Exploring the linkages between managerial leadership, communication and teamwork in successful event delivery

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ABSTRACT

Recent growth of events has triggered research into the determinants of successful event delivery. Communication is one of the determinants, and the importance of managerial leadership in enabling communication across an event's team is recognised. Empirical research on the attributes of event managers that make them good leaders from the perspective of an event's team is however limited. Through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with employees of an established events company in the UK, this study explores the role of managerial leadership in the success of an event, referring in particular to the enablers and inhibitors of effective communication. The study finds that leadership capacity of managers correlates with their personal and inter-personal competencies. On a personal level, poor motivational and interaction skills reduce the event's team performance. On an inter-personal level, insufficient recognition of the efforts applied by individual team members as well as the entire team serves as an inhibitor.

1. Introduction

Events play an increasingly important role in modern society (Getz, 2012) representing the fastest growing area within an array of tourism industries (Pernecky, 2015). With the different meanings attached (MacLeod, 2006), events connect people and build upon human relationships (Whitfield & Webber, 2011), thus manifesting people's personal, social and cultural values (Ferdinand & Shaw, 2012). For these reasons, the need to study events has been repeatedly emphasised, especially from the viewpoint of the determinants of their successful delivery (Getz, 2012).

Delivering an event is a laborious process (Wahab, Shahibi, Ali, Bakar, & Amrin, 2014) which requires effective collaboration across an event's team (Northouse, 2004) closely overseen by managers (Pernecky, 2015). As stated by Gayeski (2000, p. 378), event's success is underpinned by the "key competitive factors", which is communication, managerial leadership, and teamwork. This underlines close inter-linkages between the event's team performance and team management (Belbin, 2010), with event managers being concerned not only with seamless information and knowledge exchange (Gayeski & Rowland, 2005), but also with building human interactions within the team (Yankelovich, 1999). As "all activities organised by people have their source in communication" (Calota, Pirvulescu, & Criotoru, 2015, p. 77), staging an event requires effective communication across an event's

team which should be facilitated through managerial leadership (Gayeski, 2000).

According to Muller and Turner (2010), managerial leadership represents a rapidly evolving research domain which has seen significant theoretical development to date, but is still lacking in empirical testing of theories proposed. This is an important shortcoming as managerial leadership is paramount for corporate success (Vera & Crossan, 2004), especially in the context of the industries that are dynamic, uncertain and multicultural, such as events (Schoemaker, 2008). A good leader must acknowledge the internal environment of their organisation and appreciate the features of their team (Smith & Peterson, 1988). Managers can achieve this by recognising values, beliefs and cultural characteristics that determine employees' attitudes and their subsequent behaviour (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Managers should further adopt an appropriate communication style to motivate employees and enable intra-team collaboration (Senior, 1997). While managerial leadership can thus enhance organisational effectiveness (Dorfman et al., 1997 in Hwang et al., 2015), empirical research on what makes a manager a good leader from the perspective of staff lags behind (Altaf & Mohammad, 2011), also in the context of events (Wahab et al., 2014).

This study contributes to knowledge with an exploratory research of an events company based in the UK which has set to critically evaluate the role of managerial leadership and the mediating effect of communication in facilitating delivery of a successful event. This issue has been

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explored through the lens of an event's team, which is in response to the call for more empirical research on the enablers and inhibitors of successful events as articulated in the literature. The case study company is broadly representative of the UK's industry of events in terms of size, staffing patterns and employment contracts, thus highlighting the potential broad(er) implications of this exploratory project.

2. Literature review

2.1. Teamwork as a determinant of event success

According to Northouse (2004), an event succeeds when the set objectives have been met and the goals achieved. This is strongly influenced by the performance of an event's team and closely related to the leadership style of an event manager (Turner & Muller, 2005). Although managers and team members may define what constitutes a successful event differently, it is important to ensure that both stakeholders work closely together towards ultimate event's success (Ellis & Davidi, 2005).

As teamwork has long been established as a necessary prerequisite for effective project delivery (Wong, 2007), creation of an effective event's team is recognised as one of the determinants of staging a successful event (Williams, 2002). Senaratne and Gunawardane (2015) define a team as a group of people with complementary skills and shared values, performing together in order to achieve common objectives. However, if there is no adoption of the team working practices (Prike & Smyth, 2006) and no clear organisational design within a company (Fryer, Fryer, Ellis, & Egbu, 2004), teamwork can be challenging. To demonstrate how the individual skills can be effectively utilised in teamwork, the concept of team roles has been introduced into event management (Stewart, Fulmer, & Barrick, 2005). The critical role of an event manager is therefore to develop the team working practices through effective organisational design underpinned by comprehensively understood and properly assigned team roles (Belbin, 2004).

