

THE SYDNEY ORGANISING COMMITTEE FOR THE OLYMPIC GAMES (SOCOG) “EVENT LEADERSHIP” TRAINING COURSE— AN EFFECTIVENESS EVALUATION

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Responding to demands for increased productivity and employee efficiency, more and more corporations have created departments for the training of their staff. The Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) had its own Workforce Training Team (WTT), which consisted of SOCOG and TAFE NSW. WTT provided consultants for the Olympic and Paralympic Games and oversaw the training of volunteers and permanent staff. One of the training courses delivered to staff employed by SOCOG was the Event Leadership course. This specific course, which was compulsory for all staff in supervisory or managerial positions, aimed at improving leadership skills. As with most training courses, one way to examine whether a course has achieved its aims and objectives is through an evaluation of the attendees' perception of its effectiveness. A review of the theory of the five main effectiveness models led to the belief that the strategic constituencies' approach was the most suitable in this instance. This model takes into consideration the existence of many stakeholders and evaluates results based on the perspective of one. This research determined the participants' expectations from the course, evaluated the perceived quality and utility of the knowledge provided, gauged the course's alleged contribution to the improvement of the participants' skills, and, finally, made concluding comments regarding the design and delivery of the course.

Sydney Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG)	Training courses
Leadership skills	Effectiveness evaluation

Whether implementing a new policy, dealing with constant change, or solving specific problems, appropriate training initiatives can make a major contribution to corporate objectives. Brinkerhoff (1987) stated, “effective training programs are aimed at important and worthwhile organisational benefits, operate smoothly

and efficiently, are enjoyed by participants, achieve important skills, knowledge, and attitude objectives and are used effectively on the job” (p. 33).

However training has some inherent problems that make its evaluation difficult. Firstly, skills, knowledge, superficial attitudes, and beliefs are the only things that

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training can change. If training does, or for that matter does not, show results, it is not possible to attribute credit or blame entirely to training. The eventual worth of training, as manifested in organizational impact, will always be a function of other factors such as job design, rewards, and information. Some of the results of training, like beliefs and attitudes, may not be evident for long periods of time. Nevertheless, while the evaluation of training programs may be difficult, there needs to be a way to highlight deficiencies in existing training programs while at the same time providing strategies for course improvement. Hence, an analysis of training programs against established effectiveness criteria, however problematic, provides for points of discussion, evaluation, and change.

Background

Effectiveness is one of the most persistent themes in organizational literature, with most organizational theory introducing effectiveness considerations. Furthermore, research that makes comparisons of organizations often has effectiveness as a major focus. However, Chelladurai (1987) argued that organizational effectiveness quickly became "one of the most complex and controversial issues in management" (p. 37). Moreover, what made a single definition of effectiveness problematic is the fact that the term encompasses more than one item (Campbell, 1977). Some writers became so discouraged by the literature on effectiveness that they advocated abandoning the construct in scholarly activity altogether (Hannan & Freeman, 1977).

One reason for the ambiguity in this area of research is the fact that "organisational effectiveness is inherently paradoxical. To be effective, an organisation must possess attributes that are simultaneously contradictory, even mutually exclusive" (Cameron, 1986, p. 527). Obviously, effectiveness is inextricably linked with an organization's or individual's perspective of what actually constitutes effectiveness. Moreover, depending upon the role an individual undertakes within an organization, such perspectives may be at odds.

A second reason for the vagueness in a clear understanding of what constitutes effectiveness relates to the fact that effectiveness is a construct, not a concept. According to Cameron and Whetten (1983), "constructs are mental abstractions designed to give meaning to ideas and interpretations, while concepts can be defined

and exactly specified by observing objective events" (p. 7). Consequently, any definition of effectiveness cannot be limited to one concept but should take into account all the different aspects that it comprises. Leadership, needs, intelligence, and motivation are examples of constructs that are multiconceptual. For example, Goodman (1979) used productivity as an indicator of effectiveness, but productivity is just one aspect of effectiveness and does not represent its total meaning.

Nevertheless, organizational effectiveness is a central construct in the organizational sciences for theoretical, empirical, and practical reasons (Cameron & Whetten, 1983). Theories of organizations are based on notions of effective designs, strategies, and leadership styles, and the differences that exist between effective and ineffective organizations. Empirically, there is always a need for managers to prove that one leadership style or one reward system is better and more effective than another in order to justify choices and management style. Fundamentally, effectiveness is a central practical issue because individuals are continually faced with the need to make choices that will result in effective operation of the organization.

