

Events Mismanagement: Learning from failure

Edited by

Tim Brown, Phil Higson and Lindsey Gaston

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Preface

The book has evolved from our own collective reflections on teaching future event professionals, and our constructive attitude to making mistakes and learning from these. Our inspiration for this approach stems from two oft cited quotes. First, that of Thomas Edison who noted that “*there is great value in disaster*”, which illustrates the importance of positivity and opportunity-seeking, after a fire destroyed much of his life’s work. Second, Henry Ford’s position that “*the only real mistake is the one from which we learn nothing*”, which highlights the critical importance of not just being positive, but of learning from mistakes. This offers a useful counterbalance to any over-reliance on best practice exemplars. After all, it could be argued that learning from mistakes is the most fundamental type of learning we have all used, as we grow and develop. Therefore, this book aims to embrace this core ideology of ‘learning from failure’, and positions itself as being concerned with *Events Mismanagement*, as opposed to *Events Management* (of which there is an abundance of excellent books, articles, and papers).

With an estimated economic value of over £70 billion in the UK, and hundreds of \$billions worldwide annually, the stakes are incredibly high for the event industry, and thus for event professionals to deliver high quality events. This is coupled with ever increasing consumer expectations, as event attendees’ demand quality experiences and value for money. Events professionals are therefore under intense pressure to continually exceed these expectations. Under this pressure, and with growing demand for more innovative events, failings can occur. Whilst many of these failings will be relatively minor in nature, far too many end catastrophically, often due to poor planning, lack of coordination or human failure. This book aims to help event professionals (both current and aspiring) to understand why this happens, and to reduce the likelihood of failure in the future.

Events Mismanagement is a unique text which examines events from a very different perspective – that of how and why events fail, and what we can learn from this, whether as academics or as practitioners. Currently there is limited scholarship regarding the mismanagement of events, as the overwhelming extent of the literature focuses on the creation, design, planning, managing and evaluation of events. So, this book is designed to build knowledge, enhance management learning, and develop practitioner expertise. It does so through detailed discussions of case studies on event failures.

Whilst the event industry has evolved rapidly in the last 30 years, with a subsequent growth of education and professionalism, event failings and mismanagement still occur. Case studies of event failures are often cited in the press, and we regularly witness headlines concerning ‘festival failures’, ‘concert catastrophes’ and ‘woeful winter wonder-lands’. These serve to implicate the industry as whole, irrespective of the fact that millions of events take place every

year without any serious hitches. Nonetheless, such high-profile event failures represent a significant learning opportunity for event professionals, academics, and students. Indeed, there is just as much to be learnt from systematic appraisals of the mismanagement of events, as there is from a traditional examination of the event management process. With that in mind, this book particularly considers:

- Why events fail
- What we can learn from failure
- How we can improve practice through learning about event failure
- How events can be safer
- How to reduce the chance of events failing.

This book has been written for events industry practitioners, and for lecturers and students on events management, hospitality, leisure management or tourism management courses. Each chapter is designed to explore different aspects of how and why events fail, and what we can learn from these failures. The case studies represent a broad international mix, including examples from the United Kingdom, USA, Belgium, China, Malaysia, and Australia.

We have ordered the chapters in broad relation to the Events Management Body of Knowledge (EMBOK) 'Knowledge Domains': Administration; Design; Marketing; Operations; and Risk.

- **Administration** – incorporating financial management, people (HR), information and communications, procurement and resources, and stakeholders.
- **Design** – encompassing the theme, style and typology of the event, programming, and production management.
- **Marketing** – involving the marketing plan and channels, branding and image, public relations, sales, and sponsorship.
- **Operations** – concerning the venue or event site, event logistics and infrastructure, technical management, and attendee management.
- **Risk** – comprising risk management, legal and regulatory requirements, health and safety, crisis, and emergency management.

Each chapter provides a detailed explanation of a selected event failure case study, which is aligned to one or more of the domains. It then identifies what can be learned from the case study and suggests how this learning can be applied, in order to better manage future events. This structure offers a framework which can help academics and students relate the case studies to recognised event planning stages. This approach should be useful to event practitioners seeking insights into problems they may be facing at specific stages of the planning process.

The first chapter, *Learning from Events Mismanagement*, examines the literature surrounding how managers learn from business mistakes as part of their development. It also offers insights into the importance of how organizations develop mistake analysis processes, grounded in a no-blame, learning culture. This sets the scene for the ten-case study orientated chapters which follow.

Chapters 2 and 3 fit under the EMBOK 'Administration' domain, as both focus on the engagement of stakeholders which is critical to event delivery.

