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From Strategy to Operations

William O'Toole

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From Strategy to Operations

William O'Toole

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Dedication

I would like to thank all the people I have worked with in this exciting industry. Tracey Hull, Ted Tooher, Marwan Bin Beyat, Hamad Al Sheikh, Habeeb Habash, Steve Schmader, Tariq Al Asser, the wonderful event teams at Liverpool City Council, Coffs Harbour Council, Dubai Tourism Commerce and Marketing, IIRME and the Aqaba Development Authority, the EMBOK executive and the International Standard in Event Management team.

The contributors to this book are numerous and I can't name you all – it would be as long as the book.

The event industry is full of people with integrity, creativity and warmth. In the years of working with people in the events in numerous countries and cultures, I have been constantly delighted by their common humanity. To all of you, this book is dedicated. Events are organised celebrations. While people are happy they do not go to war. *God smiles when his children play.* In a world that seems to be in constant conflict, it is the celebrations of harvest, knowledge, occasions, sports and business that provide the humanity.

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Foreword

Steven Wood Schmader, CFEE
President & CEO
International Festivals & Events Association (IFEA World)

Over the course of my 30+ year career in festivals and events I have had the pleasure of meeting, working with, and learning from many remarkable individuals; consummate professionals with a passion for their work, their communities, their countries and our common industry. And while my respect for them all is unquestionable, there is among them a small and special handful that I have found operate on a different plain from the norm; forces of nature, with a vision and understanding of the possibilities, and not only a desire, but a need and drive to explore and go where others have not yet imagined. Bill O'Toole may be the leader of that pack.

Bill is a unique combination of practitioner, educator and – on most days – philosopher. He sees the world as a whole, but understands, first-hand, the role that all of the many parts and pieces must play to ensure the success of the whole. He is not only about theory, nor does he stand behind his considerable experience as being beyond the need for theoretical value. It is that combination of traits that has taken Bill down many different pathways that most in our field may have walked past unnoticed, together with his willingness as a professional and individual to share his wealth of insights with all of us, that stand him out from the crowd.

While events and celebration have been a part of human history for as long as we can trace back, it is only within the past several decades that those in our own industry, and now others outside of the field, have come to recognize it more clearly as a profession and a force that can be harnessed to positively affect people, communities, and countries around the world. As economic and tourism drivers, marketing and branding tools, bonding and involvement mechanisms, infrastructure and business incentives, and much more, festivals and events are following a natural development path, much like any human endeavor; a path that can be directed, through a combination of creativity, knowledge and experience to maximize the returns for everyone.

In my role as the President & CEO of the International Festivals & Events Association (IFEA World), *The Premiere Association Enabling and Supporting Festival and Event Professionals Worldwide*, I have watched with fascination and pleasure at the continually expanding number of calls and requests from governments, corporate leadership and event organizations around the world for guidance and information about how to best use, develop and maximize this 'new' tool. As a result, the IFEA has taken on many new consulting projects, developed new programs to recognize and share best practices, and upgraded our professional education tools to help meet those needs.

In this new book, *Event Feasibility and Development*, Bill O'Toole has taken us all another giant leap forward, drawing upon his extensive global experience

and knowledge to provide a textbook development guide that can be used by cities, countries, tourism organizations and other professionals as you develop your own feasibility strategies, management plans and operation systems in an effort to maximize the success of those efforts and the resources expended in the process.

As an added value, Bill shares with us a variety of successful case studies and interviews with event professionals from around the world, giving readers a rare opportunity to recognize the many similarities (and differences) that those in our industry share and a renewed understanding of the amazing impact and return-on-investment that events have had and will continue to have upon the world around us.

I always look forward to those opportunities when my own travels cross with those of Bill O'Toole's, because wherever we may be in the world I know that I will learn something new. For the readers of this book, no matter what starting point you may be coming from, I can promise that you, too, will learn something new and valuable. Enjoy the journey.