Van Leeuwen (1997) noted that "the notion of effectiveness permeates most theories of organisations at some stage, either implicitly or explicitly," and that the differences that exist between effective and ineffective organizations are usually included. Moreover, she contends "that the idea of effectiveness is a central issue in most investigations of organisational phenomena" (p. 15). Hence, while the paradox caveat on effectiveness is acknowledged, this article cautiously evolves from this perspective.

Theories of Effectiveness

There has been an attempt to reduce the complexity in the field of effectiveness by focusing on five models, and they are briefly alluded to. They are the goal attainment approach (Price, 1972), the systems resource approach (Seashore & Yuchtman, 1967), the internal process approach (Nadler & Tushman, 1980), the strategic constituencies approach (Connolly, Conlon, & Deutsch, 1980), and, most recently, the competing values approach (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1981, 1983). A brief synopsis of the models is included to provide rationale for the choice of the strategic constituencies approach.

Goal Attainment Approach

The goal attainment approach focuses on output and whether the organization achieves its goals in terms of desired levels of output (Daft, 1986). This approach is the most frequently used model for evaluating organizational effectiveness. It is especially useful when organizational goals are clear, measurable, and stable over time. However, it does not take into account the fact that not only are goals difficult to identify, but organizations are sometimes ineffective even when their goals are accomplished.

Conversely, organizations can be effective even though they do not accomplish their goals (Cameron & Whetten, 1983). Furthermore, as Kanter and Brinkerhoff (1981) pointed out, "goals can be inconsistent, contradictory or incoherent; and it is unclear at what level or with respect to what units the attainment of goals should be measured" (p. 327). Moreover, organizational goals can be short term and what is considered to be effective may change over time. Additionally, if the goals are too low and easy to achieve, an organization can be ineffective even though it reaches its goals. Finally, Chelladurai (1985) suggests that "many organizations pursue multiple goals and this factor limits the utility of a goals model approach for the analysis of organizational effectiveness" (p. 174).

Systems Resource Approach

The systems resource approach assesses effectiveness by evaluating whether the organization is able to obtain resources necessary for its high performance. Effectiveness is defined as "the ability of the organisation in either absolute or relative terms to exploit its environment in the acquisition of scarce and valued resources" (Seashore & Yuchtman, 1967, p. 892). The organization is viewed as an open system and its effective operation depends on the resources that it can acquire from its environment. This approach focuses on the outputs of the organization and it is assumed that the greater the resources, the greater the organizational effectiveness.

The value of the systems resource approach is that it takes into consideration the organization's relationship with its environment, and it can be used to compare organizations that have different goals (Daft, 1986). Although the systems resource model seems opposite to the goal attainment approach, they are not that dissimilar. An organization that manages to obtain the

necessary resources from its environment to enable its effective operation, and is effective according to the system resources approach, accomplishes its goals only when its environment accepts its outputs. Thus, a measure of the degree to which the organization is able to obtain its resources from its environment is a measure of the utility of its outputs to the environment. At this point the two models intersect.

The systems resource approach is most applicable in cases where the organization's outputs cannot be objectively measured and where the organization's resources are not guaranteed by some other organization. It is not useful when evaluating the effectiveness of public sector organizations that may not have to competitively acquire their resources from their environment. Nonpublic sector organizations must compete for scarce resources and hence, when obtained, usually provide a distinct competitive advantage. However, as Cameron (1980) stated, "an organisation can be effective even when it doesn't possess a competitive advantage in the marketplace or when the most desirable resources aren't obtained" (p. 67). An organization that has become so successful in a particular domain that it has lost its adaptability to change is one example of this.

Internal Process Approach

The internal process approach emphasizes the internal logic and consistency of the throughput processes of the organization as an organization's inputs are converted into desired outputs (Pfeffer, 1977). Expanding on this approach, Cameron (1980) defines effective organizations as "those with an absence of internal strain, whose members are highly integrated into the system, whose internal functioning is smooth and are typified by trust and benevolence toward individuals, where information flows smoothly both vertically and horizontally, and so on" (p. 69). While it appears to be a human resources-oriented model, which focuses on factors such as team spirit, employee satisfaction, concern about workers, etc., Slack (1997) comments that there are occasions when economic efficiency, as opposed to human resources factors, is the overriding concern.

Nevertheless, the major advantage of this approach is that it can be used to compare organizations that are quite different with dissimilar inputs and outputs. However, such comparisons do have their limitations. First

of all, human resource factors are hard to not only measure, but also to observe. The flow of communication within an organization and the level of employee satisfaction cannot be easily measured, which makes evaluation subjective, if not impossible. Moreover, an organization can have a high internal health and be ineffective or conversely have low morale, poor communication, and internal problems and be effective. The same results can be achieved through different processes and vice versa. As with every other approach, the internal process model seems to focus only on one aspect of organizational effectiveness, as it does not examine the organization's outputs and its relationship with its environment.

