

# EVENT LEADERSHIP

Theory and methods for event  
management and tourism



**EMMA ABSON**

with contributions by  
**Miriam Firth and Jane Tattersall**



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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?

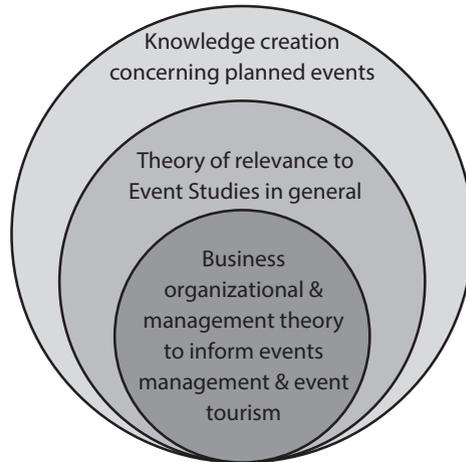
Event tourism is a related field, one that is defined by the roles events play in tourism and economic development. The primary consideration has always been economic, although increasingly events and managed event portfolios meet more diverse goals for cities and countries. While the economic aspects 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 following 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.

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## Preface

### Key objectives of the book

- Inform readers of leadership theory and practice for events and event tourism, including key concepts and definitions
- Discuss key leadership challenges for events and event tourism
- Examine the role of 'the leader' within event organisations
- Explore leadership in a range of event settings
- Develop professionalism for leadership in these fields
- Examine the role that event leadership plays in society
- Examine the role of events as catalysts for social and cultural change
- Recommend the relevant leadership behaviours and theories
- Connect readers to the relevant research literature.

A lack of research into human resource development, managerial skillsets and leadership practices of event managers has meant that there is very little understanding of the contribution that leadership makes to the management of experiences. The purpose of this book is to shine a light on leadership theory and explore how it relates to the unique context of planned events and event tourism. An understanding of leadership is essential for the development of successful event managers and for the delivery of successful event experiences – whilst some sectors of the leisure industry are run by large corporations, with well-established leadership structures in place, the event industry tends to be more transient, and often has temporary management structures which exist only for the duration of the event. In addition, the difference in leadership required for a small-scale local community event and that of a large-scale international event such as Glastonbury Festival is vast. This is the tension at the heart of leadership within events – event projects are intangible and temporary in nature and they provide only one opportunity to get it right. However, in order for event managers to be successful leaders, they also need to work in teams, motivating, empowering and developing team members. This is the challenge in planned events and makes them a unique context within which to study leadership.

This book explores the key questions of how those who work in events resolve the tension between the intangibility of event experiences, the planned nature of the events, and how event managers become successful leaders and lead successful event experiences. The purpose of this book is therefore to provide a concise introduction to leadership theory and methods for use in event management and event tourism.

### **How to use this book**

Each chapter begins with a set of learning objectives which describe the key focus of that chapter. Each of the learning objectives suggests one or more study or discussion questions, as the reader should be able to demonstrate the applicable knowledge drawn from the chapter. Further questions that could be integrated into study can be found at the end of the chapter, along with further reading suggestions – these are typically 3-5 additional texts which the authors believe will help to develop understanding of key topics further. Each chapter also has a ‘voice from the event industry’ at the end of it – these industry insights enable the reader to gain useful insights into how leadership works in the event industry. Lastly, each chapter has an introduction and summary which highlights the key areas discussed in the body of the chapter.

### **Acknowledgements**

This book would not have been made possible without the wonderful support of the two contributors Jane Tattersall and Miriam Firth. Their contributions and expertise (in Chapters 7 and 9) have added value and insight to this book, that was far beyond my own area of knowledge. I am also extremely grateful to those wonderful people from industry – Melissa, Scott, Carrie, Lils, Jason, David, Rose and Eamonn – who, despite the most challenging of years, still managed to find the time to pen thoughtful, insightful and illuminating insights that support each of the chapters. Without these insights from the event industry, the book would be less rich, and less useful to the readers.

I am also, of course, grateful to my colleagues and to my family for allowing me to carve out the time to write this book – in particular, to Andrew, who helped with the proof reading (so I can now blame any mistakes on him...!) Lastly, I am thankful to the staff at Goodfellow and to Professor Don Getz for all their support.

## Author biographies

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Emma is a Senior Lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University. She teaches across a number of postgraduate and undergraduate modules, as well as being an active researcher. Her research focuses on leadership in organisations and in teams, and her PhD focused on leadership in events. Emma has co-authored a leading textbook on Events Management, published a number of articles in academic journals and sits on the editorial board of the *Events Management Journal*. Prior to becoming an academic, Emma had a successful career in the events industry, most notably as a head of department leading on a wide range of business to business and corporate events.

### *Dr Miriam Firth*

Miriam is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Manchester, UK. Her research interests include vocational education and training, employability, intercultural training and management, and event leadership.

### *Jane Tattersall*

Jane is a Principal Lecturer and Subject Group Leader for the Events Management courses at Sheffield Hallam University, teaching across a range of modules, specialising in event design and delivery. Jane's research interest is in tacit knowledge management in music festivals and strategic event design. Prior to joining the University she had 20 years commercial and non profit events industry experience and still very much enjoys current roles at music festivals during summers, as on-site volunteer manager and community liaison manager.

