

Event Leadership

Theory and methods for event management and tourism

Instructor's Manual

7: Knowledge and event leadership

Jane Tattersall

This is the instructor's manual produced to accompany the book *Event Leadership – theory and practice for event management and tourism*, by Emma Abson (with contributions by Miriam Firth and Jane Tattersall), 2021, published by Goodfellow Publishers Ltd.

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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 7

Chapter aims

- Introduce and critically discuss aspects of knowledge and their value
- Explore the nature and role of knowledge in events and festivals leadership
- Understand processes and challenges for tacit knowledge management
- Consider methods of tacit knowledge transfer in small and medium sized event and festival organisations
- Focus on leadership in action – knowledge management in small to medium sized enterprises

7.1: Introduction

Use the following extract to introduce the lecture content.

The aim of this lecture is to explain the value and management of different types of knowledge in an events or music festival business setting, where its potential to maximise profit and help an organisation to outperform its rivals has received less attention in academic literature than other sectors such as manufacturing or information technology. Competition in the events and festivals sectors has increased considerably as more companies join the market, and the nature and scope of events has widened to satisfy consumer appetites for more diverse and engaging experiences. Leaders that nurture, recognise, manage and employ knowledge effectively are more likely to be innovative and successful in their sector. Throughout the chapter, knowledge is explored mostly through the lens of music festivals, although the points made are easily applicable to the wider events, tourism and leisure sectors.

‘Merely mentioning ‘knowledge’ raises problems, for anyone with the temerity to write about knowledge has to confront the pervasive disagreement about what constitutes knowledge’ (Starbuck, 2006: 74).

Knowledge can be considered in many ways; what we know, how we know it, our beliefs about what is true, how our actions are led by our knowledge and how what we do creates new knowledge. Philosophers have argued for centuries about whether we can truly ‘know’ anything, and the debate will continue because knowledge, understanding, truth and belief are interrelated concepts that are open to interpretation depending on a person’s perspectives, experiences and environment.

Consider the following questions:

- ◆ If you believe something to be true, is it true for everyone?
- ◆ Does knowing something mean you understand it?
- ◆ Does knowing how a bicycle works make you a competent cyclist?

You may be relieved that this lecture does not debate the different philosophical stances on what knowledge is but does explore aspects of knowledge that can contribute to personal and organisational success.

7.2: The value of knowledge

Fierce rivalry is one of the conditions of a highly competitive environment. Most festivals compete using a differentiation strategy (Porter, 1984) meaning organizations need to be evermore creative and innovative in managing their resources, to give attendees unique and memorable experiences to outperform their rivals or even to survive.

As a resource, knowledge is said to be more valuable than other tangible resources (such as funding, premises or stock of products) as the primary source of creating value and sustaining superior performance. Through the lens of the knowledge economy 'a firm's intellectual capital represents the only sustainable source of competitive advantage'. Providing it remains within the organization, knowledge can be a distinctive resource that is valuable, rare, non-substitutable and inimitable, creating opportunities for competitive advantage. Furthermore, it is tacit knowledge, rather than the manipulation of other available tangible resources, that is said to be the primary basis of core competencies and the key to superior performance.

Tacit knowledge is referred to as that which cannot easily be explained or communicated in written format and comes from experience, personal perceptions and values. It is related to intuition and the development of skills and knowing how to do things. In 1955, referring to executives, Katz first suggested that what someone can accomplish in an organization is a more important consideration than the traits or personality characteristics they possess. It is the set of core skills employed by leaders and managers in pursuit of organizational objectives that is significant, and the combination of skills and knowledge determine what can be accomplished. Furthermore, organizational learning does not occur as new insights are gained about an issue or problem but for learning to take place, action must occur. This suggests that only when insights gained from 'knowing that' are interpreted and turned into 'know how' is new knowledge created.

As you will have understood from the previous lectures and the definition of Yukl (2010: 8) presented in Chapter 1, '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'. You will also have understood that leadership is viewed through the lenses of actions, behaviours and traits. To efficiently lead, it is essential to understand where expertise, knowledge and skills are held organisations, teams and individuals, to create opportunities for these to be employed with maximum effectiveness to achieve the organisation's objectives. The term knowledge management is given to these processes and is explored further in the chapter.

The Explicit – Tacit Knowledge Continuum

'We know more than we can tell' Michael Polanyi (1967).

