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Event Management Implications for Tourism Education

DONALD E. HAWKINS and JOE JEFF GOLDBLATT*

Event management includes the functions of creating, planning, marketing, coordinating, supervising and evaluating those activities requiring public assembly for the purpose of promotion, education, reunion, advocacy and celebration. Event management requires competencies in administration, coordination, marketing, inter-personal skills, and the utilisation of human resources. This paper uses the umbrella term "event management" as a common reference point for four related certification programs: (1) Certified Festival Executive (CFE), (2) Certified Meeting Professional (CMP), (3) Certified Exposition Manager (CEM) and (4) Certified Special Events Professional (CFEI). Initiatives underway at The George Washington University are described, including event management related studies. It is concluded that colleges and universities should consider event management as an appropriate focus of curriculum development efforts at the undergraduate and levels. Specific issues which should be addressed are discussed.

The profession of event tourism management includes the functions of creating, planning, coordinating, supervising, education, reunion, advocacy, and celebration.

Getz (1993: 31) describes a special event as being open to the public, being specific theme-fun related, occurring infrequently (often one time a year), having predetermined opening and closing dates, not usually having permanent structures, usually consisting of several types of activities, all activities taking place at the same locale or region, and perhaps involving food-retail-recreation-education.

In actuality, the term "special event" first may have been used by employees of the Walt Disney Company during the opening days of the first theme park, Disneyland. According to the late Robert F. Jani, who served as director of public relations for Disneyland and is credited with creating the Main Street Electrical Parade and other special events at the park, the phrase special was coined to identify happenings in the park different from the norm. The most simplistic definition of a special event would be that which is different from a normal day of living.

Defining the term "special event" is challenging due to the variety of social, life cycle, corporate, military, religious, and educational events which may be included. However, the function of event management can be accurately defined as it requires certain specific competencies that were first identified by the Saskatchewan Tourism

Education Council (1992) in Saskatoon, Canada. This governmental council conducted a detailed study in 1990 to develop occupational standards for the job entitled "special events coordinator." The results of their study determined that five competencies are required in order to be approved by the Saskatchewan government as a "special events coordinator." These competencies are:

1. Administration
2. Coordination
3. Marketing Techniques
4. Interpersonal Skills
5. Coordination of Staff, Volunteers, and Participants

Although challenging to define, the emerging field of event management and its implications within the world's largest industry, tourism, represents a shared body of knowledge with unique competencies.

Within the convention, meetings, and expositions field, there are numerous linkages between professional certification programme competencies and current academic course offerings. Although the umbrella term "event management", like its predecessor "special event", requires a specific set of competencies and skills, currently no formal major or course sequence leading to a specific degree in higher education can be identified.

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Certification Programmes

Four certification programmes related to event management are described in the following section: (1) Certified Festival Executive, (2) Certified Meeting Professional, (3) Certified Exposition Manager and (4) Certified Special Events Professional.

Certified Festival Executive

Festivals are a major component of event tourism and marketing. Whether cultural, ethnic, artistic, religious or historical, these festivals require specific competencies as do other types of events.

The International Festival Association (IFA) working in conjunction with the Restaurant, Hotel, and Tourism Management Institute at Purdue University, has developed the following requirements in order for a festival event manager to obtain the Certified Festival Executive (CFE) designation. Four years of paid, full-time festival industry executive experience are required and candidates must successfully complete a minimum of four IFA/Purdue sponsored seminars. In addition, CFE candidates must attend a minimum of four IFA conventions within the six years previous to the date of certification. The successful candidates must also attend a regional seminar, participate in the New Professionals Seminar and complete additional service requirements. Finally, each CFE must submit a written paper suitable for publication.

Certified Meeting Professional

The convention Liaison Council is a membership organisation composed of leading associations within the conference and exposition industry. They administer the Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) examination and designation. The requirements for this designation are similar to those of other organizations. However, they are not affiliated with a university and do not require that courses be taken at a university campus. After qualifying through a service and professional experience audit, the candidate is required to sit for a written examination which combines cognitive and affective learning.