Competing Values Approach

Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1981) developed the competing values approach to "integrate the diverse indicators of performance used by managers and researchers" (p. 123). This model is similar to the strategic constituencies approach in that they both take into account the paradoxical nature of effectiveness and recognize the fact that different stakeholders in an organization can have different goals and preferences. However, while with a strategic constituencies approach the different constituents can have different goals and can all be satisfied, in the competing values approach the different dimensions of an organization, and the effectiveness criteria, are seen as ideals in competition (Slack, 1997). This is a major distinction between these two models.

The competing values approach integrates the diversity of effectiveness into four models. The first model is the *open system*, where the primary goals are growth and resource acquisition. The dominant value in this approach is establishing a good relationship with the environment in order to acquire resources and grow. The second model is labeled the *rational goal model* and has productivity, efficiency, and profit as indicators of effectiveness. Under this model an organization wants to achieve output goals in a controlled way. The *internal process model* is the third of the four models and has as its primary aim a stable organization that maintains itself in an orderly way. Finally, the *human relations model* focuses concern on the development of human resources.

It is important to note that each of these models has a polar opposite. According to Quinn and Rohrbaugh

(1981), the human relations model, which emphasizes flexibility and internal focus, stands in contrast to the rational goal model, which stresses control and external focus. The open systems model, which is characterized by flexibility and external focus, runs counter to the internal process model, which emphasizes control and internal focus. Although the competing values approach evaluates effectiveness by using multiple criteria, the biggest challenge that occurs in its evaluation is, according to Slack (1997), "determining which constituents are important to an organisation, and then measuring the criteria they value and use in determining the effectiveness of their organisation" (p. 34).

Each of these models covers part of the construct of effectiveness, depending on the point of view of the subject. However, it is to be expected that when a definition of effectiveness is unclear, its measurement will also be unclear. One possible reason that the best criteria to evaluate effectiveness are unknown may be that effectiveness is inherently subjective, as it is based on personal preferences of individuals. For example, Van De Ven and Ferry (1980) referred to organizational goals as being manifestations of individual preferences and values. Hence, goals in this instance are the best criteria for measurement. However, Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) argued that the preferences of the most powerful constituency should be used as the criteria by which effectiveness was measured.

Strategic Constituencies Approach

The fifth approach, the strategic constituencies approach, integrates diverse organizational activities and focuses on organizational constituencies. A constituency is any group within or outside the organization that has a stake in the organization's performance. According to Connolly et al. (1980), this model is based on "a view of organisational effectiveness in which several different statements can be made about the focal organisation, which reflect the criterion sets of different individuals and groups or constituents" (p. 211). Stockholders, suppliers, employees, and owners are all constituencies, and one measure of effectiveness can be the assessment of how satisfied each group is with the organization's performance. Obviously, each constituency will have a different criterion of effectiveness due to the diverse interest in and expectations of the organization. The question arises as to which of these constituents should be used for the evaluation of the

organization's effectiveness. Connolly et al. (1980) argued that since the perspectives of all constituents are legitimate, effectiveness should be considered as a plural concept. The author commented, "it is effectivenesses that should be considered, not effectiveness" (p. 217).

The strength of the strategic constituency approach is that it takes a broad view of effectiveness and examines factors in the environment as well as within the organization. The constituency approach also includes the community and the notion of social responsibility (Daft, 1986). This had not been incorporated into alternate models. The constituency approach also handles several criteria simultaneously (inputs, internal processing, and outputs) and acknowledges that there is no single measure of effectiveness. The well-being of employees is just as important as achievement of the owner's goals.

This approach gained popularity, based on the view that effectiveness is a complex, multidimensional construct that has no single measure. It is a valid approach to evaluate organizations across several criteria that represent outcomes relevant to diverse interest groups. Also, as Chelladurai (1987) notes, "this model measures organisational effectiveness at three levels, which are input, throughput, and output and that those three stages are the phases where system resources, process, and goal model are used" (p. 38). It would appear that the strategic constituencies approach is the most integrated approach to organizational effectiveness.

However, it must not be confused with a multiple approach to organizational effectiveness. A multidimensional approach simply suggests that an organization should be evaluated on different dimensions—resource acquisition, smooth functioning of internal processes, and so on. In the strategic constituencies approach, various groups evaluate a focal organization on the same dimensions. Thus, this approach focuses on who should be evaluated rather than the dimensions of the organization that should be evaluated (Chelladurai, 1985). From this perspective, the strategic constituencies approach subsumes all other models of effectiveness.

