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Anton Shone and Bryn Parry

SUCCESSFUL EVENT MANAGEMENT

A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK

FIFTH EDITION



SUCCESSFUL EVENT MANAGEMENT A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK

Anton Shone and Bryn Parry **Fifth Edition**



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Anton Shone and Bryn Parry**

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PREFACE TO THE FIFTH EDITION

This book is in two parts: the first part, chapters one to four, presents a picture of the events business; the second part, from chapter five onwards, is about how to organise events. My advice to the reader is to take this book as a complete approach: not just the text, but also the diagrams, case studies and the discussion questions set in the case studies. This will help you learn more. For the beginner, or someone wanting ‘a thirty-minute guide’ to organising events, your first step is to look at the forms listed in the front of the book to give you some idea of what you are going to need, and then start with chapter five.

I have taken a deliberately European approach. This is for two reasons. Firstly, many of the range of books in this subject area of events management are either American or Australian and tend to contain examples (especially the American texts) which may not have huge relevance to the European experience. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, because we, as Europeans, do not explore the extent and quality of our knowledge and mutual experience sufficiently. Partly this was due to language barriers and to perceived cultural differences. However, in the age of the internet and in the twenty-first century, language is an increasing irrelevance, when the common language of the net is English, and culturally, well, we are Europeans. More unites us than divides us, as most young people, having backpacked their way around the continent and drunk cappuccinos in open-air cafés from Galway to Genoa, know very well. This being the case, the book contains material from all over Europe and all money is stated in Euros. As a convention, all case study material is real as named. However, some more generalised examples are given to illustrate the text and to help the reader; in these cases the fictitious town of ‘Middleburg’ is used. We are aware of the limitation of generic examples, but this one remains for the present. For those who live in the Dutch provincial capital of Middelburg, or any European town from Mittelburg to Middlesborough, I hope you will excuse this small liberty and not search too hard for the Arboretum, the Venetian Bridge or the pub.

I am extremely grateful for the contributions made to this book by many people and organisations and I thank most kindly all those who have contributed in some way, great or small, and in particular for this edition, our reviewers. We cannot, of course, accommodate everything which has been fed back, but in this fifth edition I have taken the opportunity to revise those sections of the book that most needed bringing up to date. I have paid attention to the case study material and have added a number of new cases, and revised and brought up to date virtually all others. Most especially I have overhauled the reference material, I have also included suggested weblinks and YouTube clips, but the reader must be aware that link rot affects anything on the web, and what is current and available as I write this edition may not remain on the web even by the time the book is published. This is a risk we take and it is still within the ability of all who read this book to search for supporting

material themselves. In certain examples where I have removed old cases, these have been made available via the book's companion website: as 'Classic Cases' in order that they can still be used if they are of interest.

In updating, further work has been done on the sections about online ticketing, and in terms of social media whose technology and use changes extremely rapidly. New material has also been added in terms of the work which charities and volunteers do; in terms of catering and hospitality activities, such as mobile and street catering; in risk management and in the development of methods of analysis of the external environment in the form of the PESTELI approach, which now also looks at sustainability. New information has been written in to cover issues such as terrorism, safety and disasters, and in terms of equality, mobility and inclusivity, which are introduced in Chapters 9 and 10.

For this edition the figures and diagrams have been revised and I hope the careful consideration of these assists the understanding of the reader. I hope these changes will ensure the book remains effective as a practical guide. This said, the book is by no means definitive and I urge the reader to bear that in mind and to use it as a starting place for further study. Any comments which readers may wish to make will be gladly received.

Anton Shone, written in Derby and in Florsheim.

