Event Leadership

Theory and methods for event management and tourism

Instructor's Manual

6: Leadership as a skill

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 6

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Chapter aims

□ Introduces the concept of leadership as a skill

□ Explore Mumford's approach to leadership skills

□ Understand the difference between a skill and a competency

□ Critically examine competency theory

□ Understand the variety of competencies that have been identified as important to event leadership

□ Focus on leadership in action: the skills you need to be a successful event leader by David Strafford

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6.1: Introducing leadership skills

Use the following extracts to introduce the lecture content, which will focus on viewing leader-ship as a set of skills that can be 'performed'.

In both the event industry, and in scholarly research, leadership is often considered as a skill. This school of thought is closely related to the trait theories of leadership, as conceptually, it is hard to differentiate between the personality traits leaders possess and the skills that they demonstrate. What is the difference between the terms? Well, it is widely accepted that traits are innate, but skills can be learnt. So, skills differ from traits because they are considered to be seen to be something that can be developed – a practised ability. A skill is the ability to do a job well, particularly if you have practiced it. This school of thought therefore suggests that you might not be a "natural leader", but perhaps you can develop the necessary set of skills that will allow you to become a good one. As such, you can develop the capabilities required to lead.

This area of leadership study suggests that leadership depends on an 'interactive package of complex skills' Mumford, Zaccaro, Connelly, & Marks (2000) present a skills-based model of leadership performance, which suggests that the performance of a leader is based on three key types of skills:

1) Complex problem-solving skills

2) Solution construction skills

3) Social judgement skills

In other words, effective leaders must define problems, gather information, formulate ideas and construct a plan to solve a problem. They must then ensure that others are willing to work towards these solutions with them, which requires social skills such as persuasion, negotiation, judgement and decision-making. Mumford et al., also suggest that, in order to be an effective leader, individuals must also have a body of knowledge or expertise.

Discussion prompt – have the students ever thought about the skills needed to undertake leadership? What do they think they might be. You could also discuss the difference between skills and competencies:

The terms skills and competences are often used interchangeably, but they are not the same. A skill is a specific ability, normally related to certain tasks, whereas a competency tends to incorporate more than just a set of skills – if applied correctly, the term should also acknowledge knowledge, behaviours and traits or abilities. These competency-based theories of leadership therefore recognise that people can learn different sorts of leadership competencies in order to lead in different styles.

6.2: Introducing competency based leadership theory

Use the following to explain competency based leadership to the students.

Competencies are defined as skills, motives, traits, abilities or personal characteristics that lead to effective job performance in leadership or managerial occupations. These competencies can be technical, intellectual or emotional in nature.

♦   *Technical* – or *managerial* - competencies can be described as an understanding of, and proficiency in, a specific kind of activity.

♦   *Intellectual* competencies are the cognitive abilities of an individual – their IQ and their ability to use the knowledge or insight from their own intelligence.

♦   *Emotional* competencies are defined as the leader's emotional intelligence – your ability to define and manage your own emotions, and those of the people around you. Emotional intelligent people use the emotional information they gather to guide their own behaviours.

Those scholars researching competencies in leadership are therefore concerned with identifying the specific competencies within each of these three areas that contribute to the development of successful leaders.

Competency views of leadership can, in many ways, be seen as little more than an extension of the trait theories of leadership – scholars are still often only concerned with what skills the individual leader possesses and competency theories of leaderships often result in a list of skills that detail the knowledge that people need in order to successfully do their jobs. This focus on producing a list of skills for successful leadership is actually very useful for the event industry, as it gives those responsible for recruitment and training something specific to work towards. In recent years, the rapid change to the global environment have resulted in changes to the strategic focus of the event industry and one of the key issues is that of the fast turnover of staff, which creates both strategic and operational human resource management issues for event organisations. To meet these challenges, and to overcome the related challenges in recruitment and retention, much academic research in events, tourism and hospitality has focussed on relevant competencies and skill sets

6.3: Competencies in events

Introduces the students to both the EMBOK model and the MBECS.

