

# **Event Leadership**

## **Theory and methods for event management and tourism**

### **Instructor's Manual**

#### **8: Events, leadership and power**

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.

This manual and the accompanying illustrations are provided by the authors for the private use of instructors using the book *Event Leadership*. All the diagrams are copyright protected and should not be circulated beyond the classroom. To further support instructors, there is a set of PowerPoint slides for each lecture available.

## 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 8

### Chapter aims

- Consider the question who leads and when?
- Explore the power of leaders
- Understand the different types of power
- Reflect on the power of events to lead change in society
- Reflect on the power of event communities
- Discuss the nature of power relationships with event stakeholders
- Focus on leadership in action: industry insight from Carrie Abernathy

### 8.1: Introduction

*Use the following extract to introduce the students to the tricky concept of thinking about how power dynamics work with leadership. The lecture will also cover how events themselves are powerful.*

A criticism of many of the conceptualisations of leadership is that they tend to focus on the positive nature of leadership and ignore the issues of power, influence and domination leadership be untangled from the power dynamics that occur within and around it? Despite the rise in viewing leadership as an influence process, as charted in Chapters 3,4 & 5 of this book, leadership in events is still often attributed to those in formal positions of power – by that I mean those in managerial positions, who have the power to make decisions about their followers working lives and even – at the extreme end – decide to terminate people’s employment. Critics such as Bolden (2011), Alvesson and Spicer (2012) argue that when leadership is the preserve of those in managerial positions, then the dynamics of who holds the power in the relationships are always unequal, and it is impossible to overcome these inequalities, because one person is always in a stronger position than the other.

This is certainly a concern for event management and the related sectors such as destination management organisations which, because of the dynamic, fast paced nature of the work, often rely on team members accepting leadership from those who aren’t in formal leadership positions. This chapter therefore gives the reader a brief overview on the power of leaders in events, and an insight into both the benefits and issues of that power.

A second level of concern is also leadership within the events community - who is it that brings people and organisations together? What does it take to achieve effective collaboration among events and between events and other key stakeholders? This might be a matter of individual leaders taking charge, but equally it could be that leadership emerges from specific network dynamics.

In viewing leadership as both a process of influence AND a process of power, we can gain useful insights into the power relationships that may be at work.

## 8.2: The power of leadership

*Use the following to introduce students to the concept of power, and to introduce them to how power and leadership are always intertwined.*

What do we mean by power? Power is most commonly defined as the ability of an individual to exercise some sort of control over someone else. Leadership, on the other hand, should not be solely bound up with power – after all, an individual can have the ability to influence others, despite not being in a formal – powerful – leadership position. In other words, people with power have the ability to influence others AND the ability to exert control over others. Leaders will have the ability to exert influence over others, but they do not necessarily have the power to make people do what they want.

Leaders must exercise their power carefully because power is simply the right to provide leadership. As Warren Bennis famously suggests, 'leadership is the wise use of power. Power is the capacity to translate intention into reality and sustain it.' (Note: this citation is widely attributed to Bennis, but there is no original source data. Be careful if you reuse this quotation in your assignments!)

Therefore, following this line of thinking, event leaders have power over a multitude of situations at work. That doesn't necessarily mean that they should use power over the people they lead – good leaders will not need to display their power in order to get results, instead they will empower others. But of course, bad leaders exist, and many will misuse their power.

But what do we mean by the power of leaders? In many ways, it is simple – power is the capacity or potential to influence. Those in formal leadership positions have the power to make a range of decisions that will impact on the people who work for them. For example, event leader managers are the ones who usually decide:

- ◆ How much people get paid
- ◆ Whether or not to reward staff with financial bonuses
- ◆ What work each staff member will do
- ◆ To allow holiday requests

And event leaders decide things like:

- ◆ Who will feature on their event programme
- ◆ Which supplier they will use
- ◆ How much they will pay their suppliers
- ◆ Which sponsor gets the best spot in the VIP lounge
- ◆ Who sits where at the conference dinner

And all of these decisions have power attached to them – for those affected by them, the outcomes can be positive or negative. But there are many different types of power, and given the interconnectedness of power and leadership, it is important we understand what they are. Northouse (2015) describes 5 types of power, and they are explained in the table below:

**Legitimate power**

Legitimate power is the same as authority.