- Chapter 2, *Stakeholder Mismanagement: Learning from failure at two major music festivals*, provides insights from The Big Church Day Out and Shakedown events, exploring these case studies to identify key themes and best practice in stakeholder management for event professionals.
- Chapter 3, *Managing Event Stakeholders: Expect the unexpected*, explores two different examples of event stakeholder management from the service provider's perspective, in order to consider how poor client relationships can lead to event management failure.

Chapters 4 and 5 are aligned to the EMBOK 'Design' domain, as both focus on the overall event design, programme and planning.

- Chapter 4, *Adding Fuel to the 'Fyre': leaving it late at Vestiville*, examines the Belgian event's failure to explore issues around event planning, project management, and communications, to critically evaluate the reasons for the festival's failure and last-minute cancellation, thus providing valuable learning points.
- Chapter 5, *Safety in Numbers: the challenges of managing free-to-attend events*, investigates the under-researched free-to-attend events context, and the significant challenges these pose for event organizers and their host communities. The chapter explores the lessons learnt from two large scale community events in the UK.

Chapters 6 and 7 are associated with the EMBOK 'Marketing' domain, as both focus on event marketing, sales and sponsorship.

- Chapter 6, *VIP Hospitality Packages: Style over substance?*, examines the role of the event professional in setting and managing event expectations through its communications and marketing, and its significance in terms of managing potential service and event failure. High profile event failures, such as Fyre Festival, are examined in the context of these expectations.
- Chapter 7, *Don't Believe the Hype: Concepts, causes, and effects of event mis-marketing*, investigates how and why event marketing efforts fail due to over-promising but under-delivering, and the negative impact this can have on the event's brand, on stakeholders associated with the event, and on the events industry more widely.

Chapters 8 and 9 are aligned to the EMBOK 'Operations' domain, as both explore the event site, infrastructure, and attendee management.

- Chapter 8, *What a Waste! Stakeholder engagement and sports event waste management: An analysis on operational efficiency*, explores the SEA Games 2017 in Malaysia as a critical case study that failed to develop appropriate plans and infrastructure for successful event delivery.

- Chapter 9, *The Hope and Glory Festival: A festival of failure*, studies the infamous Hope and Glory Festival and its late cancellation due to poor planning and management, and lack of appropriate event infrastructure, hampered by an indifferent festival director.

Chapters 10 and 11 are linked to the EMBOK 'Risk' domain, as both focus on the risk management and health and safety aspects of delivering events effectively and safely for all stakeholders.

- Chapter 10, *Mishap in Macao: Unexpected accidents at motorsport events*, highlights the pivotal role that risk management plays in mitigating potential failures in events. It examines the Macau Grand Prix (China) case study, in the context of risk management and communications failings at a major event.
- Chapter 11, *Running the Risk: Examining the risk management practices surrounding the ill-fated 2011 Kimberley Ultramarathon*, explores the theoretical concepts pertaining to risk management within events development, and examines these in relation to the staging of the 2011 Kimberley Ultramarathon in Australia.

Through exploring and examining these event failure case studies, in the context of EMBOK domains, we hope that those engaged with events will appreciate the value in learning from failure, in order to better enhance practice.

Tim Brown, Phil Higson, Lindsey Gaston

Who is this book for?

- Event professionals who are keen to develop best practice and learn from how and why events fail.
- Students of event management who are preparing for a career in events or related industries.
- Local, regional, or national government departments involved in developing and managing events.
- Trainers, teachers, and lecturers in the field of events management.
- Academics and researchers exploring the theoretical underpinning of best and poor practice in events, tourism, and hospitality.
- Readers interested in the application of theory to their everyday world.

Editors and contributors

Editors

Dr Tim Brown is Programme Leader for Events Management at Chester Business School and since 2009 has taught subjects ranging from events operations, logistics of events, and event fundraising. Tim is also the Senior University Teaching Fellow for Chester Business School.

Tim has over 15 years of experience working in the events industry and continues to consult and oversee major events. During Tim's time in the industry, he has delivered hundreds of events regionally, nationally, and internationally. The events he has been involved with range from large-scale conferences, dinners, and award ceremonies to hospitality and charitable events. Some of the biggest events he has delivered include high-profile projects such as the hospitality for the Opening of Capital of Culture, Boodles Nations Cup Tennis, Annual Tourism Awards, MIPIM in Cannes, and the corporate hospitality for 1,500 people at the Paul McCartney 'Liverpool Sound' Concert.