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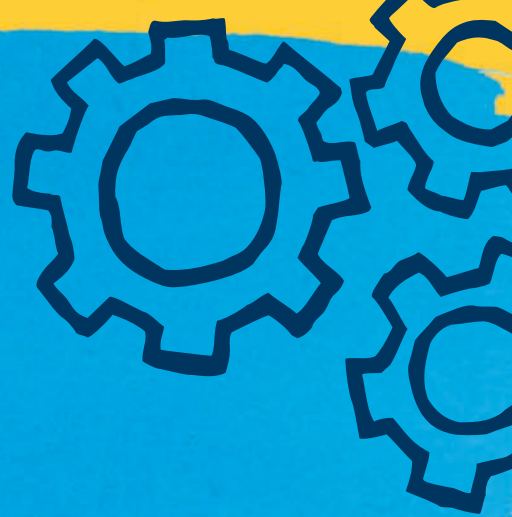
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PART 1

THE EVENTS BUSINESS

- 
- 1** An introduction to events
 - 2** The market demand for events
 - 3** The events business: supply and suppliers
 - 4** Social, economic, political and developmental implications

CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO EVENTS

AIMS

- To consider a definition of, and framework for, special events
- To provide a categorisation and typology for special events, together with an overview of the historical context
- To identify the key characteristics of events, in order to understand the business of events management as a service activity

INTRODUCTION

Events have long played an important role in human society. The tedium of daily life, with its constant toil and effort, was broken up by events of all kinds. In most societies, the slightest excuse could be found for a good celebration, although traditional celebrations often had strict ceremonies and rituals. In Europe, particularly before the industrial revolution, routine daily activities were regularly interspersed with festivals and carnivals. Personal events or local events to celebrate certain times of year, perhaps related to religious holy days, were also common. This role in society was, and is, of considerable importance. In the modern world some of the historic driving forces for events have changed. For example, religious reasons for staging major festivals have, perhaps, become less important, but we still see carnivals, fairs and festivals in all sorts of places and at various times of year, locally, nationally and internationally (Ferdinand *et al.*, 2017). Many of these events, although traditional in origin, play a contemporary role by attracting tourists (and thus tourist income) to a particular place. Some major events, however, still revolve around periods such as Christmas or Easter in the Christian calendar, and towns and cities throughout Europe often hold major festivals based on these times. Even in those countries where religion is no longer as important as it once was, the celebration of originally religious, and other folk festivals, still takes place; so do older festivals related to the seasons, including the celebration of spring, with activities such as dancing round a maypole, decorating water wells or crowning the Lord and Lady of May. Harvest time continues to provide a reason for a seasonal celebration in rural locations. At the same time, many historic, traditional or ‘folk’ ceremonies and rituals are, in practice, recent inventions or recreations.

We can grasp therefore that **special events** were often historically crucial to the social fabric of day-to-day life. In modern times we are often so used to special events that we do not necessarily see them in this context (e.g. Mother’s Day). It is also sometimes difficult for the student of events to understand the full extent of these activities, their variety, their role and how they are run. Unlike many industries we cannot say, ‘Well, this industry is worth maybe €30 billion a year,’ or whatever. In fact, it is quite difficult to quantify in monetary terms how much events are worth ‘as an industry’ due to opaque definitions and overlapping market sector boundaries. Such a calculation is problematic, because the range of events is vast, from big internationally organised sports spectacles such as the Olympics, to the family naming ceremony of the new baby next door. All we can reasonably say, perhaps, is that we can look at any one event in isolation and see what value or pleasure it generates. Indeed, certain events have the purpose of creating wealth or economic value in some way, as well as entertaining and cementing society, but these are not the only reasons for holding events, nor should they be.

Special events

Special events are that phenomenon arising from those non-routine occasions which have leisure, cultural, personal or organisational objectives set apart from the normal activity of daily life, and whose purpose is to enlighten, celebrate, entertain or challenge the experience of a group of people.

DEFINITIONS AND FRAMEWORKS

For the student of events, we have to provide some context or framework to begin to understand the nature of the activity and the issues about management and organisation surrounding it. This being the case, and for convenience, we need to attempt both a definition and a means of classification:

Authors such as Goldblatt (2014) have chosen to highlight the celebratory aspect of events:

‘Special events: a unique moment in time celebrated with ceremony and ritual to achieve specific objectives.’