Legitimate power comes from the power that a leader has because of their position in the organisation.

People with legitimate power will often also have reward, coercive and / or expert power – but legitimate power is a wider concept than these.

To understand legitimate power, think about how, if a policeman or the boss of your company tells you to do something, you are likely to do it.

**Coercive power**

Coercive power is the power leaders have to control, manipulate or punish.

Leaders in formal managerial positions have coercive power, because they can punish you for not doing as they ask.

To understand coercive power, think about how your line manager at work can decide to give you the most unpleasant jobs, or demote or sack you.

**Reward power**

Reward power is the power to give benefits or rewards.

Rewards can be financial, or emotional or motivational – basically anything the person values can act as a reward.

To understand reward power, think about how you feel when someone in a leadership position praises you for doing a good job. Or consider how it feels to get a bonus because of your hard work!

**Expert power**

Expert power is the power given to those who have expertise in a certain field.

To understand expert power, think about how important the audio-visual technician is at an event. You wouldn't be able to run your event well without them, and that means they hold power over you in terms of how well your event is run and one aspect of the quality of the event.

**Referent power**

Referent power is the power that comes from a leader's strong relationship skills.

Referent power is very useful in situations where command and control are less acceptable, and collaboration and influence will gain greater results.

As organisations move away from traditional hierarchical leadership structures, referent power becomes more important. In other words, referent power happens when followers respect and / or admire their leaders.

To understand referent power, think about someone who you admire so much that you try to behave like them. That person has referent power over you.

**Table 8.1:** Type of power, adapted from Northouse (2015)

### 8.3: Who leads and when

*Use the following extracts to discuss leadership in events*

There is no denying the continued emphasis within the event industry of the role of the formal leader. Most event organisations are structured around a typical hierarchical structure, with organisational teams each managed by team leaders, and a chain of command that reaches up to a leadership team who make the strategic decisions on the vision and direction of the organisation. It is risky then for us to ignore the role of a formal leader when – in nearly every type of organisation – they are still an essential part of the structure. Indeed, researchers now recognise that in order to fully understand leadership processes, both vertical (top-down leadership) and collective leadership throughout the organisation need to be considered.

Unlike other industries such as banking or manufacturing the output of the event community is based on the consumption of an experience – what people pay for, or sign up to, isn't a tangible product and nothing can be taken away. This intangibility means that perceived consumer experiences are central to a successful event – but it also creates significant challenges in shaping experiences that create a lasting legacy, or changes to consumer thinking and behaviour - which are integral to successful outcomes. Similarly, experiences are also temporary in nature - they are planned for, staged and then they disappear - this is true even of recurring event experiences. This temporality results in inevitable and ever-growing pressure to deliver - there is only one chance to get things right, and mistakes in planning or delivery are very difficult to rectify when the experience is underway. And, because the work is often geared towards one particular point in time – that of the experience delivery – there is an associated, and increased, risk of job insecurity and poor working conditions, for example very long and unsocial hours. This then leads to the key issue of power – that ever-growing pressure, which culminates in that 'it has to be alright on the night' feeling, means that decisions need to get made quickly, and those that have the power to make the decisions are therefore looked to as leaders (whether they want to be or not). Ultimately during the live delivery of an event, there is usually one person with whom all the decisions rest and power is therefore enshrined in the role – what they decide to do is what will happen.

*Note to instructors – you could also discuss here the difficulties with access to power, and the problems this causes in terms of diversity and the exclusion or 'othering' of voices. This is covered in the book in Chapter 8, as follows:*

By looking at leadership as a process of influence, scholarly research has a tendency to focus only on the positive aspects of leadership. This is a cause for concern, because it means that many ignore the negative issues around the power that leaders can hold over their followers, and the impact this power can have. Power is, after all, the ability to exercise control over others and those in leadership positions are in positions of power (both in terms of financial reward, respect and decision making). This power, derived from their position of authority, can be very beneficial and rewarding for the leaders themselves, which means they are not likely to want to relinquish this power to others. In addition, the traditional hierarchical structures that exist in most event organisations work to prevent those not in formal leadership positions from gaining access to power.

