IT'S NOW TIME TO MANAGE TIME!

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Context

In the sports event management environment, Emery (2003) has suggested that the key to successful micro-management is the effective management of the project components of the 'golden triangle,' namely the factors of quality, cost (human and financial) and time. Contemporary sports event management entails planning and controlling these interdependent factors across the lifecycle of the project, whereby success is often judged against performance outcomes of whether the sports event exceeded stakeholder expectations, and whether the project was completed on budget and time.

Whilst the management of quality, finance and human resource have received considerable analysis and coverage in the academic and professional literature, the analysis of time has not. This is quite surprising, given that in practice it is not unusual to hear of sports mega-event managers working more than 60-hour weeks for several consecutive months before the event. In some instances managers have even been known to set up their bed in their office, so as not to waste a working minute of their waking day (Westerbeek et al, 2005).

The sports event management environment may well be characterised by finite deadlines, uniqueness, and high levels of uncertainty (Watt, 1994), but such working practices cannot be conducive to good health or good management practice. In the contemporary climate of personal and organisational accountability, and the continuous search for improving management productivity, effectiveness and efficiency, time appears to be the forgotten resource. As the limiting factor for so many sports events, time management should be paramount in the sports event manager's mind, particularly as it is the one perishable resource that cannot be saved, purchased, or stopped.

It is for this reason that this exploratory research is the first phase of a series of sports event-related time management studies. These studies intend to audit current practice before promoting appropriate review and time management practices from which the event industry can hopefully prosper in its search to become a new profession (Harris, 2004).

The purpose of this particular study is two fold; first to appraise an event manager's use of time in the implementation phase of a professional basketball event, and second to determine a user-friendly and non-invasive method of data collection/analysis.

Method

Being approved by the Northumbria University ethics committee and having received written consent from the selected case study event manager, this research involved two phases of data collection. The first phase entailed direct observation of the event manager for a full working day at a randomly selected professional basketball match in the United Kingdom. Data on the event manager's activity and time use was collected by shadowing and recording (via dictaphone as well as pen and paper) all his activities/actions, immediately before, during and after the event.

The second phase of the research constituted a face-to-face, post-event structured interview with the manager. This was used to determine the normality of the event experience, the perceptions and context of the actual time use, as well as to identify potential limitations and improvements in the data collection methods.

Data analysis was then carried out manually, quantitatively by the use of inferential statistics and graphical representation, and qualitatively by individual transcript and then thematic content analysis.

- 120 attended an inaugural NW Women in Business Conference linked to the Opening Ceremony
- 70 delegates, including 18 from overseas, attended an IFI Women, Europe and Football Conference at University College of Lancashire, Preston
- 800 children were involved in a 'Euro Hakka' project and a further 1,000 cheerleaders, both involved in performances on the Opening Day and at the Final.

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Results & Discussion

The quantitative analysis revealed that more than 150 separate activities were encountered in a continuous working day of some 690 minutes. Whilst activity durations varied between 1 and 27 minutes, the diversity of activity included proactive problem solving, through to reactive formal and informal communications. In appraising ineffective time usage, it was largely attributable to the technological communication media of the telephone and the computer, as well as to the limited opportunities for delegation.

The interview findings additionally revealed that this was considered to be a 'normal event experience' and that time-wasting needed to be controlled in the future. Whilst the method of direct observation and data recording were not perceived to have influenced management or other behaviour, the method of analysis and objective use of time were reported to be a very useful exercise for the manager, in determining personal effectiveness and responsibility. As a result of this analysis, it was suggested that a new event administrator should be appointed and that time management effectiveness should be considered a future aspect of staff training.

Implications

The implications of these findings together with other research (Radu, 2005) suggest that self-monitoring of time is rarely undertaken in the current technologically driven work environment (Westerbeek et al, 2005). In a finite and technologically driven context such as that encountered in the sport event management, it is recommended that independent time analyses are regularly administered to identify internal and external time-wasting factors. In consultation with the event manager, personal management plans can then be devised to improve both personal and organisational levels of effectiveness and efficiency. In conclusion, this exploratory research has hopefully resurrected the importance of managing time alongside managing quality and cost, as well as having highlighted the need to establish event management benchmarks for time management techniques, and comparisons.

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EXPLORING THE DIMENSIONS AND TARGETS OF THE COMMITMENT BY VOLUNTEERS IN JUNIOR ATHLETICS

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Context

The commitment of volunteers is critical to the effective organisation and delivery of community-based sport (Cuskelly, McIntyre and Boag, 1998). Most definitions of organisational commitment emphasize the attitudinal and affective attachments that an individual may have for his or her organisation. Positive attitudinal and affective attachments are likely to make the individual remain in the organisation (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Further, most studies of volunteer commitment focus on the actual board or committee rather than all volunteer roles.

Meyer and Allen (1991) noted that definitions of organisational commitment reflect three broad themes: (1) an affective orientation (affective commitment); (2) recognition of the costs associated with leaving the organisation (continuance commitment); and (3) a moral obligation to remain with the organisation (normative commitment). Taken together these dimensions represent an individual's *commitment profile*. Research on the organisational commitment of volunteers has generally focused on the affective dimension of commitment, although Pearce (1993) noted that volunteers might work for other reasons, some of which can be externally compelled (a normative imperative).

There is a large volume of research supporting a multidimensional model in paid employee settings (e.g., Meyer and Allen, 1997). There is, however, limited research about the commitment profiles of volunteers, in particular, sports volunteers (Cuskelly, 1995; Cuskelly, McIntyre and Boag, 1998). Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) recently reviewed the multidimensional organisational commitment model to include other workplace targets of commitment. In this model, targets can be both entities (e.g., work group, career) and behaviours (working towards organisational change). Entity targets of salience to volunteers could be the work group (e.g., the committee) and the role(s) undertaken (e.g., official, coach, committee member).

This research attempts to extend the body of knowledge on volunteer commitment by examining its dimensionality and its relevance to targets other than the sporting organisation. Participants were recruited from Little Athletics centres in New South Wales (NSW), Australia. Little Athletics centres provide modified track and field activities and competition for children aged between 3 and 15 years. A volunteer committee runs each centre and all activities are conducted and supervised by volunteers who fulfil the roles of, for example, coaches, officials, and time-keepers.

Methods

The data for this study were collected during the NSW Little Athletics Regional Championships. Twenty-seven centres from a total of 197 NSW Centres were represented. This provided a potential volunteer sample of 250 individuals. The final sample comprised 109 volunteers (44%) from a variety of roles. This regional event had a larger than average number of very experienced volunteers, which may have skewed the results.

A survey was constructed and tested. The items in the survey were based on Meyer and Allen's organisational commitment scales (e.g., Meyer and Allen, 1991). Meyer and Allen's scales have reliability (coefficient alpha) median values of .85, .79, and .73 for the affective, continuance, and normative scales respectively. Terms were changed to make them relevant to the organisation/type of worker under study (e.g., "centre" for "organisation"; "volunteer work" for "work"). Items were developed to assess affective, continuance and normative commitment to the Little Athletics centre, the work team, and the volunteer role. A variety of demographic questions were also included. A self-completion questionnaire (using a 5-point Likert scale) was pretested with Little Athletics volunteers at one researcher's centre and revised for use in this pilot study. Questionnaire results were coded and entered into a SPSS version 12.0 for Windows file for analysis.