Certified Exposition Manager

The International Association for Exposition Management administers the Certified Exposition Manager (CEM) designation. This designation combines both practical experience, through an audit of professional and educational experiences, with a formal written examination.

Certified Special Events Professional

The International Special Events Society (ISES) Educational Foundation administers the Certified Special

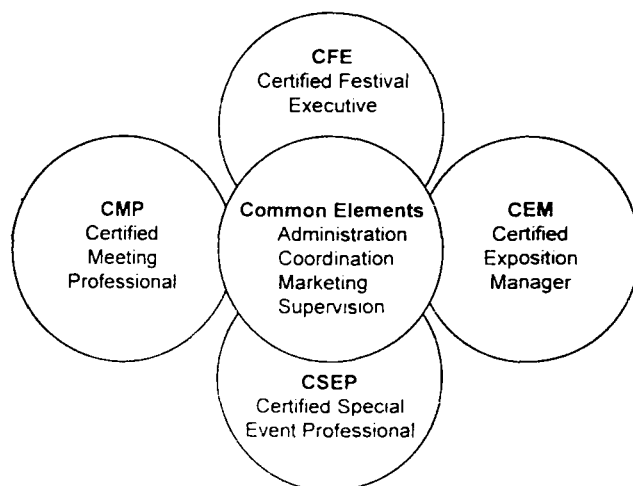
Events Professional (CSEP) designation. This designation, the most recent of all the industry linked organizations, requires a minimum number of points be achieved before the candidate may sit for a six hour written examination. Points are awarded for professional experience, educational activities including attendance at programmes, and professional contributions to the literature in the field of special event management. Candidates are required to attend a minimum of two ISES Conferences for Professional Development prior to being awarded the CSEP designation.

Furthermore, although not yet in place, the ISES will require recertification through a process soon to be determined.

Commonalties Among Certification Programmes

Each of the four certification programmes examined requires four competencies in order for the candidate to be judged by his or her peers as worthy of an industry sanctioned designation (See Fig. 1). These competencies include: administration, coordination, marketing and supervision.

Figure 1
Common Elements
Event Management-Related Certification Programs



Within each of these competencies, a variety of critical skills are required. For example, the International Special Events Society (1992) has identified the following competencies for testing during the CSEP examination, which also are closely related to the other certification programmes listed above.

Administration

- Ensure that the event complies with all federal, state, or local legislation.
- Create structure of responsibility pertaining to event and staffing.
- Identify problem areas, weaknesses, threats, and evaluate options.
- Execute necessary leases and other agreements.
- Evaluate liabilities and obtain insurance.
- Oversee all financial details including budgets, cash flow statements, income/expenses, etc.

Coordination

- Identify event elements and determine logical sequencing.
- Devise contingency plans and implement when necessary.
- Develop site plan.
- Coordinate parking, communications, support staffing, power/electrical services, staging, seating, decor/design, catering, security, medical and emergency services, waste control, recycling, registration, and site tear down.
- Handle transportation needs including VIP's, public transportation, parking, and arrange for services for the disabled.
- Identify and obtain primary services such as speakers, masters of ceremony and presenters, and arrange for prizes, awards, and gifts.
- Determine need for partner programmes, optional tours and other activities as required by guests.
- Implement all aspects of staging, entertainment, lighting, special effects, including necessary permits and union labour needs.
- Determine how to coordinate design, decor, props, and signs to incorporate logo/theme and also including site set-up, tear down and storage.
- Organise technical rehearsal and performer orientation.
- Outline how to coordinate registration area.
- Establish accreditation system.
- Establish and implement transportation plan.
- Arrange all staff, volunteer, and participant meals.