The possibility that the multiple constituencies of an organization could have different preferences for organizational performance, and therefore would select different criteria for assessing organizational effectiveness, gives rise to the importance of the values underlying these differing sets of criteria (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). As Zammuto (1982) suggested, "organisational

effectiveness fundamentally is a value-based concept in that the whole of the evaluation process requires the application of value judgements, from the selection of constituencies and the weighting of their judgements, to the development of recommendations for future organisational performance" (p. 261).

In Zammuto's view, the various multiple constituency approaches can be classified under four perspectives. The *relativistic perspective* (Connolly et al., 1980) holds that the evaluations by all the various constituencies are legitimate, and therefore the primacy of one view over the other cannot be established. The *power perspective* (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) addresses the preferences of the most powerful constituents, or the coalition of powerful constituencies, that need to be satisfied. The focus of the *social justice perspective* (Keeley, 1978) is on satisfying the needs of the less powerful or the less advantaged constituents. Finally, the focus of Zammuto's (1982) *evolutionary perspective* is on the process of becoming effective, rather than on being effective. That is, organizational effectiveness is viewed in terms of how the organization attempts to satisfy the divergent needs over the long term as the constituents and their needs change over time. If the organization performs poorly according to several interest groups, it is probably not meeting its major goals and may even be struggling to survive.

The shortcomings of this approach are rooted in the ease by which constituents of an organization and their importance can be identified. A constituent that is important to some people in the organization may not be to others. Also, as the organization goes through life stages and hence its needs change, the importance constituents attach to criteria also changes. For example, in its early stages, an organization may see the financial department as important, while in its later years the marketing department may take primacy.

It is clear that all five models evaluate whether or not the different goals of an organization have been accomplished. Since no single approach to organizational effectiveness is appropriate in all circumstances, or for all organizational types, it is reasonable to define the concept of effectiveness in the light of each particular case. In order to identify the approach that is most suitable for the measurement of the effectiveness of SOCOG' Event Leadership training course, account should be taken of the special characteristics that SOCOG had as an organization and the characteristics that make the evaluation of training programs difficult.

Explication of such characteristics and rationale for model selection follow.

The SOCOG Event Leadership Training Course

The Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) Event Leadership training course was compulsory for all staff in supervisory or managerial positions. The aim of the course was to "provide participants with the skills, knowledge and realistic expectations on how to effectively lead their workforce during an event" (NSW Technical and Further Education Commission, 1999, p. 3). Its objectives were:

1. explain the generic role of the supervisor, the chain of command, and relevant venue terminology;
2. describe the event environment in context of the Sydney 2000 Games;
3. explain and identify the composition and management of the event workforce;
4. appreciate the motivations and expectations of key stakeholders;
5. explain the skills required to be an effective event leader;
6. discuss the tools and tips currently used by event leaders to build and manage teams effectively; and
7. appreciate the challenges facing event leaders based on real life scenarios taken from past events. (p. 3)

However, irrespective of course objectives, the point must be reinforced that the course was run in the pre-Olympic period and measured expectations of the specific course, not behavioral attributes, which related to enhanced performance in a designated functional position.

While it could be argued that output from training is the most appropriate measure of effectiveness, this would not have diminished the importance of the strategic constituencies approach. While the cohort remained the same, a case could be made that in the initial instance they were a constituency evaluating an educational process and post games they would have been evaluating leadership attributes. Significantly, this research explored the attendee's perception of the training process; measurement after the games would measure outcomes.

Moreover, according to the goal attainment approach, the Event Leadership course would be effective if it

had accomplished all the above aims and objectives. However, some of these objectives were not measurable (objectives 4, 5, 6, and 7), and even if by the end of the course they had all been accomplished, it would have been impossible to completely attribute credit to the training course. These are two of the problems that evaluators of training have to face. One is the fact that the training goals are not measurable, and two is that "there is little empirical evidence linking training to improved job behaviour or employee attitude" (Haskell, 1998, p. 107). For the above reasons, the goal attainment approach is not the most appropriate for the evaluation of the effectiveness of this training course.

It could be argued that since the outputs of a training course cannot be objectively measured, the systems resource model is the most appropriate. However, SOCOG was a public sector organization and its resources were guaranteed from the government. Consequently, regardless of the results of the Event Leadership course, part of SOCOG's budget would have been spent on the training of its employees. The fact that this training course was among the first courses delivered in SOCOG, and the one that was being delivered even at Games time to all staff in supervisory and managerial positions, is not an indication of its effectiveness.

