

# EVENT PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Principles, technology  
and innovation



MOHAMED SALAMA



# **Event Project Management: Principles, technology and innovation**

**Mohamed Salama**



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The Events Management Theory and Methods Series

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## **Introduction to the Events Management Theory and Methods Series**

Event management as a field of study and professional practice has its textbooks with plenty of models and advice, a body of knowledge (EMBOK), competency standards (MBECS) and professional associations with their codes of conduct. But to what extent is it truly an applied management field? In other words, where is the management theory in event management, how is it being used, and what are the practical applications?

Event tourism is a related field, one that is defined by the roles events play in tourism and economic development. The primary consideration has always been economic, although increasingly events and managed event portfolios meet more diverse goals for cities and countries. While the economic aspects have been well developed, especially economic impact assessment and forecasting, the application of management theory to event tourism has not received adequate attention.

In this book series we launch a process of examining the extent to which mainstream theory is being employed to develop event-specific theory, and to influence the practice of event management and event tourism. This is a very big task, as there are numerous possible theories, models and concepts, and virtually unlimited advice available on the management of firms, small and family businesses, government agencies and not-for-profits. Inevitably, we will have to be selective.

The starting point is theory. Scientific theory must both explain a phenomenon, and be able to predict what will happen. Experiments are the dominant form of classical theory development. But for management, predictive capabilities are usually lacking; it might be wiser to speak of theory in development, or theory fragments. It is often the process of theory development that marks research in management, including the testing of hypotheses and the formulation of propositions. Models, frameworks, concepts and sets of propositions are all part of this development.



The diagram illustrates this approach. All knowledge creation has potential application to management, as does theory from any discipline or field. The critical factor for this series is how the theory and related methods can be applied. In the core of this diagram are management and business theories which are the most directly pertinent, and they are often derived from foundation disciplines.

All the books in this series will be relatively short, and similarly structured. They are designed to be used by teachers who need theoretical foundations and case studies for their classes, by students in need of reference works, by professionals wanting increased understanding alongside practical methods, and by agencies or associations that want their members and stakeholders to have access to a library of valuable resources. The nature of the series is that as it grows, components can be assembled by request. That is, users can order a book or collection of chapters to exactly suit their needs.

All the books will introduce the theory, show how it is being used in the events sector through a literature review, incorporate examples and case studies written by researchers and/or practitioners, and contain methods that can be used effectively in the real world.

## Preface

In the era of digital transformation while the new map of the world is being defined by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, it imperative that the project managers review current systems and processes that were set out decades ago. Events are typically contemporary, thus should reflect the new trends in the global orientation and harness the vibrant development in technology. In this book, a new model for event project management is introduced to update current practice, based on three pillars: embracing the sustainable development goals; adopting the latest technology; and managing innovation. The Sustainable Event Management Model is rooted in the concept of sustainable project management and grounded in the Sustainable Project Management Model (Salama, 2018).

The first seven chapters cover in depth the core theories, knowledge areas and key models that the event manager needs to master for the efficient and effective delivery of events. Chapter 1 provides a holistic background about the event industry and event management theory. The discussion starts and ends by reference to the project management context, with emphasis on the sustainable project management school of thought. The following sections cascade from the general introduction to the event industry and the event management theory to the detail explication of the Sustainable Project management Model (SPMM); highlighting the challenges the sector needs to address transitioning towards sustainability. The chapter concludes with a brief introduction to the Sustainable Event Management Model that is the crown jewel of this book which is presented and discussed in depth in Chapter 9.

Chapter 2 looks at the sustainability in the context of event management, starting from scratch with the basic definitions then explaining the concepts of sustainability, sustainable events and sustainable event management and measurement. The chapter discusses the ISO International Standard, ISO 20121:2012, event sustainability management systems and provides an early critique that justifies the need for the Sustainable Event Management Model (SEMM).

Chapter 3 reviews the traditional project management (TPM) methodology, providing a detailed explanation of the tools and techniques, guided by the PMI methodology, while using examples to illustrate how the concepts can be applied in a practical context. Such tools and techniques include: scope management, stakeholder management, organisational breakdown structure (OBS), work breakdown structure (WBS), task responsibility

matrix (TRM), project scheduling, Gantt charts and networks, cost planning and control, earned value analysis (eva), quality management systems and project integration management. The chapter guides event managers towards developing an event project plan according to the TPM processes, tools and techniques.