Marketing

- Identify and develop promotional strategy.
- Incorporate protocol information where required.
- Organize hospitality programmes.
- Show volunteer, staff, or participant appreciation.

Supervision

- Prepare and conduct training and/or orientation programmes.
- Assess needs, resources, and time restrictions.
- Create occupational descriptions and documents.
- Develop evaluation criteria and performance reviews.
- Demonstrate ability to resolve conflicts.
- Establish a recognition and reward programme for staff and volunteers.

Related Studies

Hester (1993) examined the conceptual components of event management and explored both the educational preparation and competencies needed to successfully engage in this emerging profession. Hester, noting that there appeared to be a need for event management education, interviewed event-related industry organizations including those identified above and mailed 34 questionnaires to event management industry professionals. Fourteen of the 20 respondents declared that a professional degree in event management is necessary.

Hester also confirmed that, except for individual courses in special event management at some post secondary institutions, there exists no formal course sequence which would provide a professional education curriculum in event management.

Further research conducted by the International Special Events Society (1993-94) determined that one of the primary reasons professionals joined that organization is to benefit from educational programmes. Currently their educational programmes are limited to an annual three-day conference for professional development.

Initiatives Under Consideration

In order to explore the event management field in more depth, several initiatives are under consideration at The George Washington University which may be of interest.

The International Special Events Society and The George Washington University are collaborating to conduct a study of the event management field. The results of

this study will include the typical academic background of event management professionals and length of experience in the profession. Using this preliminary data, curriculum specialists are planning to conduct a gap analysis and determine those competencies which require further development. Another study is being designed to assess the learning styles of event management professionals. A series of focus groups is being convened with experienced and limited experienced event management professionals to determine their competency levels and needs regarding future career development.

In the spring of 1994, the George Washington University sponsored the First World Congress on Sport Event Safety and Security, which convened disparate industry groups to recommend guidelines for sport event safety. Security, fire, safety, and event management executives discussed recent events, such as the violent attacks on athletes Nancy Kerrigan and Monica Seles, as well as the World Cup soccer tournament crowd management procedures. This body of experts agreed that more must be done to focus the spectators', participants', athletes', as well as the event managers', attention on more effective planning and management steps required to insure safer events.

Implications for Tourism Education

Within the tourism industry, one of the fastest growing areas is event tourism. Whether hallmark events or neighbourhood festivals, the economic impact and sustainability aspects of events are only recently being measured in a scientific manner.

While visiting the infamous Tenderloin section of San Francisco, an urban anthropologist asked a social worker from this depressed area an interesting question. "Is there one activity which brings together the many diverse elements in your community for even a temporary time of understanding and communication?" The social worker

quickly responded, "We have over 50 different ethnic minorities living here and most are below the poverty level. In addition we have the largest homeless problem in the U.S. with 10,000 vagrants and only 2,000 beds. However, come to think of it, there is one time when every aspect of the Tenderloin community comes together for a unifying experience. That's our annual arts festival" (Goldblatt, 1992 personal communication).

As colleges and universities address event management as a focus of curriculum development efforts at the undergraduate and graduate levels, they will need to address the following questions or issues: Should event management be a separate degree programme or a concentration area? Can event management integrate convention, festival, exposition and special events planning and management activities under a common curriculum? How is event management related to the overall tourism and hospitality field? At what level(s) should event management curriculum be delivered: technical, undergraduate or graduate?

At this early stage, The George Washington University has developed a concentration of courses in event management in its Master of Tourism Administration programme to encourage leadership development in this important area. Also, the same university is launching an event management certificate programme to meet the more immediate training needs of personnel employed in the field or those desiring entry-level skills.

Efforts to develop event management curricula and research activities should be encouraged. These early efforts should be carefully monitored and evaluated in terms of measurable outcomes before more extensive professional education programme are initiated. Event management, however, appears to be a promising area which deserves attention by post-secondary institutions preparing tourism and hospitality personnel.

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