Event Leadership

Theory and methods for event management and tourism

Instructor's Manual

1: What is leadership?

How to use the book for teaching & learning

The content of the book can easily be adapted to facilitate learning from the content. Instructors using the book will have access to the following:

♦ *Learning objectives* - each of these suggests one or more study or discussion questions, as the reader should be able to demonstrate the applicable knowledge drawn from the chapter.

♦ *Short explanations of leadership theory* – these can be used to stimulate discussions or debates, as the basis of case study evaluations or to ask students to reflect on their own experiences of leadership.

♦ *Scenarios* – these can be used to prompt conversations, for analysis and for problem solving.

♦ *Further questions* that could be integrated into study are at the end of each chapter.

♦ *Further reading suggestions* are typically 3-5 additional texts which the authors believe will help to develop understanding of key topics further.

♦ '*Voice from the event industry*'– these industry insights enable the reader to gain useful insights into how leadership works in the event industry.

It is recommended that instructors use a blend of class discussions, debates, case study evaluation, real life scenario setting and student-led presentations in order to fully utilise the content of the book.

How to introduce the subject of event leadership to your students

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 then 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 to be successful leaders, they also need to work in teams, motivating, empowering and developing team members. This then 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.

Lecture 1

Chapter aims

☐ Introduce the historical development of leadership studies

☐ Understand the various definitions of leadership

☐ Critically discuss the difference between leadership and management

☐ Explore why leadership differs in events and event tourism to other areas of management

☐ Learn why leadership matters in professional practice

☐ Focus on leadership in action: how to get a job leading events - industry insight from Lils Collingwood, Albany Recruitment

1.1: Introduction

In this part of the lecture, introduce the students to why leadership matters in events. Use the following as a guide.

Nearly 100 years of leadership studies have resulted in a large body of literature that suggests that leadership matters in all aspects of life. Studies have also shown that soft skills, such as leadership, are key to continued success in complex, fast changing organisations, and in a variety of managerial contexts. The nature of leadership within organisations and the styles of leadership required for specific business management roles have frequently been studied and there is a broad consensus that leadership matters in a range of managerial positions including event project management, tourism and hospitality management, human resources and a variety of other senior organisational roles. Leadership practices are essential for the development of successful event managers and leadership in planned events and event tourism therefore cannot be ignored.

Very little research has been conducted into organisational management, human resource aspects and, in particular, leadership. This is a problematic gap in our knowledge and understanding of this economic and socially important sector, especially given that events are a service led industry, in which the human resource is the central element for success. As I pointed out in an earlier piece of research into leadership in events:

'Event managers believe that it is not the technical skills (such as financial planning, event design) that ensure successful event delivery but rather that it is the soft skills and the human resource that drive successful events .… in order to be successful leaders, they also need to work in teams, motivate and empower others, and develop team members.' (Abson, 2017).

The event / event tourism industry is interesting settings through which to consider leadership because of several managerial and organisational challenges that are viewed as being unique to this sector. These challenges arise from working within industries that are fast paced, diverse, highly competitive and change rapidly. In addition, the sector has a number of unique characteristics – summarised as the time-bound and peripatetic nature of events (short in duration and often one-off and often rotating around a number of locations); diverse in scale and emphasis; highly dependent on a range of teams and organisations to deliver the events and often on volunteers to run the events.

1.2: History of leadership studies

I recommend the second part of the lecture provides a brief history of leadership studies.

There have been several significant shifts in scholarly approaches to leadership – these shifts can be summarised as a move from focussing upon who the individual is (e.g. trait theories) to looking at what the individual does (e.g. behavioural theories) and the context they do it in (e.g. situational context theories) and the competencies needed to lead (the competency school of leadership). These approaches to understanding leadership all share the view that leadership is a specialised role – they focus on the individual and, whilst some of these theories looked at what other influences there may be (i.e. followers, or situational context), they do so through the lens of the primary leader, carrying out leadership functions. Recently however, this view of leadership has faced increasing criticism as scholars have begun to reject the idea that one person can have a significant impact on an entire organisation. Instead, scholars have begun to focus on the relational aspects of leadership, as scholars consider how interpersonal relationships inform leadership practice. In this school of leadership thought, scholars focus particularly on the influential aspects of leadership (e.g. charismatic leadership, transformational leadership and leader-member exchange theories).

