomes. It involves:
 - Providing timely and positive feedback
 - Demonstrating trust through delegation of tasks and responsibility
 - Providing public recognition for outstanding performance.
- Being decisive and making sound, sometimes bold, decisions. Key determinants of effective decision making include:
 - Recognising and minimising decision biases
 - Coping with low probability events where there is little if any guidance from previous decisions
 - Understanding risk, how to assess it, respond to it, and communicate its significance to others
 - Gaining support and commitment for implementation.

The ability to carry out these leadership roles generally requires the power and ability to influence others. This capacity for leadership and influence is greater when a manager can effectively draw upon several power bases.



In a leadership role, what are the key benefits of being decisive? Can you think of any potential problems associated with an over-emphasis on decisiveness?