EMBOK

A group of leading academics, including Glenn Bowdin, Matthew Gonzalez, Janet Landey, Kathy Nelson, Julia Rutherford Silvers, Joe Goldblatt and William O'Toole (EMBOK, 2017), introduced a conceptual framework of creating an Event Management Body of Knowledge (EMBOK) back in 2003. This framework has created a model that hopes to "facilitate the ability to map, define and align current event management standards consistent with the needs of a global event management environment" . The EMBOK model takes into account the skill set of the industry but is largely concerned with the identification of knowledge domains and the event planning process.

We are now, arguably, in a very different world to the one in which the EMBOK was originally developed. Despite this, and despite its conceptual nature, this piece of work is seen as an important tool by many leading authors. And it was produced by a group of the most established events academics, so it certainly has credence from an academic perspective. It provides an incredibly detailed conceptual framework of the knowledge needed in event management and event studies and it avoids the trap of reducing the role of event manager to a list of skills that the other standards fall into.

MBECS – the Meetings and Business Event Competency Standards

Originally developed by the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council and EMBOK partners in 2009, and adapted by the Meetings Professional International (MPI) and industry representatives in 2011, who turned them into a set of standard competencies specifically for meeting and business event professionals. The MBECS are intended to give the industry a benchmark to measure excellence in event management. They provide a comprehensive summary of the range of knowledge, skills and abilities required of those who work in careers planning and producing meetings and events.

The standards were written in collaboration with an international stakeholder group and key phases included research and analysis of documentation relating to event management, benchmarking of a variety of foreign and national qualifications and occupational standards and the creation and validation of the competency framework. This framework was validated through consultations and quantitative research to determine relevance, frequency and criticality ratings. The standards can be used to benefit a number of groups or individuals. For example, it is suggested that the standards are for:

♦ event managers to plan their professional development and recognise the range of skills they need

♦ employers who need to define job requirements and recruit and manage an events workforce

♦ education providers to benchmark their curriculum and explore areas of research.

Abson (2017) used Dulewicz and Higgs (2005) LDQ model in order to identify the key leadership practices for event managers working within the business events industry. The LDQ model is based on the competency school proposition that leadership requires emotional intelligence, managerial competence and intellectual competencies – it consists

of 15 leadership dimensions that can be used to explain the performance of managers in an organisational context. The findings from this study established that there are six key leadership practices that are essential for the development of successful event managers. These are presented below – note the mixture of technical, intelligent and emotional competencies.

Managerial competencies

Engaging communication

Engages others and wins their support through communication tailored for each audience. Is approachable and accessible.

Resource management

Organizes resources and coordinates them efficiently and effectively. Establishes clear objectives. Converts long-term goals into action plans.

Intellectual competencies

Strategic perspectives

Sees the wider issues and broader implications. Balances short- and long-term considerations and identifies opportunities and threats.

Critical analysis and judgement

Gathering relevant information from a wide range of sources, probing the facts, and identifying advantages and disadvantages. Sound judgements and decisions making, awareness of the impact of any assumptions made.

Emotional intelligence competencies

Emotional resilience

Capability for consistent performance in a range of situations. Retain focus on a course of action or need for results in the face of personal challenge or criticism.

Interpersonal sensitivity

Be aware of, and take account of, the needs and perceptions of others in arriving at decisions and proposing solutions to problems and challenges.

Table 1: Six key leadership practices for event managers (Abson, 2017) with descriptions from Dulewicz and Higg's LDQ (2005)

As is often the case, it is useful to look at tourism and hospitality studies in order to highlight the similarities in the research approaches found in the three inter-related fields. In the same way as we have seen in events, but in far greater volumes, much of the research into leadership within tourism and hospitality falls within the managerial competence framework – they evaluate skills and competencies based on perspectives of key stakeholders, such as industry, guests, educators and students. There have been numerous studies that attempt to explore competencies and leadership in hospitality – most of these focus on hotels, and at hospitality management in a particular cultural context. These studies have resulted in a considerable body of knowledge on the competencies required by managers in order to lead in the particular context of hospitality and, their findings suggest that the need for operational and technical skills has decreased at the same time that strategic and corporate skills have increased and that management style needs to incorporate leadership rather than just supervision.