Lastly, there is something of a 'new wave' emerging within leadership studies, which represents a diversification of thinking around how leadership occurs, and what leadership actually is. Badaracco (2001) describes this as a 'post-heroic' phase – and this represents a significant shift in leadership theory. For example, in recent years, a number of very public corporate scandals (such as Enron and Lehmann Brothers) have created an interest on ethical and moral behaviours of leaders. This has resulted in three emerging forms of 'positive' leadership studies – authentic leadership, ethical leadership and servant leadership, sometimes described as theories of the 'new hero'. These 'positive' forms of leadership focus on leader behaviours that are ethical, moral, professional and socially responsible, and suggest that the leader's interpersonal dynamics will increase the followers' confidence and motivate them to perform better than is expected. Authentic, ethical and servant leadership perspectives are conceptually closely related both to each other, and to the field of transformational leadership. However, these new theories have been further developed, with research now suggesting that now acknowledge that transformational leaders can also be unethical, abusive, or self-serving (think, if you like, of the 45th president of the United States here). Another set of emerging leadership theory can be described as collective leadership – in this, scholars consider that leadership is not just found in the role of the formal leader, but is also found in the interaction of team members to lead the team by sharing leadership responsibilities. There is then a growing body of research that convincingly argues that leadership is relational and multi-level, which involves leaders, followers, and the social influence processes of larger networks (e.g. shared or distributed leadership).

1.3: Defining leadership

In this part of the lecture, provide the students with an overview of the way leadership is described throughout literature.

Whilst most scholars agree that leadership matters, many suggest that there is a vagueness and uncertainly around what leadership is. There exists no agreement on a universal definition of leadership, and each school of thought offers their own views and specific definitions of what they mean by leadership. These can be summarised as

♦ Leadership is a trait or an ability – Chapter 2
♦ Leadership is a behaviour – Chapter 2 & 3
♦ Leadership is a relationship – Chapter 3 & 4
♦ Leadership is a skill or a competency – Chapter 6
♦ Leadership is an influence process – Chapter 3, 4 & 5

Now, using the definition in the text book, open up a discussion with the students on what they think leadership is.

The book adopts Yukl's (2010) definition of leadership – 'Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives' (p.8). This position acknowledges that trying to answer the question 'what is leadership?' is an impossible endeavour, as the answer is constantly revised as people interact with a variety of leaders and experience of leadership changes.

Simply put, leadership means something different to every person, and even their own interpretations will shift over time, or in different contexts. Instead, this book defines leadership in a broad sense, as an influence process that resides in relationships. That said, it is necessary to understand and be able to apply the full range of scholarly definitions of leadership – which is why this book includes sections on leadership traits, leadership behaviours and leadership competencies. How you decide to interpret what leadership means, and what good leadership is, will be up to you.

1.4: Leadership in the event industry

Discuss the lack of research into leadership within the event industry, and why that might be. Use the following to summarise what is known so far.

In order to run successful planned event and event tourism experiences in this changing and challenging environment, organisations need employees with a wide range of expertise, and skills that include technical, emotional, aesthetic, problem-solving and information-processing.

Planned events are a particularly interesting lens through which to further enhance our knowledge of leadership because they operate within these urgent, creative, complex working conditions. The very nature of planning and delivering experiences adds a range of different considerations that other industries do not face and those working in the event industry therefore require a certain way of working, that includes the need to be agile, to collaborate with a wide range of people and to share working practices across a range of teams, external and internal. The figure below gives us an understanding of what effective event leaders do:

Figure 1: What do Event Managers do? Getz & Page, 2020 (adapted from Abson, 2017)

The problem with research into leadership in events is threefold – firstly there is a limited quantity, and that that exists is lacking in variety; secondly it fails to sufficiently consider how interactions with co-workers, subordinates, others within the organisation and the wider network effects leadership processes and thirdly, there is not enough empirically informed work. We therefore know relatively little about who leads within event organisations and about how the specific context of planning events impacts on the leadership process.

Further activities for seminars / independent learning and / or assignments

Scenario evaluation

1. The event manager for a large, international festival has complete control of the project plan, delegates all the work to her large team herself and is the key point of contact for all the major stakeholders. She is taken seriously and suddenly ill two weeks before the event is due to take place. What happens to the festival when the person with all that essential knowledge is suddenly not available to run it?

    In this example, the risk is obvious – when only one person fully understands the operational processes of an event, then both the responsibility and the knowledge sits firmly with them. If that person becomes suddenly unavailable, then the whole event is at risk. Good leadership would solve this because good leadership involves the delegation of responsibility and the development of trust in your team to manage the necessary tasks. Good leaders spread leadership throughout their organisations, and throughout their teams – both to lessen the risk of jeopardising the event, and to motivate and empower their staff members. An empowered, motivated team means a happy team – and therefore a team that will deliver the best experience they can. Types of leadership that might support this empowerment are discussed in Chapters 3 & 4 and 5, and issues around knowledge are explored in Chapter 8.

2. An experiential event agency is working with a large corporation on its experiential marketing, but the client is very fussy and the lead contact is a very difficult person to deal with, disagreeing with everything the agency suggests. How does the agency lead a project in this environment?

