

# **Human Resource Management for the Event Industry**

**Lynn Van Der Wagen and  
Lauren White**



Events Management

# Human Resource Management for the Event Industry

Second edition

Lynn Van Der Wagen  
and Lauren White

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# Human Resource Management for the Event Industry

*Human Resource Management for the Event Industry* still remains the only text to introduce students to the unique application of HR principles in the context of a highly complex event environment. Linking theory, research and application it looks at the purpose and processes of managing such a sizable and varied workforce in a highly pressured environment through the differing and various types of events from sporting to arts to business events.

Since the first edition, there have been many important developments in the field, and this second edition has been completely revised and updated in the following ways:

- Extensively updated content to reflect recent issues and trends including: labour markets and industry structure, impacts of IT and social media, risk management, volunteer motivation, talent management, equal opportunities, and managing diversity; all explored specifically within the event industry.
- An extended volunteer chapter, including new material on ethics, volunteer motivation and satisfaction.
- A new chapter on internal communications looks at how an effective internal communication plan can be achieved, which is a critical part of HR strategy in the unique event environment.
- Updated and new international case studies throughout to explore key issues and show real life applications of HRM in the event industry.
- New Industry Voice case studies by HR professional Kerrie Nash, sharing her expertise and experience in the field.
- Supported with new lecturer and student online resources including: PowerPoint slides, suggested answers to review questions, and web and video links to additional resources.

Written in a user friendly style, each chapter includes international examples, bulleted lists and exercises to test knowledge.

**Lynn Van Der Wagen** is Head of Tourism and Events Management at the Northern Beaches College, Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE. She is the author of many highly acclaimed books on tourism and hospitality, among them *Hospitality Management and Event Management: For tourism, cultural, business and sporting events*.

**Lauren White** is a public relations and communications professional employed by a leading global law firm. She wrote the new chapter on the role communications strategies play in integrating the workforce (stakeholders, staff, contractors and volunteers) and provided input across all other chapters.

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# Preface



The second edition of *Human Resource Management for Events* has been enhanced by the contributions of Kerrie Nash who is arguably the most experienced HR professional in the world of mega events. She has over 20 years experience in establishing and managing HR/training operations in the following roles:

- Director of Games Services, Glasgow
- Head of Workforce, London Organizing Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games
- Head of Spectator Services, Doha Asian Games Organizing Committee
- General Manager, Event Services, Special Olympics World Summer Games
- Programme Manager, Spectator Services, Manchester Commonwealth Games
- Head of Workforce Strategy and Integration, Manchester Commonwealth Games
- Programme Manager, Human Resources and Workforce Training, Sydney Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Kerrie Nash has shared her expertise across all areas covered by the text and her quotes from the field enhance every chapter. It is not often that an author is able to access the depths of knowledge of such a highly qualified industry practitioner; and the book is enhanced by her valuable contributions.

This edition has been updated with a new chapter on internal communications which is a crucial part of the HR strategy. Effective internal communications plays an important part in workforce engagement, and this should encompass the whole workforce, contractors as well as paid staff and volunteers.

From an academic viewpoint, recent research has been incorporated and discussed in the text, including the various studies on volunteer motivation and retention. It is hoped however, that this edition raises awareness of the wider scope of human resource management for events, with particular attention paid to the contractors and partners and their role in delivering the final event product. The crisis over G4S's Olympic security preparations in London which led to police and the military stepping in to fill the void left

by the private security contractor is a case in point. Failure to meet last minute recruitment and accreditation targets meant that the G4S was unable to meet contractual obligations in this high-risk area. Legal and industrial relations issues, labour market conditions, logistics and risk management are all the remit of the HR professional.

Environmental targets are important aspects of most event bid processes and even the smallest community committee pays attention to environmental sustainability. However, social impacts of events are seldom afforded the same attention and it is here that there is scope for change in the event industry. The bid for the 2004 Olympics by Cape Town, South Africa, represented the first bid from Africa, and the focus of this bid was on urban and human development. Affirmative action principles were to be applied to employment and skills development in this unsuccessful bid. Today smaller events in South Africa are used for the sole purpose of building entrepreneurial skills. For example, Skills Village 2030 is a practical framework for workplace experience that utilizes festivals and events for social inclusion, cohesion and integration.

Brazil has been in the spotlight for mega events, and their government's endorsement of affirmative action in 2001, combined with more recent attention being paid to social issues may lead to an increased focus on the social impacts of these mega events, not only outside the organization, in areas such as sports participation, but also inside the organization, in the areas of recruitment and training. This requires a genuine commitment to diversity principles and selection of employment programmes with clearly defined social objectives.

It is hoped that this text will enable event managers to shift their attention from infrastructure and operational procedures to the important area of human resource management. People deliver an event and a highly professional standard of event service should become the norm. This is particularly important in the business events sector where there is considerable international competition.