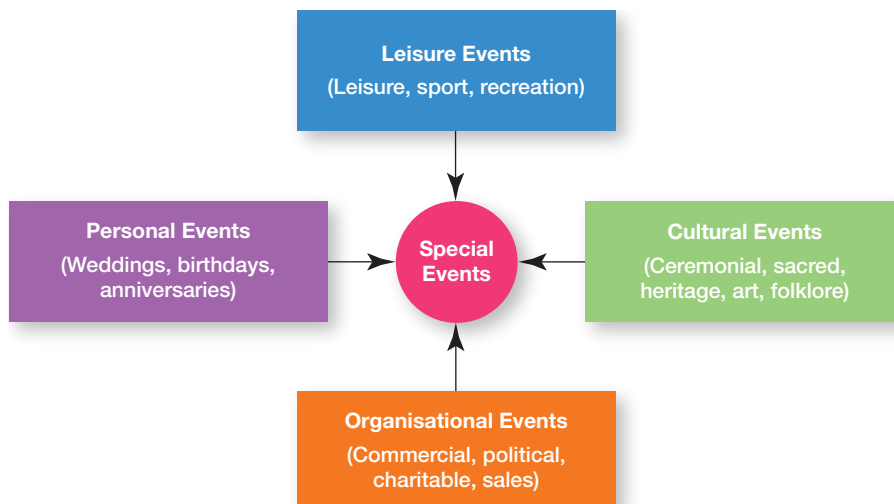
Although this definition clearly works for events like weddings, parades, inaugurations, and so on, it works less well for activities like engineering exhibitions, sports competitions, **product launches**, etc. Getz (2005), in referring to the experience that **participants** have, states:

‘To the customer or guest, a special event is an opportunity for a leisure, social or cultural experience outside the normal range of choices or beyond everyday experience.’

This definition, too, has its advantages, but also seems to exclude organisational events of various kinds. Nevertheless, it is a place to start and from it we can begin to look at the vast range of events that take place.

To do so, it helps to have some means of classification (Bassett and Dowson, 2018). Figure 1.1, for convenience, splits events into four broad categories based on the concept (in our definition) of events having leisure, cultural, personal or organisational objectives. It is crucial to bear in mind, when considering this categorisation, that there are frequent overlaps. For example, the graduation of a student from university is both a personal event for the student and their family, and an organisational event for the university. A village carnival is both a cultural event, perhaps celebrating some aspect of local heritage or folklore, and a leisure event, possibly both for local people and for tourists. Therefore, overlaps should be seen as inevitable rather than exceptional, and any attempt to categorise an event, even by analysing its objectives, its organisers or its origins, will have to take account of this, even if we can agree that a particular event does fall into such and such a category.

Figure 1.1 A suggested categorisation of special events



product launches

A 'show' to introduce an audience, such as the media, to a new product or service. It may also be aimed at an organisation's internal management and staff, sales force or external dealers and customers.

participants

A person attending an event who is actively taking part in it, or in some activity related to it.

CATEGORIES AND TYPOLOGIES

In the following section we will begin to consider how this proposed categorisation might be developed to take in the great variety of events. It is a useful starting point, and one we can adopt to help us look at the context and precedents for modern events, and as a means of understanding their breadth and variety.

In looking at the various kinds of special events, whether these are leisure-based, personal, cultural or organisational, it is possible to identify a number of characteristics that they have in common, thus helping us understand what special events are and how they work, as well as differentiating them from other activities.

Our definition of events could be given a shorthand version: ‘Those non-routine occasions set apart from the normal activity of daily life of a group of people’ but this may not necessarily give a feel for the specialised nature of the activity. We can say specialised because of the uniqueness of events, but also because such events may often be celebratory or ceremonial in some way. This is an aspect that other authors, including Goldblatt, have highlighted. Clearly this approach can be applied to activities such as weddings, product launches, prizegivings, etc. On the other hand, it may be less suited to events such as exhibitions, sport days or annual **conferences**, although it can be argued that even an exhibition of paintings or a sales conference may have an element of ceremony about it, since someone has to open it; but insofar as exhibitions, conferences, and so on are non-routine, the definition is usable. For the purpose of illustrating the four categories, and to demonstrate historical progression, this chapter explores four case studies: for leisure events, the ancient Olympic Games; for personal events, a Roman wedding; for cultural events, the Royal Diamond Jubilees of 1897 and 2012 (which, for those interested in the overlaps, could also be said to be political and therefore organisational); and for organisational events themselves, the Paris Exposition of 1889.