   This example is more complex and leads us to ask questions about who leads and when. Is the client or the agency a leader in this scenario? The answer is that they should both lead at appropriate times, and both parties should be willing to accept leadership from the other. The client has specialist knowledge of their brand, product and customer. The agency has specialist knowledge of events and event experiences – if they both listen to each other and accept leadership from those with expertise, then the project will go well. However, in circumstances such as the one described here, how likely is it that the client contact will listen and accept that he might be making poor decisions? A different type of leadership is required, one in which the client feels in control and the agency is there to 'serve' – this is explored in chapter 4.

3. A human resource department has been asked to produce some leadership training for the recent event management graduate recruits. What kind of training would they need to develop? What skills might be useful for these new event leaders.

   The third scenario is perhaps the most complex of them all – how do you train people in leadership, when leadership must change all the time, depending on who and what you are leading. Currently, most training still boils down to leadership styles and leadership competencies. These are explored in chapter 6 - but the reader is encouraged to remember that leadership should be adaptable and how it is enacted should change depending on the situation in which it is taking place. In addition, remember that events are all about relationships. Understanding how to lead those relationships is not only a key skill needed for event managers, but will facilitate better event experiences. This is explored throughout this book.

4. An event organisation is owned and run by the entrepreneurial founder of the business. The business has done very well in the past, but the owner is very controlling, and insists each decision is run past him before it can be made. This slows down the team's ability to respond to clients queries and makes quick decision making and problem solving impossible. In addition, this man holds all the power and he has a very bad temper, so everyone in the organisation is scared of him, and can't challenge the status quo. What impact will this have on the team's ability to deliver events?

   This example suggests an autocratic leader – perhaps someone who considers himself to be a 'great man'. This type of leadership – explored in chapter 2 – is difficult to deal with, as the leader is sure they are always right, insists that people does as they says and rarely accepts advice from others. It is not always pleasant to work with people who exhibit this type of leadership. But that is not to say that there is no place for it – at certain points in an event cycle, when the risk is high and quick decision making is crucial, having a decisive and controlling person in charge can help to keep the event from collapsing in on itself. There is a time for all sorts of leadership - the best event leaders will adopt the right type of leadership at the right time.

5. A destination marketing organisation (DMO) is developing an event portfolio for a small city. The city has suffered from a very poor reputation in recent years, with high levels of crime and poverty. How can the DMO use the event portfolio to lead changes to the perception of the city?

> The last scenario challenges us to think about leadership from a different perspective – not as something someone does, or as a process that people can participate in. Instead, we are asking you here to consider events as thought leaders – the event experience itself can educate communities, it can modify behaviours and it can create long lasting memories. The power of events as influencers within society and their ability to act as catalysts for change should not be overlooked. In Chapters 8 & 9, we explore how event leadership is more than how to be a good leader – it is also about events that shape the future in politics, society and the economy.

Discussion prompt

Using the *Leadership in action: Industry insight from Lils Collingwood.*

♦   Ask your students to read Lils' thoughts on how to get a job in the event industry

♦   What are their views on her recommendations?

♦   Do they read industry magazines?

♦   How many events do they attend? Do they try to attend different types of events?

♦   Would they consider sharing their thoughts on a blog or via linkedin?

♦   Do they have any ideas of their own on how to get noticed in the industry?

Chapter study questions

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 this and subsequent chapters. Further questions that could be integrated into study might be:

1. Discuss the nature of professionalism within events and event tourism, with reference to leadership. Describe the knowledge and skills needed to be an event manager, and discuss how leadership fits within this.

2. Describe why leadership matters in planned events and event tourism. What makes these settings unique and how might that change the types of leadership required?

3. Discuss the difference between leadership and management.

4. How would you define leadership?

5. Develop your own definition of 'good' leadership. What does leadership mean to you?

6. Develop your own definition of 'bad' leadership. To help, think of the worst boss you have ever had – why do you think they were such bad leaders?

Assignment suggestions

In addition to the questions suggested above, the instructor can use the following questions as essay questions, or as presentation assignments.

◆   Discuss the difference between leadership and management

◆   What skills will the future event workforce need, and why?

◆   Does leadership matter in planned events and event tourism?

◆   Discuss the key criticisms of leadership studies.

Further reading

Use the following texts to explore the topics in this chapter further, and to prompt independent study.

Bladen, C. Kennell, J., Abson, E. & Wilde, N. (2018) *Event Management: an introduction*, London: Routledge.

EMBOK: Event Management Body of Knowledge (https://www.embok.org/index.php/embok-model).

Getz, D. & Page, S. (2020) *Event Studies* (4th edition) London: Routledge.

Kotterman, J. (2006) Leadership versus Management: What's the difference. *The Journal for Quality and Participation*, **29**(2), 13-17.

MBECS: Meetings & Business Events Competency Standards (https://mpi.org) .