People make events successful, and there are so many of them behind the scenes. There are ticket sellers, purchasing officers, technical assistants, media monitors, cleaners, cooks, accreditation experts, security officers, risk managers, creative designers, announcers, singers and sweepers. Mostly their skills are brought together for a very short time. There is no more challenging environment for human resource management than the event business.

Events celebrate our best moments: winning the World Cup, coming first in an Olympic 100 metre swim, watching children performing, receiving an award, holding a twenty-first birthday party, or a ninetieth for that matter. Small or large, events commemorate our most important moments, and they are significant in our lives and in our cultures. Because there is so much planning and organizing to be done – because the risks are high – event professionals are needed.

There are many books on event planning, on crowd management and on economic impact analysis. But to date, there has not been a book on human resource management for the event industry. The challenge for me was irresistible. I had a background in human resource management as a training manager and director of human resources for a five star hotel. This was early in my career, and I thought the hospitality industry was the



most exciting one there was. This was until I worked for the Sydney Olympic Games and discovered the world of events. It was not a soft entry into the business; it was conflict ridden and stressful. But, hey, it was exciting. And as every event manager will agree, all the angst is worth it when the event is a success. So with the rosy afterglow of a flawless mega event, I continued to teach in this area and became increasingly enchanted with the event business, later becoming involved in the Beijing Olympic Games and the Shanghai World Expo, an event that surpassed all targets with an attendance of 73 million visitors. And of course who could miss the enchantment of the London Olympic Games?

This book is for anyone managing people at a festival, carnival, exhibition, show, competition, race, display, match, concert or convention. The work needs to be analysed and allocated, contracts prepared and signed, people hired, procedures developed, staff trained, uniformed and fed. Things change constantly; the structure (physical and organizational) is often not in place until days or hours before the event starts. In this controlled chaos, decisions are quick, clear communication is essential and people need to be upbeat all the time. I have to confess that when working as a volunteer for the Sydney Olympic Games I became so tired of smiling, nodding and answering questions on my journey to and from work (two hours each way) that in the final days I went in mufti, carrying my volunteer uniform in my bag and saving my emotional energy for my shift. My hope is that the bonhomie of your events is such, too, that it wears you out! That's the measure of success: everyone around you is uplifted and energized, and you know that this event will be fixed in everyone's memory for a lifetime. People said, 'this is a once in a lifetime opportunity'. If you are entering this profession, I hope that you have many such positive opportunities.

Finally, may I welcome my co-author, Lauren White, whose important task it was to highlight the role of internal communications in integrating the efforts of the diverse and often widely dispersed workforce. Internal communications (incorporating social media) works towards developing a work culture that contributes to the event's impacts, whether these are economic, social or environmental. Some events raise money for important causes, others exhibit and sell products on the world stage, and many events reinforce the branding of the organizing body. For mega events it is the country's reputation that is on the line. Who can forget the service of Olympic Games staff and volunteers? In each case the individual's patriotism and enthusiasm contributed to their country's image domestically and internationally. Commitment of team members, volunteers and stakeholders is the key to success; the audience will remember the service experience, not the width of the pathways or the number of flags flying, long after the event is over.

# Acknowledgements

The help of many people and organizations has been essential in the preparation of this book, particularly Kerrie Nash, who provided the industry insights at the end of each chapter.

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# Human resource strategic planning

## Establishing the context

Part I of this book establishes a context for human resource management in the event business. The different types of event include business events (conferences and exhibitions), sports, arts, entertainment and community events, street parades and festivals. These events may be commercial or not for profit. They may be fundraising events or simply big parties.

The functions of human resource management of recruitment, selection, induction, training and performance management are important parts of every event organizer's job. In the case of large events, including mega events such as the Winter Olympic Games or FIFA World Cup, the size of the event would clearly warrant a specialist human resources team. For smaller events, these functions would be undertaken by the organizer, organizing committee or area managers.

In this environment, there is typically a diverse range of employment arrangements and very frequently there are volunteers involved. Most events are project based, occurring once only or annually. Chapter 1 will discuss the unique features of the event environment that differentiate it from other traditional business environments in which human resource management is practised. Chapter 2 will look at planning from a macro perspective, looking at the whole workforce that could include paid staff, volunteers and contractors (vendors/suppliers) who provide event services such as catering. The growth of the event team over time and the phases of organizational development will be covered in Chapter 3, shortly followed by a discussion in Chapter 4 of the issues associated with volunteer management. Chapter 5 deals with the employment of event service providers such as security, cleaning, waste management and technical support (lighting and sound). Having developed an awareness of the overall responsibility that the event organizer has for the health and safety of everyone working on site, the following chapter, Chapter 6, will discuss employment legislation in more detail. Finally, Chapter 7 will discuss the process of job analysis, leading to the development of job descriptions that form the basis for many other human resource functions (such as training) which are covered in Part II when the text moves on to operational planning. Overall, Part I is largely focused on the development of a strategic plan for human resource management of one or more events.