6.4: Criticisms of the competency approach

The following extract should help you to form a persuasive argument about the weaknesses within the competency based theories. Use this as a talking point in your lecture – do the students think reducing leadership to a list of skills or competencies is useful?

There are many that therefore say that documents like the MBECS produce a reductive view of a complex job role, that is built around a task-orientated job analysis rather than the perhaps more rounded approach of a person-orientated job analysis that results in competencies expressed as personal skills, characteristics and behaviours.

This reduction of a job role to a list of skills may reflect the demand from industry for a list of competencies that define and drive performance but it fails to take into account the debates around the effectiveness of competency studies that have ensued since McClelland (1973) first suggested that competency could support the assessment of personnel. These debates centre the issues posed by reducing a body of knowledge to a list of skills that don't change with context or with the future of the organisation and that competency models are often either overwhelming in number or incredibly generic, looking very similar, even across different organisations and sectors.

6.5: Summary

Use the following chapter summary to explain the key points in your lecture.

The bewildering number of competencies required or lists of skills and personal qualities expected in order to be a leader in one particular job role makes the practical use of these lists almost impossible. In addition, they fail to take into account the way that people use these competencies or apply these skills, or the context within which they use them. As Petrie (2014, p. 10) summarised, 'For a long time we thought leadership development was working out what competencies a leader should possess and then helping individual managers to develop them – much as a bodybuilder tries to develop different muscle groups'. But the competency model began to seem out-dated when understanding of the variety of ways people can develop grew and as scholars began to move away from the notion that leadership is all about what one person does, knows or behaves. What this body of work does tell us, however, is that we have a pretty good understanding of what people need to do in order to be a 'good' event manager.

Further activities for seminars / independent learning and / or assignments

♦ Create a presentation that demonstrates the difference between skills and competencies

♦ On post-it notes, brainstorm all the leadership competencies you think might be needed to do the job of event manager. Compare your list with the MBECs

♦ In teams, disseminate the information in the MBECS to the rest of the seminar group. Can you summarise what competencies and skills are needed?

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. Explain why a list of competencies for event managers might be useful for each of the following groups:

   ◆   Event professionals

   ◆   Students

   ◆   Event academics

   ◆   Human resource directors

   ◆   Training managers

2. Many argue that a list of competencies for event managers is reductive and therefore problematic. Why do you think this is?

3. Find a copy of the MBECS – do you think there is anything missing from the list?

4. What is the difference between a managerial, intellectual and emotional competency?

5. Looking at the list of leadership competencies identified as important by Abson (2017), identify which ones you think you already have and which ones you need to develop. How will you go about developing these competencies?

Assignment suggestions

In addition to the study questions listed above, instructors could use the questions listed as essay questions, or as presentation assignments.

◆   Reflect on how the MBECs could be used in the industry. How could they be useful?

◆   Discuss the EMBOK model – is it still relevant?

◆   Describe and evaluate the findings by Abson (2017). Could the competencies identified here be useful in other parts of the event industry?

Further reading

Use the following texts as guidance for further, independent, study.

Abson, E. (2017). How event managers lead: applying competency school theory to event management. *Event Management*, **21**(4), 403-419.

Cecil, A., Fenich, G.G., Krugman, C. & Hashimoto (2013) Review and analysis of the new international meeting and business events competency standards. *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism*, **14**(1), 65-74.

Koenigsfeld, J. P., Perdue, J., Youn, H. & Woods, R., H. (2011). The changing face of competencies for club managers. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, **23**(7), 902-922. doi:10.1108/09596111111167524