

Implementing collaborative strategies among the XXIV European Rhythmic Gymnastic Championship (Eurhythmics) stakeholders

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Aim of paper

Numerous stakeholders are contributing to the success of a sports event. This network and the interactions between key stakeholders are essential for the success of any event (O'Brien & Chalip, 2007; Parent & Seguin, 2007; Parent, 2008). The local organising committee (LOC) should conceive and implement strategies, originally focusing on international federations, rights owners, audience, sponsors and media, but nowadays addressing a large number of stakeholders (i.e. governments, public sector, local authorities, etc.), constituting a network defined by their relationships. This communication is aiming at presenting a process aiming at engaging stakeholders and their resources based on their importance on the network, the goals convergence and their capability to share and coordinate their resources. This event-driven network stimulates those stakeholders to implement a relationship marketing strategy and to create a value constellation which provides benefits for all.

Organisational/managerial context

After hosting the Winter Olympic Games Turin decided to implement a public policy aiming at organising international sports events. In particular they hosted the Fencing World Championships (2006), the winter Universiade (2007). In spring 2006, the Italian Gymnastic Federation with the support of the Local authorities in Turin won the bid for the organisation of the XXIV European Rhythmic Gymnastic Championship. In October 2007 the LOC was far behind schedule and due the conflict between its main stakeholders and to managerial skills. The Executive Committee appointed a new CEO with the mission of restructuring the LOC in order to organise a quality event two months before the Olympics Games in Beijing.

Organisational/managerial practice/issues

According to Norman and Ramirez (1993), the focus should be on the value-creating system itself, within which different stakeholders in order to co-produce value. To achieve this goal, a LOC and their stakeholders must work together. This involves managing four important areas: the stakeholders, the convergences between their respective objectives, the joint programmes that will enable these goals to be achieved and the resources mobilised by partners. In order to establish a strategy the LOC assessed using the MACTOR method (Godet, 2006) the balance of power, the convergences and divergences with respect to a number of issues, associated objectives and resources between Eurhythmics 2008 stakeholders.

According to this diagnosis the LOC decided to engage the following main stakeholders' local authorities, Italian Olympic Committee, Italian Gymnastic Federation, mains sponsors. A four step process was implemented (Ferrand and McCarthy, 2008): relationships building,

management and governance, impact assessment and valuable networks development as a legacy. Event organisation was managed as a collaborative programme and associated programmes were created and implemented in order to reinforce relationships between stakeholders and fulfil their main objectives. The main ones were: “Ceremonies on city squares” (local authorities, citizen, sponsors), gymnastics promotion in schools (UEG, Local authorities, Ministry of education, Italian Gymnastic Federation, main sponsor), social marketing per umbilical cord blood donation and funding research on stem cells (ADISCO).

Due to this relationship strategy the primary stakeholders engaged substantial resources (i.e. financial, equipment, human and technical) corresponding to 68% of the operational budget. As the result the LOC moved from an anticipated 42% loss to a positive financial position at the closure of the event. This 3 days event attracts 28.000 spectators, with 8.000 pupils from the schools. The final were sold out. Local authorities, sport organisations and the main sponsor got a positive return on relationship and they decided to get involved in new sport development programmes.

Implications for sport and sport management

Three main issues should be stressed based on the *XXIV European Rhythmic Gymnastic Championship experience*:

- Resources are a critical factor for the success of the organization of an international sport event. The LOC must create and develop relations with the stakeholders to get the necessary resources for the implementation of its mission. The relationship and interaction allows to share stakeholders' assets and liabilities (Rindova & Fombrun, 1999). This strategy can reduce the dependence with respect to the resources which can be co-built and shared (Coff, 1999; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003).
- That led the LOC and its stakeholders to develop managerial competences allowing to create value through its capacities to create an unique combinations of assets and liabilities. (Henderson & Cockburn, 1994; Maltese, 2009).
- A one shot event organization requires the implementation of set of phase requiring the involvement of a large number of stakeholders. To be successful managers must engage en core stakeholder and create a good relational dynamics based on relevant systemic governance.

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