The most common distinction made in literature is that between explicit and tacit knowledge. In plain terms, explicit knowledge is that which can be expressed in formal language, presented numerically, explained, classified, written down and stored in a database by individuals to share with other individuals or teams. Explicit knowledge is linked with information and in events and festival organisations, this can include business plans, event plans, operational documents, site plans, project management documents, operating systems, client and attendee details, entertainer information and riders, financial information and anything else which can be expressed in words and numbers and is able to be communicated through documents and conversations.

Tacit knowledge is generalised to be that which cannot easily be explained or communicated in written format and comes from experience, personal perceptions and values and is context dependent. It is related to intuition and the development of skills and knowing how to do things. In events and festival organisations this can include 'knowing' what will work on a proposed event site, 'knowing' how to respond to an unforeseen problem or situation or producing creative ideas for installations,

7.3: Aspects of tacit knowledge

Implicit and latent knowledge

Taylor (2007) observed that the term tacit knowledge is often over simplified, used to mean any knowledge which is not written down, and this leads to ambiguity or misconception about what it is and whether it can, in fact, be captured.

Misunderstandings, generalizations and ambiguity can occur when the term tacit knowledge is used interchangeably with implicit or latent knowledge, both types of knowledge that can be articulated but has not yet been and often it is these types of knowledge that several articles refer to when discussing tacit knowledge in a generalised way, to mean any knowledge which is not written down, verbalised or easy to explain .

These distinctions may appear pedantic, but the implications for accessing and sharing this knowledge are significant, if leaders can find ways to gain insights into where previously uncommunicated knowledge, skill or know-how experience resides and devise ways to address the issue.

Implicit knowledge. Muñoz et al. (2015) consider a typical company boardroom meeting, which could be a scenario in any events or festival organization. Here, some knowledge is available explicitly as financial reports, market research or other types of information. Some knowledge is not explicit at the time of the meeting but can be made explicit by executives participating in the meeting verbally sharing informal data that is not written or recorded in formal reports. This knowledge, that was not formerly explicit but is subsequently shared, is interpreted by Frappaolo (2008) as implicit knowledge. Authors frequently generalise this type of knowledge as tacit in academic literature.

Latent Knowledge was proposed by Agrawal (2006:64) in his examination of the outcomes of experiments conducted by inventors at universities. He found that potentially valuable knowledge, resulting from failed experiments was being lost. According to his respondents, most of their experiments failed or partially failed, but due to the constraints of time and funding, the results were not codified. This knowledge, he claims, is not tacit knowledge as it could have be codified but at the time was not. Agrawal states that this latent knowledge 'is valuable for climbing atop the shoulders of giants, advancing research, and, in the case of commercialization, developing the early-stage inventions into saleable products or processes' Making efforts to uncover latent knowledge in event organizations could have significant implications for the health, safety and enjoyment of attendees, where on-site changes have been made in real time but not recorded.

7.4: Knowledge management

Having gained an understanding of the different types and aspects of knowledge, readers may ask themselves 'what should event leaders do to make the most of it?' Academics and industry professionals continue to debate this and as with aspects of leadership, perspectives vary and are context and resource dependent. Therefore, understanding who possesses what knowledge, and the distribution, use and adoption processes that exist or not in the company is critical in developing knowledge management strategies. Paradoxically, knowledge of knowledge management will determine how successfully an organisation is able to utilise all the knowledge held within the heads of its people.

Definitions of knowledge management are numerous, but generally it is acknowledged that to be successful, the process should be conducted at all levels of an organisation and involve four main stages, mainly referred to as:

- ◆ Knowledge creation, capture or acquisition
- ◆ Knowledge sharing, distribution or coordination
- ◆ Knowledge use, adoption or implementation
- ◆ Knowledge storage or organisational memory.

Jimenez-Jimenez & Sanz Valle (2011) emphasise the importance of managing and leveraging knowledge assets for organizational success:

- ◆ Knowledge acquisition is the process used by an organisation to obtain new information and knowledge.
- ◆ Knowledge distribution is the process by which information is shared by employees.
- ◆ Knowledge interpretation occurs when information in given meaning and is transformed into new common knowledge
- ◆ Organisational memory is the method by which the information and knowledge are stored for use in the future.