PREAMBLE

This is a textbook from the frontline of events development. I realised that the work I was doing was called events when we wrote the first textbook in 1998. Up until then I was a promoter or entrepreneur. I owned and managed an agency with a major record company in Australia, Larrikin Records. Our 'product', or line up of talent, was unusual and therefore a large part of my work consisted of coming up with ideas to employ them.

We approached major companies and government organisations with ideas for events. Although they had their marketing departments, we found that the larger the company the greater the need for outsourcing creative ideas. It was a chink in the corporate organisation's wall. The large organisations had the 'muscle' – power and money – and we had the ideas and we were in touch with the market and the trends. We could move quickly, looking for opportunities and gathering a project team to organise an innovative event.

Event management as a business, at this stage, was unheard of. Most event organisers were seen as the 'party people', the people who put on a party. It was regarded as low down the corporate hierarchy and, basically, anyone who has organised a children's birthday party could do it. This was not helped by the attitude of the event planners, who kept the secrets to themselves. At that stage, their secrecy was their competitive edge. The secret of a successful corporate function was the knowledge that gave them an edge on the competition. It has the not-so-insignificant effect that the event could not go ahead without the event planner. The concepts of accountability, status reports, management competency and cost–benefit analysis are a recent addition to the science and art of event management.

There were two trends that changed the secrecy and mystery of event management. First was the growth in importance of events. Numerous experts in the field,

such as Don Getz and Julia Rutherford Silvers, have commented on the exponential growth of events. They have grown in number and importance. At the same time the term 'event' has expanded to include sports, exhibitions, meetings and community celebrations. As a result a large company found it was involved in numerous events. They organised internal events, such as staff parties, training seminars and incentives. They used events to market their products and services such as product launches and exhibitions. They supported community events as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). They sponsored major events such as the sports and festivals. When viewed from the event perspective, the company was heavily involved in events. Exactly the same was happening to local authorities such as councils, governments and government departments. The organisation of events was distributed across numerous company divisions. The marketing department was concerned with product launches, openings and the odd travelling exhibition. The executive assistant or communications team organised the seminars and conferences. Sponsorship of events was controlled by a combination of marketing and finance. Human resources organised the training and a recruitment event. Everyone had a hand in the staff party.

The next trend was the arrival of formal risk management. I won't go into the reasons for the growth of risk management, suffice it to point out that it is here to stay. In the event context, risk management provides a pathway of accountability for any risks. If something goes wrong, the responsibility for the fault will find its way via the risk management plans until it rests with those responsible. If there is an incident at an event, the responsibility may be apportioned to the board of directors of the company. No longer can the senior management of an organisation say they are not responsible for the operations of the staff party. Although this varies with different countries, laws concerning corporate responsibility and board liability are certainly spreading rapidly around the world.

Risk management and the growth in importance of events imply that management of the event must be competent. This reflects the maturing of the event industry.

The large companies were fascinated. They knew there was a return on investment for events. The new telcos and the software companies were heavily involved in events. By sponsoring the right event the highly competitive mobile telephone companies could beat their opposition and get into a new market dominated by the government telecommunication company. This produced the new term for many promotional events-experiential marketing.

The events and festivals we organised ranged from a 12-day magic festival to a concert in the middle of Borneo (Indonesia) with the local Dayaks. In one case I organised a 2-day public awareness event in a swamp. It was a 9-hour drive from a major city and had no infrastructure. By carefully developing the event, the result was a live broadcast to Asia and the Pacific, a CD and a video that grossed millions of dollars, as well as the event itself. I had no idea when I began the project that this would be the result.

I heard the term 'it'll never work' so often that I took it as a challenge. The problem with events feasibility and development is that events are special and if

someone thought they would work, it would already be happening. Inevitably, there will be many people who cannot imagine a new event.

Events development is not a linear path. The growth of an event – I refer to increase in quality and size – does not follow a simple ratio. Putting more money into an event does not necessarily mean that the event will grow proportionally. Doubling the amount of advertising or promotion does not mean doubling the audience.

Events feasibility and development are the most rapid growing areas of the industry. The fast developing economies of Asia, South and East Africa and the Gulf are hungry for events. Unfortunately, in my opinion, their first response is to 'buy in' major events with little thought to the legacy of the event.