The concept of team roles is well researched (Senior, 1997) with seminal contributions made by Belbin (2004); Parker (1990); and Spencer and Pruss (1992). Belbin's research has explained the interrelationships between the behaviour of individual team members and the team roles that can be assigned to them for effective teamwork (Prichard & Stanton, 1999). The nine groups introduced by Belbin have since been analysed in terms of their positive and negative inputs (Belbin, 2004) and studied in the context of a balanced team (Senior, 1997), where the more roles that are allocated to a team member, the better team performance can be achieved (Senaratne & Gunawardane, 2015). Wong (2007) has built upon Belbin's research and concluded that a team consisting of the best professionals does not always guarantee its success (Macmillan, 2001). Next to professional experience, event managers should account for the individual skills and the backgrounds of employees when creating an effective event's team (Yeh, Smith, Jennings, & Castro, 2006). Likewise, event managers should build good inter-personal relationship within the team anticipating the needs of the team and intervening in critical moments (Senior, 1997).

It is important to emphasise the long-established, dynamic nature of teams, team performance and team roles in the context of organisations and business project management (Mann, 1961). Indeed, team members may change over time or team performance conditions may change over time (Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001). Also, the task assigned to a team itself may require different types of activities and/or different inputs from team members as it evolves over time (Syer & Connolly, 1996). This imposes an extra challenge on managers as they need to understand how teams and the roles within these teams can develop by becoming more relevant or less relevant over time, and then adjust the way how they manage the teams accordingly (Forsyth, 2009). This is of particular importance for teamwork in events as the events environment is highly dynamic and often unpredictable (Getz, 2012). Despite its explicit managerial importance, the topic of (intra) group dynamics within teams remains under-studied (Feitosa, Solis, & Grossman, 2017) which holds true for events.

2.2. The impact of organisational culture on team performance

Internal environment of a company and, especially, its organisational culture, is another determinant of event success (Altaf & Mohammad, 2011). Defined as the beliefs and the basic assumptions shared by all team members (Kemp & Dwyer, 2001), organisational culture represents a deep linkage describing the environment in which the team operates (Schein, 2000). Organisational culture determines how knowledge is managed (Chang and Chang & Lin, 2015) and shapes the patterns of communication across a team (Dwyer, Teal, Kemp, & Chay, 2000). Any challenges faced by employees during the knowledge management process are related to what Schein (2000) defines as "*psychological climate*" of an organisation. It is closely connected to the team's internal culture (Ajmal & Koskien, 2008) and organisational culture (DeTiene and Jackson, 2001). Based on the multi-faceted dimensions (Hofstede, 1989) and cyclic elements (Alavi, Kayworth, & Leidner, 2005), the process of creating, transmitting and sharing knowledge within team members is of importance for an organisation (Kayworth & Leidner, 2003), and managers are considered prime facilitators of this process (Ajmal & Koskien, 2008).

The impact of organisational culture on team performance has been researched in the context of organisational effectiveness (Altaf & Mohammad, 2011). In simple terms, organisational effectiveness can be defined as an action of doing the right things, where corporate objectives are matched with the team's achievements. The literature agrees that if managers succeed in increasing employee commitment, employee productivity and the overall team motivation, an organisation will meet its objectives, thus becoming more effective in the long-term (Kemp & Dwyer, 2001).

For better organisational effectiveness, knowledge management within an organisation should be designed to work seamlessly (Bhatt, 2001). Further, individual motivation (Bock, Zmud, Kim, & Lee, 2005), employee behaviour (Gupta, Iyer, & Aronson, 2000) and management structures (Kayworth & Leidner, 2003) should be accounted for. These fall under the notion of "artefacts" or "*the most visible and the most superficial manifestation of an organisational culture*" (Kemp & Dwyer, 2001, p. 80), also known as the company's "cultural web" (Johnson & Scholes, 1997). It is a critical role of an event's manager to ensure the cultural web and its implications are communicated to the team (Kayworth & Leidner, 2003).

To understand how organisational culture can aid in achieving organisational effectiveness, it is important to comprehend that organisational culture and an individual's emotions are inter-connected (Gunkel, Schlaegel, Rossteutscher, & Wolff, 2015; Matsumoto, Yoo, & Nakagawa, 2008), which affects an employee's motivation and subsequent work performance. For these reasons, managers should carefully evaluate employee motivation and communicate with them regularly to update on their progress (Kemp & Dwyer, 2001). By interacting with employees and acknowledging their contribution to teamwork, managers facilitate positive changes in employee behaviour, thus contributing to organisational success (Gupta et al., 2000).