Power - or the lack thereof - may well be evident in the degree of participation of leadership and the process of leadership itself and how it can be bestowed on people may

well exclude certain people. This of course has huge implications in terms of diversity and equality. Given the recent rise in global consciousness about these issues, questions must be asked about how much access to power those who face structural inequality in the event industry because of their gender or race will have.

Another concern is also the lack of diversity, inclusion and representation at events themselves. In a piece of research conducted in 2020, the Event Manger Blog looked at 150 events to determine how diverse the speaker panels really were. They found that between 35-40% of events they looked at didn't have one black speaker and, if that was widened out to include BIPOC (black, indigenous and other people of colour) and female representation, the overall picture is still really poor. And this is problematic, because events are platforms and many believe they have a duty of care to provide space for all, or at least a level playing field for diverse voices. And of course, there is huge value in not just ensuring that all areas of event communities are represented but also because diversity means a greater richness in knowledge and experience and leads to a much more interesting event.

As I have already made clear, little is known about leadership and power within the event community – however, when we look at leadership research in general, it becomes clear that the exclusion of 'different' voices limits participation in leadership and that power has a clear influence on relationships at work and in access to event spaces and event platforms.

#### **8.4: The power of events and event communities**

We'll discuss how events can be catalysts for change – when we conceptualise events in this way, it becomes clear that the event experience itself can be a form of leadership. We can think of events as powerful in two ways – firstly, we can think of the event organisations power, in terms of setting the agenda, deciding on the programme for events, and amplifying key issues (such as the way Glastonbury places sustainability and recycling at the heart of its event objectives, or the drive to include a diverse speaker panel at xx , or the use of xxx to provide a platform to raise issues of x and y to a large audience). Secondly, we can think about the power that the event communities themselves have – the power of people coming together to bring about change. Both of these types of power are examples of leadership – the power of events therefore lies in their ability to lead change.

Crucially, as Rojek (2013) suggests, we must remember that events are not normally spontaneous or expressions of people power – they are well organised, often with motivations to persuade or even to manipulate the 'market place'; the ownership of events rarely rests with the people, and whilst they might involve parts of society joining together to celebrate (e.g. the opening ceremony of the Olympic games) or to do good (e.g. the 2020 One World: together at Home concert or Live Aid in the 80s), they are underpinned by a hierarchical structure that is often designed to keep the people in their place.

In addition, events have become displays of social or cultural capital (as coined by Bourdieu). Social and cultural capital is made up of an individual's social assets – the skills, education, norms and behaviours that are acquired by a social group, and which give them economic and social advantages. Events are an excellent way for individuals to display these advantages - whether by bringing people together to celebrate the successes of a country's athletics team, or putting on a concert to raise awareness of a particular issue, people are often tempted to display their attendance at events as badges of honour, and as examples of their advantages in society.

*Time permitting, you could use the extensive discussion of Rojek's work here, as covered in the book. Then use the extract below to discuss the power of events.*

Events do also have the power to do good and they have a role to play in society– they have the power to bring people together, to create and consolidate communities, to generate vast sums of money for good causes and they can raise issues to the global consciousness.

Indeed, setting objectives is the number one priority for event creators – and more and more frequently, those objectives go beyond 'making money' and look to create long term legacies – these events can be seen to be using their power of influence, and their reach, to lead on social or cultural change. Some events now put delivering long term, profound differences at the heart of what they do; others are simply taken over by protests that shift perceptions and raise awareness of societal problems.

And an example of the later is the #metoo movement, and the way it was brought to global consciousness not just through social media, but through visible protests at events like the 2018 Golden Globes Awards ceremony, where most guests dressed in black to show solidarity with the movement, and prominent actors mentioned it in their speeches.

