

Knowledge Management in Event Organisations Instructor's Manual

2: Knowledge Management Challenges in Event Organisations

This is the instructor's manual produced to accompany the book *Knowledge Management in Event Organisations*, by Raphaela Stadler, 2021, published by Goodfellow Publishers Ltd.

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Chapter 2: Knowledge Management Challenges in Event Organisations

Lecture 2

Learning objectives

- Understand different knowledge management challenges for event organisations
- Be able to identify knowledge management challenges for project-based and 'pulsating' types of organisations
- Understand how the large number of seasonal employees and volunteers in event organisations impacts upon knowledge management
- Explore the different event specific types of knowledge (creative, operational, strategic)
- Learn the difference between knowledge hiding and knowledge hoarding
- Be able to explain how the different knowledge management challenges impact upon reinventing the wheel

Introduction

It is important for students to understand the specific context and the nature of events and event organisations, and how this has an impact upon knowledge management. There are a range of challenges that come with this and they are all explored in-depth in Chapter 2. This lecture can be taught in the sequence suggested here, but it can also be taught the other way round: it is possible to start with the question of why event organisations quite often reinvent the wheel, then go into the knowledge management specific challenges that need to be faced, and finally conclude with the nature of event organisations as being 'pulsating' and project-based. The same learning outcomes can be achieved either way, it depends on students' previous knowledge and experience. For example, if they also have a Project Management module or course as part of their Study Program, then it might make more sense to start with the "reinventing the wheel" question. Otherwise, it is suggested to start with the following:

Events as project-based and 'pulsating' types of organisations

A good way of getting students to think about specific knowledge management challenges for event organisations, is by providing an overview of knowledge management in project-based organisations. Indeed, the literature on this is vast and the topic could be developed into a lecture in its own right. But most importantly it should be noted that the majority of studies here focus on large construction and manufacturing firms, as well as new product development projects. Managing an event, however, is about managing an *experience*, which is rather different in terms of the approach and complexities faced, and even more difficult in terms of knowledge sharing and documentation. Examples from the film industry could be drawn on for students to explore here: films like the *Lord of the Rings* or the *Harry Potter* series are very much based on retaining a core group of experts

on the production team who can learn from one film production to the next and build on their success, rather than bringing in an entirely new crew each time. Typical knowledge management challenges raised in project-based organisations include lack of time, lack of trust, forgetting things from one project to the next, employees hiding their knowledge from others because they do not know each other well enough, and knowledge getting lost once the project is over (the project team dissolves and takes all the knowledge with them, rather than storing it for the wider organisation before leaving). Very similar challenges apply to event organisations, as will be explored later on in this lecture.

Secondly, it is crucial to highlight the ‘pulsating’ nature of events and Figure 2.1 should be used for this:

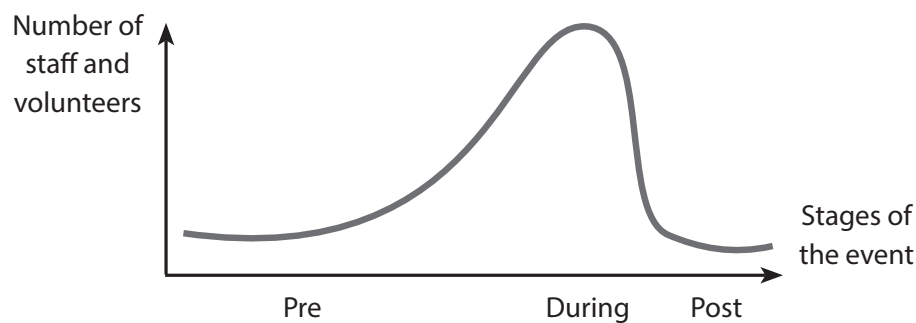


Figure 2.1: ‘Pulsating’ event organisations

Two recommended readings include:

- ◆ Hanlon, C., & Cuskelly, G. (2002). Pulsating Major Sport Event Organizations: A Framework for Inducting Managerial Personnel. *Event Management*, 7(4), 231-243
- ◆ Clayton, D. (2020). Knowledge management in events. In S. J. Page & J. Connell (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Events* (2nd ed., pp. 442-456). London and New York: Routledge

Knowledge management challenges

From there, some of the specific knowledge management challenges can be developed: lack of time and resources; lack of trust and lack of expertise; large number of volunteers; unlearning and forgetting; knowledge hiding and knowledge hoarding; as well as knowledge leakage. Figure 2.2 summarises these knowledge management challenges and can be used with students to talk through an example from their own experience. It is recommended to explore each of the challenges in relation to a practical example that the students are familiar with. For example, if they also take a Live Event module or course, this could be used as an example they all work on and the challenges they experience together.

It is important to note that some of these challenges of course correlate, such as the large number of volunteers will most likely bring lack of trust among the team and lack of expertise with it, as well as potential problems around knowledge hiding from volunteers and between them. It is also worth considering the ‘pulsating’ nature of events and hence the different stages of the event (pre/during/post, see Figure 2.1) again here, and identify which problems might arise at which stage. For example, knowledge hiding and knowledge hoarding could be an issue pre-event, whereas knowledge leakage is more likely to occur post-event, when the seasonal team and volunteers move on to other jobs.