2.3. Managerial leadership and teamwork in events

Wahab et al. (2014, p. 497) state that, in the context of events, "*leadership… [is] one of the factors that lead to a successful event*" with the absence of leadership bringing about unpredictable results for event managers. Leadership holds a proven positive effect on the event team's performance (Northouse, 2004) and employee motivation to collaborate in order to achieve the set event's objectives (Turner & Muller, 2005). In the longer term, aside from contributing to building more resilient event teams (Dodson, 2006), strong leadership makes an

event's company more competitive in the market (Ireland & Hitt, 2005). Being able to lead, instruct and manage a team are only a few examples of the skills that make a manager a good leader (Dodson, 2006).

The leadership styles adopted by event managers vary. The most effective leadership style in the context of events is the one which has a positive overall impact on the team (Addis, 2003), such as leading it in a visionary, affiliative, democratic and coaching way (Hur, van den Berg and Wilderom, 2011). Every manager has their own leadership style (Fertman & Van Linden, 1999) which largely depends on their behaviour and personality. Organisational culture can also shape the leadership styles of event managers (Hwang et al., 2015; Smith & Peterson, 1988) while national culture of both event managers and event employees can affect the leadership behaviour (Dorfman et al., 1997; Fatehi & Choi, 2019; Groves & Feyerherm, 2011). Among the different leadership styles, Khan et al. (2015, p.49) pinpoint the importance of team leadership by defining it as the "*pinnacle of managerial style*", which is characterised by the two behavioural dimensions, namely managerial concern for people and managerial concern for production. Managerial concern for people as an integral element of effective leadership is further emphasised by Osborn and Hunt (2007) and Waldman, Javidan, and Varella (2004). These authors argue that managerial concern for people determines event's success as it enhances the effectiveness of intra-team interaction, thus enabling better team performance. Managerial concern for people is closely linked to managerial competencies as they explain how effectively event managers can deal with event employees, not only when resolving conflicts, but also when setting goals (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2008). According to McClelland (1994), effective leadership requires managers to develop cognitive, social and emotional intelligence in order to recognise the needs of all team members, thus anticipating changes in motivation and acting accordingly. Managerial actions to enhance employee motivation require explicit communication, thus emphasising the importance of communicative skills for managers when leading an event's team (Gilley, Gilley, & McMillan, 2009).

2.4. Communication in events

According to Calota et al. (2015, p.77), "*all activities organised by people have their source in communication*". Communication is a dynamic process (Arnold & Silva, 2011) based on a transmission of signals and decoded messages (Gayeski & Rowland, 2005). The opportunities and challenges of communication in organisations have long been recognised and theorised (see, for example, Mayo, 1947).

According to Hynes (2015), all managers are "communicators". The communication process within an organisation differs depending on situations and circumstances, and the effectiveness of inter-personal communication between managers and the team varies significantly (Gilley et al., 2009), based on such factors as education, national culture and gender, to mention a few (Hynes, 2015). Despite the importance of communication in events, there is a paucity of empirical research on this issue within the given context (Wahab et al., 2014). This hinders understanding of the role of communicative managerial skills in event leadership (Men, 2014).

Managers represent the most crucial source of information for employees in organisations while creating effective internal communication is paramount to stay competitive and cultivate an organisational culture with a collective mission and vision (Hynes, 2015). Communication plays a crucial role in events as it can keep a project together or let it fall apart (Kliem, 2008). Communication is therefore an integral element of strong leadership in events which should be underpinned by effective management (Fitzenz, 2000). This underlines the importance of better understanding how event managers organise and lead upon their communication process with staff (Mintzberg, 1971). People's beliefs, cultural values and assumptions affect the success of communication within an organisation (Gayeski, 2000) and it is a vital leadership skill to enable effective communication across a team (Calota et al., 2015). Effective communication is determined by the level of managerial engagement with all team members, where constant information exchange facilitates employee motivation (Fitzenz, 2000), affects their productivity (Gilley et al., 2009) and impacts the overall job performance (Men, 2014).

Technology has impacted the way team members communicate in various organisational and business contexts, including events (Leenders, van Engelen, & Kratzer, 2003), but it is how the communication process is managed that makes the difference, rather than the medium used (Hynes, 2015). This underlines the relevance of direct, inter-personal communication in events to aid in delivering the event's set objectives to the team (Borba 2002 cited in Arnold & Silva, 2011). For these reasons, Yankelovich (1999) undertook a seminal study on how managers communicate with their staff. This study revealed the following determinants of effective communication: equality, empathic listening and non-judgemental assumptions. Yankelovich (1999) further demonstrated how building good relationships within the team, initiating dialogue through a gesture of empathy and clarifying assumptions can affect the communication process, thus leading to positive overall outcome.