Agile Project Management (APM) is discussed in Chapter 4 after a detailed presentation of how to develop a risk management system for events. The chapter compares the concepts of Agile versus Lean in the context of projects and attempts to answer the question whether Agile and Lean can reduce the probability and impact of risk in events.

Financial planning and control activities are crucial for the successful delivery of any event. Chapters 5 and 6 cover, in depth, the core concepts and essential tools that the event manager should understand and be able to apply in a practical context. Chapter 4 provides a holistic introduction then Chapter 5 explicates in depth the key concepts. Numerical examples are provided to illustrate the application of the presented tools and techniques.

Chapters 7 and 8 discuss soft skills with emphasis on people issues and leadership in the digital transformation era, while taking into consideration the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic that hit the event industry amongst other sectors. Chapter 7 looks at virtual teams' dynamics and challenges and wraps up with a dedicated section on wellbeing, social psychology of event culture and meaningful memories in the context of event management. Chapter 8 focuses on the event manager as leader; the digital leader as it should be, in the era of digital transformation. The chapter explains the concept of adaptive leadership, supported by the understanding of cultural intelligence in the context of event management.

Now after the aforementioned wide range of concepts, models and examples, get ready for the great leap! Buckle up....

The second half of the book starts at Chapter 9, which presents the Sustainable Event Management Model (SEMM). The model is rooted in the theoretical frameworks explicated in the first half, but takes the event manager a big step forward by providing an implementation process model that is explained in detail. The model comprises 14 dimensions that are applied to the three phases of the event: pre-event, during and post event. The process model provides event managers with step-by-step guidelines with clear inputs, tools and techniques on how to implement the 14 dimensions across the three phases of the event. The model embraces the principles of sustainability and the sustainable development goals, while maintaining the digital transformation perspective that is guided by inseparable twins of sustainable business model innovation and advanced technology.

Chapters 10, 11 and 12 aim to explicate the core concepts about the sustainable business models innovation, advance technology and digital transformation, respectively. In Chapter 10 the discussion is started by an introduction to the concept of sustainable business models following a brief presentation of the Business Model Canvas, in the context of managing innovation. Chapter 11 aims to introduce the event manager to an array of advanced technology applications that can be utilised when planning for and executing events. In Chapter 12, the concept of digital transformations is explained with some useful examples and a case study on how to use smart contracts on a blockchain platform for event. Event managers need to develop a clear understanding of those concepts in order to be able to implement the SEMM effectively. Thus, Chapters 10, 11 and 12 should be read using the SEMM lens.

Finally, the book is associated with a rich portfolio of online resources that include and are not limited to teaching slides, MCQ questions with answers, templates and figures for project management tools, solved numerical examples and a further detailed bibliography with an extended list of suggested readings.

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Dr. Salama is Director of Corporate Executive Relations at Edinburgh Business School and former Associate Head of the School of Management and Languages at Heriot-Watt University, Dubai. In addition, he has been the Academic Head of Strategy, Operations and Projects, the programme director for MSc programmes including the MSc in Managing Innovation, MSc in Business Strategy Leadership and Changes and MSc Strategic Project Management since 2006, and has supervised over 300 masters and PhD theses and authored or co-authored over 50 publications. His textbook on project management released in 2016 is the teaching textbook at Heriot-Watt, and his latest textbook *Principles of Sustainable Project Management*, released in October 2018, presents a new model for managing sustainable projects in the digital transformation era, with emphasis on the role of technology and particularly blockchain, as the most popular platform so far.

He is the academic chair of the Middle East Summit for Lean and Agile Project Management, an annual international conference that has been taking place in Dubai since 2016. Dr Salama is currently in his second term on the academic council and the quality and standards committee at Heriot-Watt. He has been a member of the Scientific Committee of the Association of Researchers in Construction Management in the UK since 2010. In addition, he is a visiting professor at Skema University, France and AAU, Amman, Jordan, and is a regular speaker in key events in the UK and UAE.

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