

Crisis Management and Recovery for Events

Supplementary questions

11: Agility in the Events Sector: A Case Study of a Business Event in Finland

V. Gorchakova & E. Berdysheva

1. What is agility, and in what ways can it manifest itself?

Agility can be defined in various ways, including as the capacity to sense opportunities and threats, and solve problems under changing and uncertain circumstances. Often associated with the speed in responding to change, agility is linked to innovation, a shared, non-pecuniary purpose of an organization, and leveraging the capabilities of partners. Beyond processes, agility can also be understood as a set of behaviors and a frame of mind that is grounded in one's own experiences but requires versatility, adaptability, and creative thinking.

2. What were the major challenges of the VUCA environment for event organizers in 2020?

The major challenges for the event organizers in 2020 were associated with the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of the environment caused by the pandemic. First, changes could happen quickly and affect various regions and countries to various extent. Second, there was a lack of knowledge about the impact of the pandemic on the event attendees, their expectations and motivations. Besides, organizing an event during a pandemic created several layers of complexity for the event preparation and delivery. Finally, as the situation had no precedents in the past, event teams had to experiment with new options without fully understanding possible outcomes of their initiatives and actions. Government regulations and guidance were also changing throughout the year and could not be predicted well in advance.

3. What are the key components of the 3Ds agile process model and what processes do they represent?

The key components of the model suggested for event management are: Define, Design, Deliver. Define is the first step, during which an event's goal, resources, target audience, action plan(s), and expected budget are identified and discussed within the event team and partners/stakeholders. During the second step, Design, an event's program and format, venue and/or platform, tools, media, as well as the final action plan and budget are developed and approved. The Deliver stage is when an event is taking place.

4. How did the agile approach to event management help in the organization of SHIFT Business Festival in 2020?

In 2020, when many events were getting cancelled or postponed, the SHIFT team decided to find a way to not only organize the Festival, but also to provide an experience and value for its attendees, participants, and partners that would be congruent with the event's high standards. The event team approached this task with creativity, original thinking, motivation, and commitment. A number of scenarios and action plans were drafted in the beginning of the pandemic, and the team demonstrated the capacity to respond to changes and challenges in a flexible and swift manner. The program was structured in a way that allowed it, on one hand, to maintain continuity with the previous iterations of the Festival, and on the other hand, to introduce prospective attendees to the new format and theme of SHIFT 2020. New technologies were employed in a way that the original serendipitous co-creative atmosphere of networking and learning could be sustained.