Mintzberg (1990) defines three main roles of managerial communication. Fig. 1 indicates that, within each role, managerial leadership represents a determinant of effective communication. For example, Fig. 1 shows that, within the interpersonal role, the manager becomes a symbol of an organisation and its legal authority, as well as its leader, who manages staff and plans project activities via effective liaison with all actors and stakeholders. Likewise, within the informational role, the manager leads on proactively informing employees about all decisions
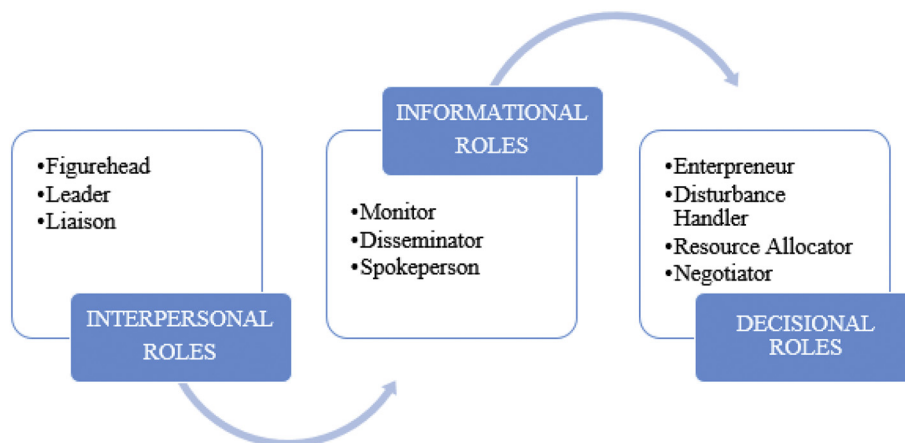

Fig. 1. Managerial communication roles. Amended from Mintzberg (1990, p. 168).

made in the context of event delivery, while, within the decisional role, the manager takes the lead on resolving potential issues and conflicts within a team via effective negotiations (Mintzberg, 1990).

The information exchange between event managers and an event's team is complex (Fitzenz, 2000). In an attempt to characterise this exchange, Kerzner (2010) distinguishes five main communication flows within an event's team, namely top-bottom, bottom-top, horizontal, diagonal and exterior. Although each communication flow is important, the top-bottom and the bottom-top flows hold the prime significance in successful event delivery as they define the success of interactions across an event's team and event managers (Hynes, 2015). The importance of all these communication flows has been recognised (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005), but more in-depth research has been called for to evidence empirically the enablers and inhibitors of effective manager-to-staff communication in events.

2.5. Knowledge gap

While the research into leadership and communication in management is rapidly evolving, there is a paucity of empirical studies on the inter-linkages between managerial leadership and communication as the determinants of successful event delivery. This paper rectifies this knowledge gap by exploring the above issue in the context of an events company based in the UK. The next section explains the research design employed in this study to achieve its aim.

3. Research design

In order to explore such "*social reality*" (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 27) as the process of event delivery in their natural conditions (Mayer, 2015), the qualitative research paradigm was adopted. The flexible, subjective and unstructured nature of qualitative research enables better understanding of the complex social phenomena that have been under-investigated (Park & Park, 2016), such as managerial leadership as a determinant of intra-team communication in events. Furthermore, qualitative research is ontologically constructivism-oriented and epistemologically interpretivism-oriented, thus facilitating better interaction with study informants in an attempt to extract rich primary data for an in-depth analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Also, qualitative research provides more solid grounds to understand people's societal representations (Mayer, 2015). Lastly, qualitative research is best suited to reach audiences whose population is limited and whose accessibility is restricted (Lewis & Clacher, 2001), such as members of an event's team, thus justifying the choice of this paradigm for this study.

Within the portfolio of qualitative research methods, in-depth semi-structured interviews with members of an event's team were opted for. Interviews enable better connectivity between the researcher and study informants, thus aiding in more thorough investigation of participants' personal views and motivations (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). An interview schedule was developed based on the preliminary themes that emerged from the literature review. These were further supplemented with any other themes that evolved during the interviewing process through iterative analysis applied to the interim data collected, which is in line with the analytical procedure outlined in Bryman and Bell (2011). Table 1 lists the core themes explored in this study alongside the leading questions employed for studying each theme and the underpinning academic sources used.