The internal process model is frequently used in evaluation of training programs and schools systems (Chelladurai, 1985). The reason for this is that the most crucial processes within the school system are the design of the curriculum and the teaching and evaluation methods used. An evaluation of these processes, and also the satisfaction expressed by both the teachers and the students, is often used to measure the effectiveness of the school system. However, the question arises as to who would establish these processes, if they are effective or not, and how objective their judgment will be. In educational institutions there are general policies and procedures, usually defined as benchmarking or quality assurance, that must be followed. However, in a training course within an organization, the internal process approach to effectiveness is not applicable, as the courses are often "one-off" and have no predetermined criteria against which effectiveness can be measured.

The competing values approach is not applicable in this research. Organizational growth and resource acquisition are not determinants of effectiveness of the training program and while efficiency could be considered as an acceptable criterion, productivity and profit are not. Similarly, a case could be mounted that the

training program was designed to maintain the organization in an orderly manner—an internal process model; however, this would have been an objective of an alternative stakeholder group, not the course attendees. There is no doubt that the training course focused on concern for human resource development. However, once again this would more likely be an objective of the employer, not the cohort under investigation. Most importantly, this approach was rejected in this instance as no competing values were identified and, moreover, the research focused on only one constituent of the training program, the participants.

Hence, the approach that seemed most applicable for the measurement of the effectiveness of the Event Leadership course was the *strategic constituencies approach*. As stated above, this approach is the only one that incorporates the notion that different groups in an organization will hold different goals and that all can be met. Most of the criticism of this approach centers on the inability to identify the different constituents; however, this was not the case in this instance. The constituent groups of the Event Leadership course were the people who delivered the course, SOCOG, and the participants. Each one had different goals and expectations from the course, yet according to the strategic constituencies approach, if the course satisfies the expectations of one of the constituents, it is effective for that cohort.

Another problem associated with this approach is the relative importance of the constituents and whose perspective should be used for the evaluation of the course's effectiveness. This research focused on the participants' perspective, as this group was an important stakeholder in the training course. It sought to determine whether the course fulfilled training expectations.

Summary

As with most training courses, one way to examine whether a course has achieved its aims and objectives is through an evaluation of the attendees' perception of its effectiveness. Following a thorough review of the five main effectiveness models, the strategic constituencies approach was deemed to be the most suitable for this research. This model takes into consideration the existence of many stakeholders and evaluates results based on the perspective of one. Hence, given the needs of this research, the strategic constituencies approach was adopted as the theoretical underpinning.

The Effectiveness of the SOCOG Event Leadership Training Course—a Methodology

Leadership training is extremely important to the organization of mega-events such as the Olympic Games. The large number of staff, paid and volunteers, working for such an event, and the associated high levels of stress, increases the need for well-trained leaders who can manage their staff effectively and cope with constant change and unpredictable situations.

The broad intent of this research was to measure the effectiveness of SOCOG's Event Leadership training course, which was mandatory for all supervisors and managers, by seeking determinants to change in trainees' knowledge, behavior, and performance after attending the training course. Specifically, what was sought to be determined was whether the training course met the initial objectives set by the Workforce Training Team in SOCOG, the degree to which the training course met the expectations of its attendees, and the degree to which the course helped its attendees to perform their duties during events. This research focused specifically on the second objective, which related to attendees' expectations. In order to determine whether this objective was achieved, the following questions were posed:

1. Did the course meet the expectations of its attendees?
2. Were there any changes in the perceived efficiency of staff that attended the Event Leadership course?
3. Which components of the course did the participants believe needed improvement?

The information sources used to provide the evidence for the research questions included a review and analysis of secondary data and primary data collection/analysis via a questionnaire-based survey. The *secondary data* included the files from the Workforce Training Team in SOCOG that set out course objectives, determined subject content, and selected appropriate facilities. These objectives formed the contextual basis for the collection of *primary data*.

SOCOG staff who attended the Event Leadership course in June and July 2000 was the cohort selected for the *captive group survey* (Veal, 1997). The group was a random sample of 79 people working in the Olympic Village in supervisory and managerial positions during August 2000. This was just prior to the Olym-

pic Games and prior to the Olympic Village becoming operational.

The questionnaire comprised 13 questions divided in two sections. The first section included five questions related to participant demographics (i.e., age, gender, education, occupational background, and past experience with event leadership training courses). The second section included questions on the reasons for attending the course, expectations of the course, and the degree to which these expectations were met. Similarly, questions were asked that sought to gauge participants' perceptions of possible improvement in their skills and the applicability of the gained knowledge to their daily duties. Finally, the questionnaire examined the design and delivery of the course, the parts of the course needing improvement, and reasons why the surveyed trainees would or would not recommend this course to other event leaders. In providing their evaluation of the course, participants were asked to indicate whether they had gained the knowledge and skills necessary to conclude that this course had been effective.

