

Putting management back into events

By [Beulah du Toit](#)

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When clients create a request for a proposal (RFP) or a tender for events management, it is vital that they understand that the nature and scope of work that an experienced events management team can offer far outweighs those services offered by venue finders or travel agents.



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The International Institute of Event Management defines events planning[1] as “...*the process of managing a project such as a meeting, convention, tradeshow, ceremony, team building activity, party or convention. ... it includes budgeting, establishing timelines, selecting and reserving the event sites, acquiring permits, planning food, coordinating transportation, developing a theme, arranging for activities, selecting speakers and keynotes, arranging for equipment and facilities, managing risk, and developing contingency plans.*”

The Event Management Body of Knowledge[2] adds, “...*as with any other form of management, it encompasses the assessment, definition, acquisition, allocation, direction, control and analysis of time, finances, people, products, services and other resources to achieve objectives.*”

Essentially, events management is the application of key project management principles in order to deliver an event on time, within budget and quality the client expects.

The key is therefore for the client to articulate fully what is required and not break up an event into disparate elements to be farmed out to the cheapest provider. This may lead to operational ‘gaps’ in the logistics process that may only manifest themselves at the event.

Magnificent, well-produced events are coordinated seamlessly from conception to evaluation, orchestrated by an events management team.

Venue selection carries risks

Venue finders and travel agents select venues based on the commission offered to them, as they do not charge the client for this service. However, the downside is that many of South Africa’s top venues will not pay commissions; therefore, the client’s choice is now narrowed down to those venues that do pay commission.

The next issue is that the venue finder/travel agent simply books ‘a meeting’. No venue layout is organised or any provision made for breakaway rooms, media areas, VIP lounges etc. On arrival, the client will have to direct venue staff as to the event’s requirements. Additional space required for registration or ‘meet and greet’ requirements may now not be available or may require additional payments.

An experienced events management will have already ascertained all the meetings requirements and negotiated the best price for the client.

Risk management calls for certain undertakings

Venue finders and travel agents do not undertake risk management activities, which are required by the ‘Safety at Sports and Recreational Events Act 2 of 2010[3]’.

“9. An event organiser must, for every event categorised as low-risk, ensure that-

a) a safety officer is appointed for that event;

b) a written safety plan is prepared detailing event

i) safety measures;

ii) security measures;

iii) crowd management measures;

iv) motor vehicle parking arrangements;

v) emergency medical measures, including participant medical measures as contemplated in the National Health Act;

c) measures contemplated in paragraph (a) and in the safety plan contemplated in paragraph (b) are put in place; and

d) ensure that the local police station is informed, prior to the event, of the event details.”

In terms of the Act, the client is now deemed the event organiser. *“... event organiser means any person who plans, is in charge of, manages, supervises or holds an event or sponsorship rights to an event or in any manner controls or has a material interest in the hosting of an event as contemplated in this Act;”*

These requirements underline the need for an experienced events management team, well versed in risk management, to manage legal requirements.



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The events management company can also advise on insurance against losses, such as the non-appearance of a key speaker, the shift in foreign exchange rates and the cancellation of events because of unforeseen weather complications.

“The first step in the risk management process is to acknowledge the reality of risk. Denial is a common tactic that substitutes deliberate ignorance for thoughtful planning.” Charles Tremper[4].

Technology - moving beyond registration to social media

The process of registration has moved beyond tables with nametags – today, delegates expect online registration, integrated payment options, electronic registration, RFID, QR codes and systems that allow them to swap information with each other both before and after the event.

Good events managers keep abreast of new technology and smarter apps to make events more productive and increase

the ROI for clients.

Today's events require the integration of social media. Not just the ubiquitous tool of the young, the use of social media has spread to boardrooms and is regarded as essential in the events management offering.

Critical discussions for events managers and clients before the event, include such questions as, "Will there be an open Twitter comments hashtag? Would the event benefit from a Facebook page? Can the events management team offer its website creation and management services? What information will go up on the website and when?

Reputational integrity is the bottom line on an event – people need to leave an event so impressed with the client's ability to host an event that they are oblivious to the effort behind the scenes that an excellent events management team can produce knowledgeably but invisibly.

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