In order to optimise an empirical investigation, samples need to be as diverse as possible (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Sample selection should be guided by the specific nature of the studied phenomenon (Kwortnik, 2003). Purposive sampling is recommended when recruiting participants whose features fit the scope of an investigation (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003) and when striving for variety (May, 2002). Purposive sampling is further suitable for projects where the limited population and restricted accessibility of study informants represent a challenge (Farrokhi & Mahmoundi-Hamidabad, 2012). The focus of this study on members of

an event's team, whose population is limited, justified the choice of purposive sampling as a suitable recruitment technique.

Participants to this study were the employees of an events company based in Dorset, the UK. The company is a typical representative of the national events industry in a way that it is small-to-medium in size, employs a smaller number of permanent but a larger number of temporary staff, and has a significant proportion of younger, rather inexperienced and not educated to an events' degree employees, including those coming from outside the UK. This is in line with Nickson (2013) who posits that the events workforce is different from the workforce in other services industries as it is represented by 'non-traditional' employees, such as students, retirees or economic migrants. This is due to the unwillingness of more 'traditional' employees to work in events because the sector's working patterns are characterised by a high level of stress, long hours, unsociable times and late shifts (Boella & Goss-Turner, 2013). The chosen company specialises in the organisation of private functions, such as weddings, but also caters for corporate meetings. Every event is designed, organised and implemented by an established event team, with extra staff contracted for delivery of larger scale events and during the peak season. Participants to this study (*n* = 14) were the 'core' employees of the company's event's team who regularly partook in actual event delivery. They represented a diversity of experiences in delivering events, thus offering a broad outlook upon the research issue in question (Table 2). The number of interviews was determined by the 'saturation effect' and interviewing was drawn to a close after data saturation was reached (Morse, Barnett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). Thomson (2010 cited by Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013) suggests that saturation is achieved with 10–30 interviews, which is a good fit with this study.

Interviews were administered within a period of two weeks in July 2017. They were conducted by a permanent member of an event's team who was trained in qualitative research methods. To reduce the possible effect of social desirability bias (King & Bruner, 2000), the interviewer held conversations with staff in an informal manner and outside the events' settings, such as during lunch breaks in external venues. Further, study informants were all provided with anonymity reassurance and their actual names were replaced with pseudonyms. On average, interviews lasted between 25 and 50 min; they were digitally recorded and transcribed. No incentives were offered. The data collected were analysed through thematic analysis as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006). Fig. 2 outlines the coding structure developed via thematic analysis in this study.

The study had a number of limitations. Besides social desirability bias mentioned above which is a known shortfall of interviews, the purposive sampling technique adopted for recruitment in this study, with the associated drawbacks of certain subjectivity involved and limited representativeness of the sample, suggest that the results of this study can be considered of exploratory, rather than confirmatory, nature. Hence, the study's results need to await further confirmation by other, more representative and generalisable, methods, such as a large-scale survey of an event company's staff. Despite the limitations of its research design, the study provided a number of interesting and useful insights into the topic in question that are discussed next.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Defining leadership qualities of an event manager

Although managerial leadership represents a long-standing object of academic discourse in management studies, defining a good leader remains difficult (Pauliene, 2016). As a result, there is no consensus in the literature on what determines effective leadership in project management as the determinants vary from context to context (Leban & Zulauf, 2004). This study therefore aimed to establish first the main qualities that an event's team assigned to a good leader.

Day et al. (2008) posit that, in generic terms, a good leader should

Table 1
Core themes explored in interviews.

Theme	Leading question	Rationale
Definition of a leader	How would you define a leader?	Can be considered a good leader a manager who has a positive impact on the team (Addis, 2003), developing a good relationship with all team members (Dodson, 2006)
	How does your manager motivate you?	Team's motivation is important in order to achieve common objectives (Turner & Muller, 2005)
	Which skills do you value in a leader?	Being able to lead, instruct and manage a team, are only an example of the skills that make a manager a leader (Wahab et al., 2014)
	How does your leader commit the team?	One of the main factors for running a successful event is creating an effective team (Williams, 2002) and therefore teamwork is a prerequisite for delivering a successful project (Wong, 2007)
Communication and managerial leadership	How does your leader manage the team during the delivery of an event?	Leadership styles are one of the factors that lead to a successful event (Wahab et al., 2014)
	How does your manager deal with any disagreement within the team?	Managerial competencies are not only based on dealing with subordinates and any type of conflict, but also on setting goals and establishing long-term practices (Day et al., 2008)
	Tell me if communication impacts your work efficiency within a team?	If there is no adaption of the team working practices (Prike & Smyth, 2006) and no clear communication in terms of organisational design (Fryer et al., 2004), working with other members of the team can be challenging
	How would you feel about the lack of leadership when delivering an event?	The absence of leadership means an unpredictable result (Senaratne & Gunawardane, 2015)
Impact of leadership and (the lack of) communication	Tell me about communication in your team and how your manager enables it?	Having a balanced and interactive team with specific team roles clearly assigned can contribute significantly to a successful event (Senaratne & Gunawardane, 2015)
	What feedback does your leader give you?	Providing employees with feedback regarding their performances has a positive effect on employees' attitude and outcomes (Lonsdale, 2016)

Table 2
Study participants (n = 14).