Special events vary tremendously in size and complexity, from the simple and small, such as the village fête, to the huge, complex and international, such as the Olympic Games (Gammon *et al.*, 2015). To understand the relative levels of complexity involved we can attempt to provide a typology. It is necessary to consider events as having both organisational complexity and uncertainty. Complexity is fairly easy to understand, whereas uncertainty, as a concept, is a little more problematic. By uncertainty we mean initial doubt about such issues as the cost, the time schedule and the technical requirements. Thus, it can be understood that, at the beginning, the uncertainty about the cost, the timing and the technical needs of organising the Olympic Games far exceeds the uncertainty of, say, a training conference or a small wedding reception. In order to quantify the complexity, in the typology in Figure 1.2, varying levels of organisational complexity have been used, ranging from individual to multinational. Using this typology, it is possible to propose a classification of various events, in order to understand the comparative demands that such events might place on organisers or events managers.

Even where an event is relatively simple, the number of people attending may make it very complex indeed. There is a world of difference between a birthday party for six people and a birthday party for 60 people, even though the format, structure and basic idea may be the same. The typology must be seen with this limitation in mind. Indeed, it is this concept of size which often means the difference between an amateur organiser or a family member running an event on the one hand, or having to employ an event manager, go to a hotel or find specialist advice on the other. Size or number of **attendees** is something that easily catches people out. We can all organise a dinner party for eight or ten people, even a buffet for maybe 20 or 30, but after that the sheer effort involved would overwhelm us: not enough space, not enough equipment, and not enough people to help, and so on. The events management business in the

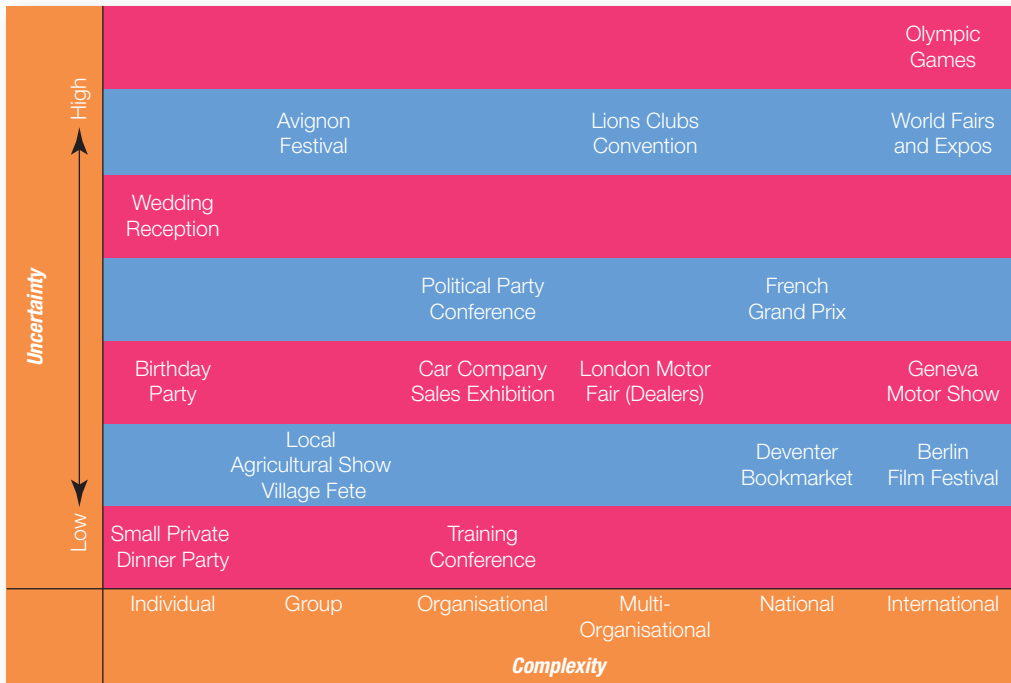
conference

A meeting whose purpose is the interchange of ideas.

attendees

A group of people attending an event, for a range of purposes, from watching the event take place, to actively participating in some or all of the event's activities.