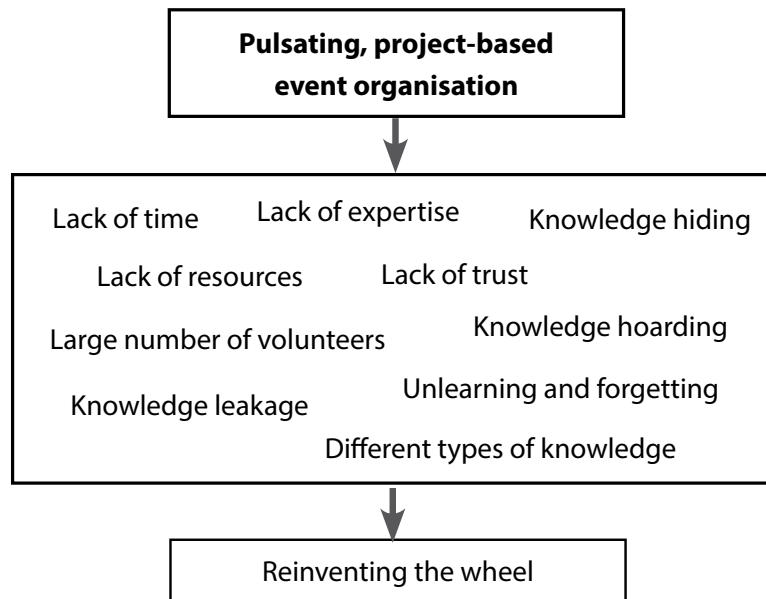


Figure 2.2: Knowledge management challenges in 'pulsating', project based event organisations

Knowledge hiding is a particularly interesting issue to explore with students as they have probably experienced it themselves at some point. This interview with Catherine Connelly from DeGroote School of Business provides a good overview of what knowledge hiding means and why people do it: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtRhaHa7mju>

Students can be asked to provide examples of the 3 different types of knowledge hiding from their own experience in group work, internships or placements, or other jobs:

- ◆ *Rationalised hiding*: hiding knowledge from someone by saying it is confidential and can therefore not be shared;
- ◆ *Evasive hiding*: either providing impractical or irrelevant knowledge to the person who requests it, or waiting to share the knowledge until it is no longer of use and then promising to help at a later time;
- ◆ *Playing dumb*: pretending not to know the answer to a problem or not having the relevant knowledge readily available.

They should be encouraged to think about the consequences of this type of behaviour, and in particular in a stressful event environment where knowledge needs to be shared quickly and efficiently. Other specific knowledge management challenges can be explored in a similar way.

An event knowledge management challenge that is not often talked about in the literature, and is worth mentioning here, is the difference between strategic, operational and creative knowledge. This can naturally lead to some tensions around which knowledge to prioritise at what point and which knowledge to draw on for certain decisions. The creative knowledge, in particular, is thereby often overlooked, but it can be a key element for innovation and long-term success for the event organisation. For a group work activity, it is suggested to look at either Glastonbury Festival (<https://www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk/>), the Edinburgh Fringe Festival (<https://www.edfringe.com/>) or a similar type of event, identify the aims and objectives and the long-term strategic plan of the festival, as well as some of the creative elements of how this is being implemented. Students can then

be asked to participate in a role play, and to run a staff meeting to discuss next year's line-up. They can take on roles such as, the executive director, the artistic director, the marketing director, the technical director, one of the charity partners, and a member of the local council. Key decisions to be made will be based on the creative, operational and strategic knowledge brought together from the different stakeholders' perspectives. It is important to get students to reflect on which type of knowledge was drawn on for each type of decision they made and why.

From all these issues and challenges the problem of reinventing the wheel each year will be the last element to discuss in this lecture. As quoted in the book; "[i]f knowledge is not shared then wasteful cycles of re-learning can occur and there could even be significant failures in an organisation" (Ragsdell et al., 2013: 1). This is particularly the case in 'repeat-pulse' types of organisations (e.g. an annual event), where it is extremely difficult to build an organisational memory over time.

Sample short-answer questions:

- ◆ Define 'pulsating' organisations and explain how this concept can be applied to event organisations.
- ◆ Why is lack of time a specific knowledge management challenge in events?

Sample long-answer or essay question:

- ◆ Discuss how you would deal with an employee who is hiding or hoarding their knowledge.

A good answer here would firstly explain the difference between knowledge hiding (intentional; specifically requested knowledge is being kept secret from the person who requested it) and knowledge hoarding (unintentional; accumulating knowledge, which then may or may not be shared with others at a later stage; employees may thereby have the best intentions about getting their jobs done, but they simply do not realise that their knowledge would also be of value to others). Specific examples of how this can occur can then be discussed in terms of the 3 types of knowledge hiding (rationalised hiding, evasive hiding, playing dumb) and/or potential reasons for knowledge hoarding (such as, loss of power, reluctance to spend time on sharing knowledge, fear of hosting 'knowledge parasites', or avoidance of exposure). In terms of dealing with an employee who engages in such behaviour, emphasising a culture of trust and mutual respect is key, as well as strengthening the work relationships within the team, and leading by example. Rewards for knowledge sharing can also be a good way of encouraging more positive behaviour, whereas punishments for not sharing (i.e., hiding/hoarding) should be avoided, as they can easily create a negative culture overall.