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Work experience in events + - Limited (0–1 years) + + - Solid (2–4 years) + + + - Extensive (4+ years)
Andrew	M	In his 20's	+ +
Anna	F	In her 30's	+ + +
Brad	M	In his 20's	+
David	M	In his 20's	+
Elizabeth	F	In her 30's	+ + +
George	M	In his 20's	+
Georgina	F	In her 30's	+ + +
Jack	M	In his 20's	+
Jamie	M	In his 30's	+ + +
Jennifer	F	In her 30's	+
Jonathan	M	In his 20's	+ +
Noemi	F	In her 40's	+
Rebecca	F	In her 20's	+ +
Sandy	F	In her 20's	+ +

have a set of clear values and goals for their team; they should further be able to shape a team's vision, formulate strategy and demonstrate continuity in their decisions (Hur et al., 2011). According to Hwang et al. (2015), there are certain leadership styles that are universally effective, and these are often determined by organisational and national cultures in which a company operates (Fatehi & Choi, 2019). In the context of English-speaking countries, House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, and Gupta (2004) distinguish a strong leader, a so-called 'Anglo Leader', who is characterised as being charismatic, with a well-adopted participative, team-oriented and human-oriented managerial approach. An 'Anglo Leader' is further described by a low level of power distance implying close and trusting relationship with a team (Ashkanasy, Trevor-Roberts, & Earnshaw, 2002), orientation on individual performance, focus on individual effort and demonstration of humane empathy (Hwang et al., 2015).

Study participants found it difficult to define a leader and, for the majority, a leader was someone who could build good relationships with staff, show empathy and listen to employees, understand individual staff's feelings and make an entire team happy (Fig. 2), as explained below by Elizabeth. This is in line with the core features of an 'Anglo Leader' as described in the literature.

'At foremost, a leader has to be able to understand staff. It's also about helping the staff and making sure that everybody has the best day during the event.… a leader needs to have a mixture of kindness and firmness; they should be strongly-minded, yet flexible, and making sure that people know they're good in their roles'.

The literature underlines the importance of the cognitive, social and emotional competences for a manager, and these should be reflected in an appropriate behaviour when managing an event's team on the ground (Hur et al., 2011; Meisler, 2013; Pauliene, 2016). Since leaders should be strongly connected with their teams (Morgeson, DeRue, & Karam, 2010), it is important for managers to develop the right strategy in handling the team and balancing out the trusting relationships with all staff. The balance can be reached by a manager by employing the main intelligence competencies (Boyatzis, 2007). These competencies suggest that, through iterative analysis of available information about the event's logistics and employees' abilities, a manager should be able to recognise and understand not only the capabilities of individual team members, but also the quality of the team as a whole, to match the event's needs with the staff's skills (Wodak, Kwon, & Clarke, 2011). Confidence, influence, an interactive and participatory decision-making process have been identified in the literature as the core factors in managerial leadership (Day et al., 2008). The importance of these managerial qualities was therefore tested with study participants. All agreed that the managerial ability to listen to and account for employee feedback was crucial for constructing trusting relationships across an event's team, thus building staff perception of strong leadership (Fig. 2):

'A leader should be well organised, willing to listen to the employees and be supportive. He should be completely aware of the business itself and the abilities of the team he manages to benefit this business. He should be motivational and empathetic' (Jennifer).

O'Toole (2001) posits that leadership success in events depends on the ability of managers to achieve the best performances of all team members. This is in line with Burns (2003) who underlines the importance for manager to motivate an event's team by encouraging peer-to-peer learning and enabling intra-team collaboration. Delegating tasks to team members who are best capable of dealing with them can empower employees and boost their motivation (Turner & Muller, 2005), thus highlighting another feature of effective managerial leadership in events. All these features were confirmed by study