The data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows. Descriptive statistics were used for the demographic information (*component 1*) with frequencies established for the first five questions. Questions 7–12 (*component 2*) ascertained skill acquisition and knowledge development. Demographic information was cross-tabulated with the responses to the second component of the questionnaire and means were calculated for the relevant questions.

With regard to the analysis of the open-ended question (*component 3*), qualitative analysis was used. All answers were presented in the report "raw" (Veal, 1997) and then analyzed. Finally, the data analysis and subsequent discussion was used for the recommendations and conclusions. The information gathered from both analysis procedures has been evaluated in light of the research questions and the concept of organizational effectiveness.

Analysis and Discussion

To provide context for the analysis and discussion, a summary of the key demographics is presented. Females dominated the cohort (68%), with the majority of respondents being in the 18–24 age bracket (32%) and the 25–34 age bracket (48%). It was an educated group, with 45% holding degrees and 11% postgraduate quali-

fications. In the main, the respondents had been managers (43%) or professionals (35%) in previous occupations, and 27% had previous event leadership experience. This was a young, professional, and educated cohort.

Rationale for Attending Course

As was expected, when respondents were asked why they undertook the SOCOG Event Leadership course, 94% indicated because it was compulsory. However, there were a number of interesting subsample differences. Responses differed according to gender, education, and occupational groups. In the male subsample, 24% saw the course as a way to improve their skills. This compared to 13% for females. Significantly, more than any other subsample, those with only a high school education indicated that they attended the course to improve their skills. This may be explained by the fact that this group had no previous occupational experience and, as such, job-related course development that focused on leadership would be extremely useful for them. Conversely, skill improvement was the lowest rating response for managers (8%). Arguably, those with a managerial background would more than likely have already experienced such management activities and hence such instruction may have been rather superfluous for them.

Finally, a small cohort of respondents (18%) who had previously attended similar courses indicated that they attended this SOCOG course to improve their leadership skills. Possibly, this group realized the importance of leadership following previous course attendance, while others may have underestimated it due to their lack of experience.

Knowledge Acquisition Expectations

The most popular response to the issue concerning expectations related to knowledge acquisition tends to suggest that the respondents were hopeful of learning the skills and attributes necessary to be an effective leader, and to deal with the challenges that event leaders face. The respondents were provided with a list of eight knowledge elements and were asked to rank on a scale of 1 (no expectation) to 5 (very strong expectation) their expectation in relation to the knowledge to be gained from the course. All knowledge elements resulted in either a strong or very strong expectation on the part of the participants. Mean responses varied from

3.4 for learning about the event environment to 4.1 for challenges facing the event leaders.

Interesting subsample responses included the very strong expectation from the 18–24 age group (M 4.1) that they would learn skills related to supervisory roles, and a similarly strong expectation from the 36–45 age group (M 4.1) that they would learn to understand the motivations of the event workforce. Moreover, with regard to the motivations of the event workforce, para-professionals and clerks had a very strong expectation about the knowledge they would gain (M 5) when compared with sales personnel (M 2.5). Those with postgraduate qualifications had a very strong expectation (M 4.3) that they would be made aware of the challenges facing event leaders, yet this did not appear to be as important to those with the high school education only (M 3.9). Finally, those with previous event leadership course experience had lesser expectations in all cases than those who did not.

The follow-up question in this instance related to whether the expectations regarding knowledge acquisition were met. Previously listed knowledge elements were provided again for the respondents to indicate whether or not this was the case (1 = not at all; 5 = very much).

The expectation that was more fully met than any other related to event workforce motivation (M 3.7). The least fulfilled expectation was learning about event planning (M 3.06). Although the stronger expectations were not fully met, the course provided knowledge that was not necessarily expected. For example, the most popular expectation was learning about the skills and attributes of an effective leader but this was not fully met (expectation 4.06 c/f met 3.5). Conversely, by the end of the course participants had gained knowledge about the composi-

tion of the event workforce, even though they were not expecting it (expectation 3.4 c/f met 3.5). This was the only instance when the mean was higher for the "met" than the "expectation" question.

In this response there were minimal differences based on gender, and given the small N meaningful comparisons between age groups were difficult. However, it is clear that when the subsample educational background was examined, respondents with a postgraduate diploma were the least satisfied by the knowledge gained from the course while those with a high school qualification were the most satisfied. In all cases bar one (composition of event workforce), the mean response decreased as the educational level increased. This difference became obvious in the question related to the skills and attributes of an effective leader. The mean response of those with a postgraduate degree was 2.6 while the mean for those respondents with high school qualifications was 3.7. Respondents with university qualifications had the highest expectations from the course according to question 7 and it appears that their expectations were only partially met.