7.5: Barriers and challenges

The difficulties experienced by organizations in managing and exploiting knowledge can be viewed from the perspective of a theoretical understanding of the processes required or a practice-based view of the mechanics, but human nature and organisation culture also play a role.

Knowledge hiding, withholding or concealing task information, ideas or know-how knowledge are not unusual in organizations and can inhibit individual or organizational performance. This phenomenon is linked to employees feeling a strong ownership of their knowledge and resisting sharing it, to obtain or maintain status or power. An interesting contrast is put forward by Huo et al. (2016: 892) between 'knowledge hiding', which is intentional and 'knowledge hoarding' which may result from a lack of time, poor procedures or other unforeseen conditions. They found that when the perceived value of the knowledge and the level of cooperation needed is high, knowledge hiding was less prevalent and that perceptions of 'organizational justice' were also influential. From a slightly different perspective Vitari, Moro, Ravarini, & Bourdon (2007) found that appropriate rewards systems and the definition of the organizational structure have the potential to significantly increase acceptance of knowledge management systems.

Barriers to implementing knowledge management activities may include the following:

Organizational perspective

- Time consuming
- Labour intensive
- People are busy
- Temporary project teams
- Workers see no benefit
- Difficult to codify tacit knowledge
- Strong positive culture is needed for people to care enough
- May involve additional work

Team/group perspective

- Reward for individual effort will encourage hoarding of knowledge
- Fear of recrimination and criticism from peers and management
- Lack of respect for other disciplines
- Lack of respect, trust and common goal

Individual perspective

- Reluctance to share information
- Knowledge is source of power, advancement, or reward/punishment
- Sense of worth and status because of expertise
- Fear of diminished personal value if give up know-how
- Competition among professionals

(Bollinger and Smith, 2001)

There are clearly significant challenges to overcome from an organisation and individual perspective, to create an environment where people feel confident and willing to engage in knowledge management activities. A good place to start is with commitment from leaders to generate knowledge strategies and create opportunities to implement them. Some studies have focused on methods used for tacit knowledge transfer, but the distinction between implicit, latent or tacit knowledge is not always apparent.

7.6: Summary

This lecture has presented an argument for recognising knowledge, and in particular dimensions of tacit knowledge, as a valuable and often underappreciated resource of event and festival organisations. Tacit knowledge has been disseminated into Implicit (unshared), Latent (dormant) and tacit (inarticulable) knowledge, with implications where leaders take the time to recognise it and create opportunities for sharing and developing it successfully within organisations. Uncovering implicit and latent knowledge is more easily achieved through improved, focused interaction between people to improve innovation and efficiency and reduce mistakes. Tacit knowledge is the most elusive type, is learned through experience and cannot easily be transferred from one person to another.

The instinctive and personal nature of tacit knowledge means that its holder may have advantages of power, expertise and value over others. As leadership is about maximising organisational performance, understanding tacit knowledge and its value to individuals and leaders, can enhance our personal and career development, whilst helping to future proof events and festival organisations.

Further activities for seminars / independent learning and / or assignments

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 differences between explicit, implicit, latent and tacit knowledge in the context of event management organisations and give examples of each.
2. Implicit and tacit knowledge are often discussed as tacit knowledge in the literature. Why is it important for events organisation to discern between the types and what are the implications and opportunities associated with this?
3. What are the main barriers for successful knowledge transfer and what can leaders do about them?

Assignment suggestions

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

1. What aspects of leadership do you associate with the most tacit type of knowledge? Give two examples and outline how a leader could transfer this knowledge to someone else.
2. Do you think larger event organisations are likely to be more or less successful at knowledge management than smaller or medium sized operations and explain why.
3. What are the main benefits to individuals of exploring their tacit knowledge?

Further reading

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

Gascoigne, N. & Thornton, T. (2013). *Tacit Knowledge, Acumen*.

Nonaka, I., Toyama, R. & Konno, N. (2000). SECI, ba and leadership: A unified model of dynamic knowledge creation. *Long Range Planning*, 33(1), 5-34. doi:10.1016/S0024-6301(99)00115-6

Stadler, R. & Fullagar, S. (2016). Appreciating formal and informal knowledge transfer practices within creative festival organizations. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 20(1), 146-161.

This aspect of leadership ties in with another book in this series:

Stadler, R. (2019) *Knowledge Management in Event Organisations*. Oxford: Goodfellow Publishers.