QUALITIES OF A GOOD LEADER	MANAGER'S COMMUNICATIVE ROLE IN SUCCESSFUL EVENT DELIVERY
• Being able to listen (14 or 100%) • Being able to delegate authority (14 or 100%) • Building a good overall relationship with the team (14 or 100%) • Having sound communication skills (14 or 100%) • Motivating the team (12 or 86%) • Helping the team when needed (12 or 86%) • Making the 'right' decisions (10 or 71%) • Being able to understand (8 or 57%) • Being firm, but fair (8 or 57%) • Being 'visible' (8 or 57%) • Being confident when making decisions (6 or 43%) • Assign job roles and tasks effectively and with authority (4 or 29%) • Being well-organised and efficient (2 or 14%)	➢ Communicate clearly and frequently throughout the event (14 or 100%) ➢ Provide clear directions and instructions (14 or 100%) ➢ Help the team on the ground with advice / directions / instructions when required (14 or 100%) ➢ Motivate and encourage (10 or 71%) ➢ Recognise the effort applied and offer praise when necessary (10 or 71%) ➢ Facilitate information exchange across the team (10 or 71%) ➢ Organise regular and effective meetings to update the team on progress (10 or 71%) ➢ Facilitate cooperation across a team via expert advice and encouragement (8 or 57%) ➢ Inform about the on-going job roles and tasks assigned alongside any changes to these (4 or 29%)

Fig. 2. Coding structure. Figures signify the total number (n) and the proportion (%) of study informants who mentioned a specific code as revealed by interview transcripts.

informants (Fig. 2):

> *'Delegation and control are important. It's difficult to trust other people, especially when you put in a lot of things together to make it happen. The leader needs to be able to identify the employees' best qualities, rely on their staff, and empower them to make the event successful'*
>
> Noemi

Communication was mentioned by all study informants as a core managerial leadership quality (Fig. 2), thus confirming theory on the vital role played by communication in successful event delivery (Beebe & Masterson, 2003; Gremler, Gwinner, & Brown, 2001; Kliem, 2008). The different meanings assigned by an event's team to managerial communicative role alongside the relative importance of these meanings were explored next. This is to understand the main attributes of effective communication in events as a prerequisite of strong managerial leadership.

4.2. Communicative skills as a cornerstone of managerial leadership in events

Communication plays a crucial role during the delivery of an event being a fundamental element of effective project management (Beebe & Masterson, 2003). Forsyth (2009) argues that event managers should adopt a communicative approach in their leadership as a means of understanding the complexity of interactions within (i.e. a team member to a team member) and outside (a team member to a customer and/or a team member to an event manager) the team. This is in line with the bottom-top and top-bottom description of communication flows within an organisation as proposed by Kerzner (2010). For effective communication, specific team roles need to be developed and rationalised based on the employees' skills. Effective communication should further account for the intra-team interactions and take into consideration how different team members express themselves by the way they think and behave in their roles (Belbin, 2010). According to Kliem (2008), it is the leader's main responsibility to create and maintain communication within an event's team. This was confirmed in this study as all informants recognised the core importance of communication in leading successful event delivery (Fig. 2).

The importance of communication defines why, from the perspective of an event's team, an event's manager should always be 'visible' on the ground (Fig. 2). A clear communication protocol within a team should be developed and reinforced by the manager for the situations when managerial presence is not feasible. This protocol should assign a job role of a key 'communicator' to one of the regular team members, based on their knowledge and experience. This is in line with the 'communicator' team role as suggested by Belbin (2010). The 'communicator' should be good at interacting and broadcasting the message across the team, thus serving the function of an interim information 'supervisor' in absence of managerial leadership. This is in line with the literature which claims that self-managing and non-directional teams can rarely succeed in effective decision-making (Yukl, 2012), and that an effective leader should always aim at delegating the communication tasks to one of the team members in their absence to ensure the continuity of interaction:

> *'It's very difficult to try and to communicate when the manager is not around, people from the team just get frustrated with that. There's no level of seniority and nobody is informed of decisions if no responsibility for delivering the message across the team is assigned. Somebody should take the lead and it's an important managerial task to assign this leadership to someone from the team in their absence'*
>
> Andrew

Team meetings are at the core of event communication as they facilitate problem-solving processes, contribute to social dynamics and enable sense making activities within an event's team (Baran, Shanock, Rogelberg, & Scott, 2012). Team meetings should therefore be regularly held and well designed by an event's manager to ensure their agenda enables group cohesion and intra-team comprehension (Stewart et al., 2005). When this point was probed, the majority of study informants recognised the importance of having regularly scheduled, properly designed, and interactive team meetings in successful event delivery (Fig. 2).

Lastly, creating an effective event's team is a core task of an event's manager (Williams, 2002). According to Belbin (2010), the more a leader understands and knows about the team and its dynamics, the easier it becomes for a leader to secure support from the team members. Communication represents one of the key factors that enable event managers to learn more about their employees, and vice versa (Senior, 1997), thus facilitating effective teamwork towards the goal of successful event delivery (Senaratne & Gunawardane, 2015). Staff attitudes to the importance of managerial leadership and communication as a determinant of effective teamwork in events were therefore explored next.