Understandably, individuals with no event leadership or occupational experience (students) were the most satisfied by the outcomes of the course, while the people with a previous experience with a similar course were "neutral." This was expected, given that this group would have had greater expectations from the course than the previous two, and would possibly have been more demanding regarding outcomes.

Fundamental Management Concepts

Although there is great diversity in perspectives on management theory, the basic underpinnings of man-

Table 1
Expectations Related to the Knowledge That Would be Gained Through Attending the Course

Element	Mean
The challenges facing event leaders	4.1
The skills and attributes to be an effective leader	4.0
The supervisor's role at the event	3.9
The motivations of the event workforce	3.8
The planning of and event	3.6
The decision-making process in the organization of an event	3.5
The composition of the event workforce	3.4
The event environment	3.4

Table 2
Level of Agreement Related to the Meeting of Expectations of the Knowledge That Would be Gained Through Attending the Course

Element	Mean
The challenges facing event leaders	3.5
The skills and attributes to be an effective leader	4.0
The supervisor's role at the event	3.6
The motivations of the event workforce	3.7
The planning of and event	3.0
The decision-making process in the organization of an event	3.1
The composition of the event workforce	3.5
The event environment	3.5

agement ideology have changed very little over time. The competencies of planning, coordinating, directing, decision-making, and management are as relevant to the contemporary as they were to classical theory. Hence, participants were asked how much the course helped them to develop these skills, and once again were asked to rank responses on a 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much) scale.

A global examination of the responses indicated the perception that the coordinating skill of the respondents was the most improved (3.0) while the planning skill was the least improved (2.7). The majority of responses to this question fell in the "neutral" category. For the first time, there were more respondents indicating that the course did not help them "at all" as opposed to helping them "very much."

There were minimal gender and age differences. While males ranked planning and coordinating higher than females, and conversely the females ranked directing, decision-making, and management higher, mean differences were minimal. Similarly, in all cases the 36–45 age group were more positive in their response to the question relating to the course helping them develop their skills, but this was based on a small *n*. The 18–25 age group ranked planning and coordinating lowest, while the 25–34 age group ranked directing, decision-making, and management lowest.

Interestingly, individuals with previous leadership experience responded more positively to the belief that concepts were acquired through undertaking the course and did not hesitate to grade the acquisition of certain skills 4 or 5. It would appear that a point of reference, like previous courses undertaken, influences expectations from similar courses.

However, the majority of the respondents indicated that the course was not that helpful in their daily duties. This was expected, given the response to the question related to concept acquisition. In response to the key inquiry as to whether the course helped the respondents perform their daily duties, the response was neutral (*M* 2.77). The course appeared to be most beneficial to the 36–45 age group (3.14), those who had completed a TAFE course (2.89), and paraprofessionals (3.25). It was least beneficial to the 25–34 age group (2.61), those with a postgraduate degree (2.67), and students (2.29).

A possible explanation for these variations can be found in the nature of training. The existing literature argues that it is difficult to connect training with re-

sults, as they are not measurable or clear. Responses to this question appear subjective and follow personal rather than group characteristics.

Assessment of Course Design

Following on from questions related to concept development and its contribution to the enhanced facilitation of daily duties, respondents were asked their level of agreement with a series of statements related to course design (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). It is argued that most respondents agreed that the design of the course was satisfactory.

The strongest feature of the course was the opportunity to engage in interaction, and the weakest was the utility of the training materials. The 46–55 age group expressed the strongest levels of agreement in four out of seven cases. The greatest discrepancy related to the opportunity to interact, with the 18–24 age group registering a mean response of 4.1 and the 36–45 age group registering a mean of 3.1. There were minimal gender differences in all cases. However, those with a postgraduate education recorded the lowest mean in five out of seven instances and the second lowest in the other two cases. It would appear that those with experience with course design were more critical. However, paradoxically, those with a TAFE qualification were the least critical, recording the highest mean in five out of seven cases. Such results are open to a variety of interpretations. Small *ns* made any meaningful comparisons based on occupation problematic. However, those with previous event leadership course experience ranked the statements lower in six out of seven instances. Again, this is an indication that previous experience increases levels of expectation.

While the participants were generally neutral in their response to the follow-up question that asked where

Table 3
Level of Agreement with Statements Related to Course Design

Statement	Mean
The was adequate opportunity for interaction	3.8
The content of the training was clear	3.7
The topics were relevant	3.5
The sequence of topics was logical	3.5
The outcomes of the training were clear	3.4
The topics were informative	3.4
The training materials were/will be useful	3.3

the course needed improvement, the one area where it was felt that improvement was definitely needed related to the information provided (*M* 2.9). The time devoted to the course was the area that needed the least improvement (*M* 3.2).