Figure 1.2 A typology of events



Based on Slack *et al.*, 2001, *Operations Management*, London, Pitman, 3rd edition, pp. 585–595

contemporary world, whether it concerns the annual dinner of the local town council or the organisation of the European Figure Skating Championships, is often about the need for trained staff, specialist companies and professional expertise.

HISTORICAL CONTEXTS AND PRECEDENTS

Events management can be thought of as an art, rather than a science. Historically, the organisation of small local events was relatively uncomplicated and needed no extensive managerial expertise. The organisation of a wedding, for example, could be done most often by the bride's mother with help from the two families involved and a vicar, priest, religious or other official representative. (In past times, especially up until the Victorian period, 'expert' advice often came in the form of a Dancing Master, employed to give the wedding festivities some formality of style. There were also quite specific local rituals to be observed, which acted as 'checklists' for the activities.) Some weddings are still done this way, and are within the ability of non-specialist people to organise and run: the bride and groom deal with the ceremony, the bride's mother or father orders the cake and a buffet from a local baker, family and friends do some or all of it; the reception is held in one of the family homes or a village hall, flowers come from gardens or are obtained from a nearby flower shop, and so on. All these tasks were, and can still be, coped with in an intimate and sociable way with no great cost or fuss.

While special events, by their nature are not routine, pressure for formal organisational or technological skill was not so great in the past for local, family or small-scale events. This is not to say that large-scale events management is a particularly recent development, only that the modern world with its many complexities



CASE STUDY 1

Leisure/sporting events: the Olympic Games



Olympia, Greece

UniversalImagesGroup/Getty Images



Fragment of a Greek relief frieze c. 500 BC depicting wrestlers in practice

FACTBOX

- Ancient Olympic Games first held in 776 BC, last held in 393
- Restarted in modern times in 1896
- Held every four years
- Ancient games were part of the religious festival of Zeus, the chief Greek god
- Modern games are a major economic activity

Learning Objectives

The aim of this case study is to examine the historical background to the Olympic Games with the following objectives:

- To consider the historical development of the Games.
- To highlight comparisons between the ancient Olympics and the modern ones.
- To understand the differences between the ancient and the modern Games.

The modern Olympic Games are loosely based on the games of the ancient Greeks. Those games, first held in 776 BC at Olympia, in Greece, had the purpose of celebrating the festival of Zeus, the most important Greek god. They were organised by the temple priests and their helpers, and carried on for many years at four-yearly intervals, even

though Greece was normally at war (quite usual in those times). One of the most important aspects of the games was the truce that existed to allow them to take place and to enable the participants, mostly the nobility and professional athletes, together with pilgrims (who were travelling to the temple of Zeus at Olympia), to get to the games safely. The ancient

games at first had only one component, the 'stade', a footrace. Later they included not only the stade (about 150 metres, hence the word 'stadium'), but also the pentathlon (the discus, the jump, the javelin, another race and wrestling), together with a chariot race, a horse race and the pankration – a very violent form of wrestling. All of these were performed naked, in the Greek style, although, as the games also celebrated military prowess, the final footrace was performed in full armour. The games lasted for five days and included various religious ceremonies, the main religious aspect being the worship of Zeus, although the women had their own games in honour of the goddess Hera (married women were not permitted at the men's games, even to watch).

The games were organised by the religious authorities of Olympia and involved professional trainers and referees for the events as well as judges. There were also social events and, rather like the modern games, a parade of champions on the final day. The ancient games continued, in all, for about 1200 years and were closed down by the Roman Emperor Theodosius II in 393. The modern

games began again at Athens in 1896, followed by Paris in 1900, and then more or less every four years to the present day (Swadding, 2011; Wallechinsky and Loucky, 2012).