Tim completed his PhD in 2018 and his research focused on charity fundraising events. His research areas include: event planning; event marketing and promotion; charity fundraising events; event evaluation; event budgeting; event safety; event creativity; and virtual events.

Phil Higson is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and former Head of Tourism and Events Management at Chester Business School. He has authored numerous publications on leadership and management, including *Uncommon Leadership: How to Build Competitive Advantage by Thinking Differently*. Phil has over 40 years experience as a manager, university lecturer, course developer, external examiner, consultant and writer. Recently retired from teaching tourism and events management at Liverpool John Moores University, Phil has worked in several UK universities and consulted or taught in: France, Russia, Hong Kong, Germany, the Netherlands, Myanmar and Malaysia. At present he is finalising his PhD thesis on multiple approaches to management learning.

Dr Lindsey Gaston is a sociologist and Senior Lecturer of Events Management at Liverpool John Moores University. His research focus embraces gender, sexuality, inclusion and sport. He received his PhD in Social Science and Health from Durham University. Lindsey also holds two Bachelor Degrees in Sociology and Religion from the University of Kansas and a combined Master's Degree in Sociology and American History from Baker University.

Contributors

Dr Ubaldino Sequeira Couto is a researcher in festivals and events based at the Macao Institute for Tourism Studies, China. He read his PhD in festivals and events at Leeds Beckett University in the UK. Ubaldino's research is mainly related to social issues in festivals and events. Ubaldino has also a keen interest in diaspora festivals and sports events.

Dr Laura Dixon is a social anthropologist and the Programme Leader of Events Management at Liverpool John Moores University. Her publications to date focus on recognition, cosmopolitanism, gender and sexuality amongst elite British 'lifestyle migrants' in the tourist town of Sitges, in Spain. She is currently working on exploring ideas of spatialisation and temporality in relation to Britons who have recently returned from Spain to the UK.

Claire Drakeley is Programme Leader for the BA(Hons) Events Management courses at the University of Northampton. Prior to joining the University Claire was Head of Enterprises & Events for English National Ballet. In 2013, Claire founded Mackerel Sky Events, a creative events agency based in the Southwest, delivering a vast range of event projects including Agile on the Beach, City of Lights and Bloodhound SSC.

Outside of academia, Claire is co-owner of professional ice hockey team, MK Lightning, leading a team of over 100 off-ice volunteers as well as the on-ice players. She also developed and now shares the practice of 80% Awesome, applying Agile principles to real life to find some calm in the chaos!

Claire holds a BSc (Hons) Mathematics and an MBA and is working on several research projects around Agile event management practice and applied game theory, including her PhD exploring high pressure decision making within event production.

Leila-Jane Edwards is an Events Management Lecturer on the undergraduate BA (Hons) Events Management and postgraduate MSc Global Meetings and Events Management programmes at University College Birmingham. She has a BSc (Hons) in Hotel and Tourism Management from Sheffield Hallam University, a Postgraduate Certificate and MA in Learning and Teaching in Vocational Subjects from the University of Birmingham. Leila has previously worked for Walt Disney World, Disney Cruise Line and Severn Trent Water. Her research interests include online technologies, event tourism and crisis management. She is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

Jonathan Fry is a Lecturer in Business and Management at Aberystwyth University where his main role is to deliver and co-ordinate the Welsh medium provision in the Business School. Originally from Cardiff, Jonathan is an alumnus of Cardiff Metropolitan University, graduating with a BA (Hons) Events Management, PgC Applied Social Research, MPhil and PGCE PcET. In 2012, Jonathan launched his

event evaluation business, Event Rater Ltd. The company won the 'Best Digital' award at the Lloyds Bank Enterprise Awards 2014 (Wales and South West England Heat).

Away from academia Jonathan's main interests include following Wales' national rugby team, Cardiff Rugby as well as attending stand-up comedy events and festivals. Jonathan is currently Managing Editor for the *International Journal of Hospitality and Event Management* (IJHEM).

Joo-Ee Gan is the Director of Undergraduate Studies at the School of Business, Monash University Malaysia. Her research is socio-legal in nature. Focusing on employment in the hotel sector and sustainable practices in the hotel and tourism industry, her studies evaluate the impact of legal measures. Her research on governance examines tourism and events as vehicles for protecting the environment and advancing the socio-economic well-being of local communities. Prior to joining academia, Joo-Ee was a solicitor specializing in corporate matters, and a legal editor of the *Hong Kong Law Report & Digests*. She is an accredited mediator of the Malaysian Bar Council and is on the Panel of the Malaysian Mediation Centre.