The subgroups who thought that the course needed improvement were those who were managers in their previous jobs and the people with postgraduate degrees. One explanation for this could be that managers already have leadership experience, which may have made the event leadership course rather basic for them. The second group had the stronger expectations of the course and this may be the reason why they felt that their expectations were not fully met. However, for this question it must be acknowledged that there were minimal subsample differences, even between those with and without previous event leadership course experience. Responses to the open-ended question provided a clearer indication as to the components of the course that needed changed.

When asked, "Would you recommend this course to other event leaders?" the vast majority of the respondents (77.3%) said "yes." For all subgroups a 70% positive response was recorded, with very few exceptions. The more popular reasons why people would recommend the course were:

1. It was very much an introduction to event leadership and could be useful to people with no previous experience.
2. It provided relevant and helpful information.
3. It was helpful in improving leadership skills.
4. It dealt quite well with handling a team of people on a personal basis.

However, responses also included comments such as "groundwork," "introduction," "basic," "lead-in," and a "good overview," while suggestions such as "I would recommend the course because any knowledge is worthwhile," or "it was better than nothing" do not add any value to the course itself. The overall impression was that the course was satisfactory but not for people with previous experience. As one of the respondents stated, "it was helpful but not essential."

The main reasons why respondents would not recommend the course were:

1. Those with leadership training experience would already have covered most of it.

2. It lacked substance.
3. While it was fun it did not really provide any practical information.

Also, some of the respondents felt that there was no relevance to their specific job. When describing the course, respondents used phrases such as "common sense," "too basic," and "too general." There were also comments on the time provided (for some it was more than enough and for others too short) and also on the learning environment (the room was too small and crowded).

In conclusion, it appears that generally there was satisfaction with the course and most of the respondents felt benefited by it in some way. In this respect it could be argued that it was partially effective. However, improvement was needed and this was clearly highlighted by the responses. In making recommendations for the improvement of the course it should be noted and taken into consideration that the main reason why people would recommend the course is the same as why they would not. It contained basic information that was helpful and necessary but in certain cases was common sense and self-explanatory.

Recommendations and Conclusion

As indicated, the approach deemed most applicable for the measurement of the effectiveness of this Event Leadership course was the strategic constituencies' approach. This research focused on the participants' perspective, as they were basic stakeholders in this training course.

Regardless of the reasons why respondents attended the course, all had a strong expectation that they would gain specific skills and knowledge. However, although it can be concluded that they, more or less, gained the knowledge they were expecting, they were not universally satisfied with that which they obtained. The general impression was that the course was informative, and covered a variety of subjects, but did not result in the expected skill acquisition. However, the existing literature on corporate training indicates that the link between training and enhanced job performance is tenuous (Haskell, 1998). Consequently, even if the respondents had gained new skills as result of the event leadership course, they would not necessarily realize it at the time, or link it to the course they were attending.

Based on this research, for future major event leadership training courses to be effective, the following should be carefully considered:

1. Courses should be adjusted to the needs and special characteristics of attendees, as people have different experiences, expectations, and needs. The event leadership course under discussion was the same for all employees and remained the same until the end of the Games. As indicated, participants have different experiences, expectations, and needs. Hence, a training course should be designed so that it is flexible enough to accommodate the different requirements of its attendees. One way to do this is by forming groups of people with similar backgrounds and adjusting the outline of the course to suit their needs.
2. The content of the course should highlight the practical rather than the theoretical. Corporate training should focus on applied information to have practical use and value for the trainees. Although every kind of knowledge is valuable, it is far preferable when it has obvious utility. Corporate training information should have practical use in order to provide explicit value for the trainees. Real-life scenarios, role-playing, and knowledge practice are necessary for the course to be relevant to the real event environment.
3. Courses need to be adjusted to the background of the participants and adjusted to the role to be undertaken. In SOCOG all staff had to attend the same course, regardless of their role, and this made the course seem too general or unrelated to many participant's jobs. The creation of activity groups within the organization, based on the leadership skills needed for such activities, and the resultant course design differences for such groups, would make the course more useful and increase its practical application.

In conclusion, it has been consistently acknowledged that organizational effectiveness and, more specifically, the effectiveness of training programs is such a difficult concept to adequately capture that attempts to measure it only highlight its complex and contradictory nature. Nevertheless, while not being able to guarantee effectiveness of this course, the findings of this research resulted in a number of recommendations that may improve such courses.

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