Discussion Questions

Investigate the modern Olympic Games and compare them to the ancient ones.

- 1 Where were the most recent games held?
- 2 How many people attended them?
- 3 How many people participated?
- 4 How were the games organised and what support services were involved?
- 5 How many people did the games employ during the peak period?
- 6 To what use were the games' buildings put after the games had finished?
- 7 How much do the modern games differ from the ancient ones?

Further Reading

Related website for those interested in the Olympics: www.olympic.org and for interesting comment and critique of the Olympics, search: www.guardian.co.uk/.

often requires specialists to do what, in gentler times, could be done by thoughtful amateurs or ordinary people. We should not mistake history, however. The scale and complexity of, say, the Greek or Roman gladiatorial games (which comprised vast numbers of activities, set-piece contests and even theatrically-mounted sea battles – the Romans were sufficiently advanced that they could flood their arenas) certainly had what today would be considered as a professional events management organisation to run them. This can also be seen in our first case study of the ancient Olympic Games, which helps to illustrate our first category of leisure events.

Looking back in history we can see, however, that events have always had a significant role to play in society, either to break up the dull, grinding routine of daily life (toiling in the fields, perhaps) or to emphasise some important activity or person (such as the arrival of a new abbot at the local monastery). We can trace all sorts of special events far back in time, even if they are the result of some recent 're-invention'. For as long as humanity has lived in family groups there will have been celebrations of weddings, births, religious rites, and so on. In following up the categorisation suggested earlier of events being leisure-based, personal, cultural or organisational in origin, we can consequently seek various historical examples or precedents. That said, we must be careful not to believe that earlier times or other societies had the same cultural attitudes as we have today.

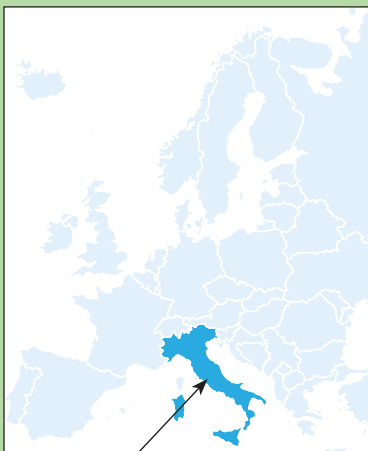
The second category of special events in our approach is that of personal events. This includes all sorts of occasions that a family or friends might be involved in.

Many modern aspects of family life can be seen to revolve around important occasions: birthdays, namings, weddings and anniversaries all fall into this category, as do many other personal events and celebrations (a dinner party is a special event in our definition). Of all these, weddings can be one of the most complicated to organise, involving friends and family and a whole range of related service activities, from catering to entertainment, as well as the formal aspect of the marriage ceremony itself. This is not to say that all weddings are a ‘big performance’, some are small, friendly and relaxed, and just as good for it – size is no measure of the success of an event. Almost all cultures known to history have some form of partnership ceremony, and in looking for a historical precedent for personal events, the Romans can provide an example.

Special events cover all kinds of human and cultural activity, not only sporting and family activities, but also cultural and commercial or organisational activities. Culture, with its associated ceremony and traditions, has a role in both in all kinds of social activities: and for all kinds of people, organisations and institutions. (Robinson *et al.*, 2010). But it has been especially important for governments and leaders, such as royalty. In cultural events ceremony becomes very evident, often as a way of emphasising the significance of the event itself or of the person at the centre of the ceremony, the intended effect being to secure support, or to allow as many people as possible to recognise the key individual. For example, the media often show heads of state (kings, queens, presidents) inspecting a ‘guard of honour’ when arriving at the airport of a country they are visiting; they listen to the national anthem and then walk past the guard of honour. The original purpose of this ceremony was not for the head of state to see the guards, but for the guards to see the head of state, so that the guards would recognise the person they were to protect.

CASE STUDY 2

Personal events: a Roman wedding



Rome, Italy



A. DAGLI ORTI/De Agostini/Getty Images

Roman marble sarcophagus, 3rd century AD with a relief depicting a wedding ceremony