

# Putting management back into events

 By [Teresa Jenkins](#)

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An event - good or bad - is viewed as a reflection of your professionalism and how your company does business. Don't leave it to chance.

When putting together a request for a proposal or a tender for events management, it is vital that the client understands the nature and scope of the work that can be provided by an experienced events management team versus events planners, venue finders, and travel agents.

The Institute of Event Management defines events management as "...the process of managing a project... 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 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."

## Delivering a quality event on time, within budget

Essentially, events management is the application of project management to deliver an event on time, within budget and to the quality the client expects. The key is therefore for the client to articulate fully what is required and not to imagine that an event can be broken up into disparate elements that can be farmed out to the cheapest provider and it will "all come right on the night." Magnificent, well-produced events are coordinated seamlessly from conception to evaluation, orchestrated by an events management team.

Let's begin with the venue - a venue finder is someone who will find and book a venue free of charge for a client. However, he or she needs to make money and this is done by receiving a commission from the venue for such bookings. The first issue is transparency: Is the client aware that this is the process and secondly, does the client understand how this reduces the choice of venue to only those that pay such a commission? Most of the top South African venues do not pay commission; therefore, the 'choice' has immediately been downgraded to only those that do. A third issue is that the venue finder, having booked the venue and, hopefully, agreed on the venue layout, has finished his or her process. The client must now continue with all other aspects of the event, particularly risk management.

## Risk management

In today's more litigious society, the management of risk is paramount and there is only so much risk the venue will assume on behalf of its clients. The 'Safety At Sports and Recreational Events Act, 2010' states "...when an event is categorised as low risk, the event organiser must ensure, amongst others, that a safety officer is appointed for the event, that a written safety plan is prepared, that the measures contained in the safety plan are implemented and that the local police station is informed of the event (prior to the event) and of the event details." This is what is required for low risk, so for high-risk events, events managers need to undertake serious study of applicable South African laws and regulations and the application of risk management.

If someone suffers loss, is injured or worse, the lawyers go after everyone and that includes the client who has organised the function. This poses a considerable financial risk to large corporates and government departments that do not carry the requisite public liability cover.

Is the event predicated on the arrival of a key speaker or group? An events planner is not going to advise on specialist insurance against such a 'no-show'. Neither is he or she going to go into the nuances of contingent liabilities on budgets against escalation nor advise on forex requirements where international costs are involved.

*"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.

## **Critical discussions - *before* the event**

Even the process of registration has moved beyond tables with nametags - today, clients expect online registration, integrated payment options, electronic registration, RFID, QR codes, and systems that allow delegates to swap information (NFC). Good events managers keep abreast of new technology and smarter apps to make events more productive and increase the ROI for clients.

Does the event require the integration of social media? No longer the ubiquitous tool of the young, the use of social media has spread to boardroom exchanges and is regarded as essential as part of the repertoire of events management offering. Does one offer carte blanche on Twitter comments, should gatekeepers be installed, at what point is social media intrusive - these are critical discussions for events managers and clients - before the event, not as a belated crisis management.

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, invisibly.

## **ABOUT TERESA JENKINS**

I am a passionate international marketer with particular bias for building sustainable brands, from inception to managing premier clients' marketing strategies and results-driven Public Relations. Outside work, I cherish spending time with family and friends, exploring wildlife and oceans through travel, indulging in reading, and embracing the adventure of lifelong learning facilitated by the internet of things.

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