Examples of events that display leadership regarding radical social or cultural change, and use the power of their reach to bring about real difference include the Black Lives Matters Protests – a human rights campaign that began on social media in 2013, and was highlighted during 2018 when some American sports stars began to 'take the knee' during the national anthems at sports games, particularly in the NFL. The campaign was launched into the global consciousness by the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor in 2020 and the subsequent organised, and spontaneous rallies and protests, around the world. Other obvious examples are the Rock against Racism concert in the 1970s, the Live Aid concert in 1985 and the One Love Manchester benefit concert in 2017.

It is important to note, however, that most events that have social responsibility or driving change as a core objective don't make international news. Many small-scale local events are created specifically to share knowledge, build communities and bring about change – examples include events that raise money to provide much needed equipment or buildings for the local community, or events that enable neighbours to share and learn about different cultural heritages. The power of these small local events to make significant differences to people's lives should not be diminished, just because the number of people they impact is low.

So, events can become platforms for key issues and they have the power to amplify voices that are frequently not heard. This then is one of the most important powers of events – events as social change agents. This concept is discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.

## **8.5: Summary**

In this lecture, we have explored the intersection between power and leadership, and we have seen how power is the ability to exert control over others, whereas leadership should be about the ability to influence others, without having to resort to power. That said, leadership does often need power and we have looked at the types of power that exist and how they work within leadership situations.



We have also explored the darker side of leadership and power, and have raised some key points that the event industry needs to address about access to power, and the power that events and event communities have to lead change in our society. During this discussion, I have shone a light on the wealth of things we need to know about leadership, power and events. Particularly within event organisations, academic scholars have yet to explore the key questions of ‘who leads and when’. There are then questions we cannot answer about who actively, and regularly, participates in leadership when running events, and who is – or isn’t – excluded from event communities. Understanding the types of power you might encounter in the events is one more step along the ladder of understanding and improving this ever changing, dynamic and hugely creative and innovative industry. I hope our readers have found this chapter useful in considering some of the key issues surrounding leadership, and have grown in confidence in understanding who leads, how they do it and what it means for those who follow.

### **Further activities for seminars / independent learning and / or assignments**

- ◆ Debate the intersection between power and leadership
- ◆ Discuss the power of events – do they really have the ability to change people’s behaviours?
- ◆ Have you ever been changed by an event experience? Explain how.
- ◆ Role play – create a case study in which the students can act as employee / employer and explore the role of power in that relationship.

### **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. Thinking over your own experiences, can you find examples of when you have experienced the five different types of power, as identified in the table in this chapter?
2. This chapter proposes that some events are so powerful that they can lead change in society. Do you agree?
3. Rojek seems to suggest that attendees at events actually make little difference, and that there is a difference between feeling good and doing good. Do you think that large scale benefit events like the One Love Manchester concert, or the Together at Home online concert actually did any good? If so, outline what differences you think they made and if not, explain why you hold this view.
4. Do some research on the Live Aid concert of 1985. Can you find evidence that this event was a leader in promoting change regarding the political responses to famine in Africa?
5. The Race for Life fundraising events organised by Cancer Research UK are among the largest fundraising events in the UK. Explain what you think the power and impact of these events might be.
6. Discuss this viewpoint: Rojek suggests that events are never displays of people power, and that audiences are always being manipulated by those that fund and organise them.

7. Can you name any events that you have attended that have had a powerful impact on you? Write a list of the events you attended, and the impact they had on you personally.
8. Reflecting on the leadership in action section, do you think there is an issue with gender and power in events?

### **Assignment suggestions**

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

- ◆ Explore the intersection between power and leadership
- ◆ Create a presentation that explains how powerful leadership can be
- ◆ Do events change lives?

### **Further reading**

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

This aspect of leadership ties in with two other books in this series:

Nieker, M.V. & Getz, D. (2019) *Event Stakeholders*. Oxford: Goodfellow Publishers <http://dx.doi.org/10.23912/9781911396635-3840>.

Antchak, V., Vassilios, Z. & Getz, D. (2019) *Event Portfolio Management*. Oxford: Goodfellow Publishers.

Other recommended reading includes:

EVENT MANAGER BLOG. (2019) *The Power of Events*. Available to download for free from <https://www.eventmanagerblog.com/power-of-events>