Steve Jones has been a highly active practitioner in the event management industry since 2008, when he began work on his first music festival, Shakedown. Growing to a capacity of 20,000 people, the festival became the largest in East Sussex and ran for 5 years. He has also led on marketing campaigns for both Boundary festival and Brighton Pride.

Steve is the Course Leader of Event Management (BA Hons) at BIMM in Brighton, where he started lecturing in 2014, specialising in event logistics and services, festival management, and digital marketing. Steve is also the Managing Director of a nightclub and a bar called Revenge, which have been the largest LGBTQ+ venues on the South Coast for over 30 years. In recent years, he has had academic research published that focuses on safe spaces and mental wellbeing in LGBTQ+ event spaces.

Tim Kerr spent two decades working in senior management roles spanning customer service, operational and logistics functions across multiple sectors including aviation and shipping. His first forays into the events space were in the early Noughties and took the form of logistics and services delivery for community-based music festivals. In 2009, he teamed up with friends from the Christian music scene to develop the Big Church Day Out. Billed as the Christian Glastonbury, the event has grown from a one-day music showcase into a four-day cultural, musical, and spiritual celebration that is the largest of its kind in Western Europe. Today, Tim's consultancy business provides events management, market research and communications services to globally renowned publishing brands. He has ghost written books for Olympic Gold Medallists and journalism articles for professional footballers. He spent eight years lecturing on the Event Management degree at BIMM Brighton, specialising in event concept and design and research methods.

Dr. Clare Lade is an experienced lecturer and researcher in the tourism, hospitality, and events discipline. With over 20 years of experience in academic research and university teaching, her research interests include regional and international destination development, dark tourism, gastronomic tourism, and event management. She has presented as an expert in these areas at academic conferences within Australia and internationally and has maintained her connection with industry, leading tourism research projects and industry workshops in conjunction with local, regional, and state tourism organisations. Clare has taught at both an undergraduate and postgraduate level at leading tertiary institutions in Australia and Singapore and is skilled in face-to-face, blended/flipped, WIL, and remote learning techniques and technologies. Clare currently holds a lecturing position at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia.

Dr Weng Si (Clara) Lei is an Assistant Professor at the Macao Institute for Tourism Studies, China. She received her PhD in International Business from the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom. Prior stepping into academia, Clara worked in the industries for some years and took part mostly in marketing and event management.

Brian Low is an Adjunct Associate Professor, Monash University, Malaysia. He was previously on the faculty at Western Sydney University, Australia. He is an editorial board member the *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing* and *Industrial Marketing Management*. Brian's background includes significant hands-on business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-government (B2G) marketing management, marketing research and policy management experience.

Nikki McGavin is a Development Officer at Heritage and Culture Warwickshire, part of Warwickshire County Council. She was a Lecturer in Events Management at University College Birmingham from 2014 to 2021. She has a BMus (Hons) degree from the University of Huddersfield, a Master's degree in Music Composition from the University of Sussex and a Postgraduate Certificate of Learning and Teaching in Vocational Subjects with distinction from the University of Birmingham.

From 2004 - 2006 Nikki worked at the Barbican Centre, in London. She was Festival Manager, and later Executive Producer, of the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival (hcmf//) from 2006 to 2014. Nikki is Co-Director of Out Of The Machine, a global creative arts consultancy. Nikki is a guest lecturer at Bath Spa University and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

Dr Peter Vlachos's expertise focuses on the 'experience economy' and its impacts on urban development. His research examines how the live arts and entertainment industries, and the creative and leisure sectors more broadly, can influence place branding, labour mobility, and local and regional economic diversification. Peter began his academic career with degrees in Political Science from the University of Toronto. He worked in several federal and provincial government ministries in Canada, then in a variety of cultural organisations in Canada and the UK. He embarked on his teaching career at City University, London on the

MA in Cultural Policy and Management. He joined the University of Greenwich in 2007, where he established and led the new MA in Events Management. Peter is a member of the senior management team in the Department of Marketing, Events, and Tourism, where he holds lead responsibility for the department's transnational educational partnerships.

Dr Benjamin Wong Tziak Ze received his PhD in Food Chemistry from Monash University. He has great interest in environmental sustainability through exploring green technologies and materials to help minimize the impact on the environment. He started his green journey as a volunteer in the 29th Southeast Asian (SEA) Games in 2017, which was declared a green event to promote environmental awareness and sustainability. His subsequent research involves the exploration of sustainable source of proteins extracted from black soldier fly larvae for food applications and for the development of meat alternatives.