Most study informants agreed (Fig. 2) that the main task of an

event's manager was, through effective communication, to motivate team members to ensure they perform to the best of their ability. This is in line with the literature which posits that, if there is no adaption of the team working practices (Prike & Smyth, 2006) and no clear design of intra-team interaction process (Fryer et al., 2004), working across an event's team can be challenging. It is therefore important to understand the level of team commitment to team leaders and vice versa (Dodson, 2006). Most employees highlighted the absence of directions and motivation from their leaders as the main inhibitor of team performance during event delivery (Fig. 2). This is well articulated by Anna below who highlights the risk of non-motivational and non-directional leadership in events:

'I think the leaders in our company don't really have so many directional or motivational techniques. I think the staff could be motivated more by positive reinforcement, just by giving a little bit of praise. I have actually a lot of staff coming to me saying that the most senior staff could actually motivate more; they are under-appreciated at work… The leaders seem to only interact [with staff] when there is a problem. But they could just say – that's really good stuff, well done, you, or well done, team. The absence of directions and motivation from managers is one of the worst things when it comes to dealing with individual or team performance'

Anna

Above, Anna emphasises the importance of recognising the individual and group efforts in successful event delivery. According to the literature, this is a core communicative skill in pursuit of leadership which event managers should never overlook (Brun & Dugas, 2008; Chow, Lo, Sha, & Hong, 2006; Long & Shields, 2010). Better recognition of the individual and team performance leads to increased motivation and improved productivity among staff (Lundberg, Gudmundson, & Andersson, 2009), thus calling for more regular and frequent adoption of this communicative technique by event managers.

5. Conclusions

This study evaluated the role of managerial leadership in delivering a successful event, referring in particular to the effect of enabled communication across an event's team. The contribution of this study to knowledge is in that it provided practical evidence of a significant role played by intra-team communication in event delivery and the position of managers within the successful event teams, in terms of inhibiting or facilitating individual performance of employees alongside staff collaboration. The study responded to the scholarly call for more in-depth, empirical research on this topic which holds substantial implications for events industry practice.

The study identified poor communication skills of event managers as an inhibitor of an event's team performance. To run a successful event, managers need to interact with the team more regularly and on a more frequent basis. They should be more pro-active and explicit when motivating employees, giving them directions and providing with feedback. Regular meetings can aid event managers in making intra-team communication more effective. Event managers should further understand the individual capabilities of each of their staff and delegate communicative responsibilities accordingly, especially at times of managerial absence. This is to empower employees, thus enhancing their motivation and morale and boosting overall team performance. Lastly, by interacting with staff, event managers should recognise the efforts applied by the individuals and the team as a whole to reach the set event's goals. In absence of managerial recognition, delivery of a successful event can be jeopardised while the long-term career aspirations of employees within an event's company in question, including staff retention, − endangered.

The study holds a number of important managerial implications. First, it demonstrated the importance of communication as a core managerial leadership quality in event management, thus suggesting that communication skills should be a critical attribute of managerial

recruitment and training in events. Second, the study shown that interaction in event delivery should be frequent and on-going, thus highlighting the need to assign the communicative tasks to someone within an event's team in the manager's absence. Lastly, the study provided further empirical evidence in support of the need for the development of 'soft', transferable skills among both event managers and event employees for long-term organisational and career success.

The study outlined a number of promising research avenues. First, to make the outcome of this exploratory analysis more generalisable, it is important to test the propositions developed herewith in a large-scale survey of event employees. Second, such a survey should target event staff from the countries outside the UK in order to account for the possible effect of national culture in employees' perception of communication as a determinant of managerial leadership in events. Third, opinions of event managers on what makes them good leaders and what role their communication with staff plays in successful event delivery should be sought to enable a comparative analysis of managerial and employees' perceptions, with subsequent identification of the gaps in perceptions that need to be rectified. Lastly, there is a need to test the key propositions made in this study empirically, especially from the viewpoint of examining the impact of numerous contextual factors that affect team performance, such as time availability during an event and/ or temporal dynamics of event delivery, and effects of the type of different employee tasks on team role requirements and overall staff performance. This is given the results of this study are representative of a single company and therefore hold limited generalisability unless tested in other organisational contexts.

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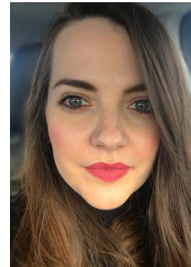
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