In part this text is written to assist those countries to develop their events and gain a maximum return to their populations from the events they have bought from overseas. These major events can leave a real legacy of knowledge and skills. One must realise that the current major events – particularly sporting events – that are sold around the world were originally developed by enthusiasts. From the Grand Prix to the Olympics, it was local enthusiasts who created them. The lesson is that a country can develop its own major events (and sell them to other countries) by assisting local enthusiasts.

My recent work has been in Jordan, United Arab Emirates (Dubai) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In each of these countries there is a vibrant culture and innumerable local events. In Entebbe and Khartoum I have been training the UN event staff in event management. In the Sudan, a country ravaged by strife, events will help heal the social and economic wounds. After years in the doldrums, the economies of Uganda and Kenya are powering ahead and will be in need of more commercial and public events to assist their development. I am privileged to 'sit in the front row' and take part in this unfolding history.

About the Author

William O'Toole, BSc, MEng
Manager of EPMS Pty Ltd
Founding Director of Event Management Body of Knowledge (EMBOK)
Events Development Consultant to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

William is recognised as a key person in the creation and development of the event sector around the world. His experience has spanned the globe and events from operations to management to strategy development.

Recently, he worked as an events development specialist for the governments of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the European Union, Dubai Tourism Commerce and Marketing, the Aqaba Development Authority and numerous councils and local authorities. He trained events staff in the UN in Khartoum and Entebbe. He originated and advised on the inaugural events conferences for both Kenya and Uganda.

William has been creating and organising events for more than 30 years. His experience in developing, managing or consulting events spans over 40 countries. He is a sought-after presenter and teacher in event management in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Taiwan, UK, USA, Malaysia and the Middle East. He is an Event Management Consultant to public and private organisations for events throughout Australia and Asia, including numerous tourism and regional authorities on their event support mechanisms.

He authored two international texts on event management, 'Festival and Special Event Management' and 'Corporate Event Project Management'. These textbooks are used for courses around the world and have been translated into Chinese, Korean and Portuguese. His adaptation of project management to event and festival management as published on his CD-ROM, found at www.epms.net, is used for events in USA, Europe and China.

William originated the concept of the event management body of knowledge (EMBOK) which has grown into an international body and is the basis of the International Competency Standard for Event Management. He is not only versed in theory William currently organises concerts, festivals and other events around Australia and throughout Asia.

Author with event managers in bedouin tent, Qassim, Saudi Arabia. Photo courtesy of Unaizah Governor's Office

Series Preface

The events industry, including festivals, meetings, conferences, exhibitions, incentives, sports and a range of other events, is rapidly developing and makes a significant contribution to business and leisure related tourism. With increased regulation and the growth of government and corporate involvement in events, the environment has become much more complex. Event managers are now required to identify and service a wide range of stakeholders and to balance their needs and objectives. Though mainly operating at national levels, there has been significant growth of academic provision to meet the needs of events and related industries and the organizations that comprise them. The English speaking nations, together with key Northern European countries, have developed programmes of study leading to the award of diploma, undergraduate and post-graduate awards. These courses focus on providing education and training for future event professionals, and cover areas such as event planning and management, marketing, finance, human resource management and operations. Modules in events management are also included in many tourism, leisure, recreation and hospitality qualifications in universities and colleges.

The rapid growth of such courses has meant that there is a vast gap in the available literature on this topic for lecturers, students and professionals alike. To this end, the ***Events Management Series*** has been created to meet these needs to create a planned and targeted set of publications in this area.

Aimed at academic and management development in events management and related studies, the ***Events Management Series***:

- provides a portfolio of titles which match management development needs through various stages;
- prioritizes publication of texts where there are current gaps in the market, or where current provision is unsatisfactory;
- develops a portfolio of both practical and stimulating texts;
- provides a basis for theoretical and research underpinning for programmes of study;
- is recognized as being of consistent high quality;
- will quickly become the series of first choice for both authors and users.