Divergent managerial approaches: The increasing professionalism of UK arts festival management

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Overview

- Research Methods
- Definitions
- Professionalisation
- Communities of practice
- Job recruitment
- Education & training
- 'Types' of organisers
- Role of volunteers
- Programming content
- Conclusions
Research context & methods

- Study of ‘combined arts festivals’
  - Defined as those containing more than one genre of arts
  - 40% of all arts festivals in the UK (Rolfe, 1992)

- 42-question mail-back survey questionnaire
  - 56% response rate
  - 66 CAF in sample
  - Analysed by size and years in existence

- In-depth interviews with 18 organisers (2004)
  - Based on festival size and years in existence

- Case studies (2004-5)
  - Cardiff Festival
  - Henley Festival
  - Lichfield Festival
  - Lafrowda Festival (Cornwall)
How does 'occupation' become 'profession'?

- Creation of specialist body of knowledge – university qualification
- Control over specialised client market
- Establishment of specialist work practice & responsibilities

(Bounds, 2004, 256)
Festival management professionalisation elements

- Education & Training
- Trade associations
- Qualifications & 'best practice'
- Advances in recruitment
- Research standards
- Formal organisational structure
Communities of practice

- Furthering employment respectability
- Publicising festivals in their 'communities'
- Publishing best practice reports
- Hosting conferences
  - Industry, academia, public & private sectors
  - Landmark locations to promote status, importance and respectability
Standards for recruitment

- Degree / Qualification
- Experience in management skills
- Knowledge of contemporary festival issues
- Competitive salary

- Shift from amateur volunteers --> professional career opportunity

- Emphasis on business skills rather than arts knowledge
Education & Training

- 85% event professionals plan on continuing education to stay current and further career (Goldblatt, 2000)

- HE & FE courses
  - Business, Management & Marketing
  - Cultural studies / Social Science
  - Tourism, Hospitality & Leisure
  - 'Eventology'

- Academia: research, publications, methods, conferences, consultancy, exchange of ideas
'Types' of arts festival organisers

- 'Traditional' organisers
  - Volunteer, part-time or seasonal hire
  - Resident, part of community
  - Amateur performances, some professionals
  - Small (less 10,000 attendees)
  - Few festival events per day
  - Motivated by passion for arts and/or giving back to the community
  - Views organisation as social activity
  - Plans for future include continuing organising same festival or retiring from organisation
Pros and Cons of 'traditional' organiser

- Knows community and what they like
- Passionate about arts – makes it priority
- Not trying to achieve broader goals, so focus on festival itself
- Festival hinges on dedication on one person or small group of individuals
- Reliant on good will
- Not sustainable for future because systems not in place
  - Funding implications
'Types' of arts festival organisers

- 'Professional' managers
  - Paid, full-time
  - Not from the place, often move to take job
  - Regional, national, international level
  - Degree / qualification, focus on business skills
  - Apply business models for future of festival
  - Professional performances, national & int'l
  - Develop festival and make contributions to place
  - Move on from role to more senior positions
Professional organisation but volunteer run

- 86% use volunteers year round to maintain festival operations

- Average number of volunteers
  - Small: 36
  - Medium: 73
  - Large: 110

- Average number of paid staff
  - ¼ no paid staff
  - Small: 3
  - Medium: 7
  - Large: 16
Programming content

- 'Traditional' and 'Professional' include and exclude similar content

- 'Traditional'
  - More popular
  - Community-focused

- 'Professional'
  - Opera
  - Fireworks
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events included by both traditional and professional organisers</th>
<th>Events excluded by both traditional and professional organisers</th>
<th>Events found in more traditional organisers’ festivals</th>
<th>Events found in more professional organiser’s festivals</th>
<th>Events found in about half of both types of festivals (inconclusive)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All music except opera</td>
<td>Ballet</td>
<td>Folk dance</td>
<td>Opera</td>
<td>Contemporary dance</td>
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<td>Stilt walkers</td>
<td>Mela</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>Fireworks</td>
<td>Fringe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>Mime</td>
<td>Carnival</td>
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<td>Street performances</td>
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<td>All visual arts</td>
<td>All film</td>
<td>Puppetry</td>
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<td>Comedy</td>
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<td>Children’s</td>
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<td>Free events</td>
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<td>Fiction</td>
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Conclusions

- Cultural policies
- Programming policies
- Funding policies
- Proliferation
- Increased competition
- Future sustainability
- Career opportunities