

# teaching note

## *The Importance of Event Stakeholders: A case study of the Route 91 Harvest Festival Shooting*

### Summary

The October 1 shooting at the Route 91 Harvest Festival was a well-publicized tragedy in the events industry. The shooting resulted in 58 deaths, including two law enforcement officers and over 850 injuries (Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA], 2018). It is considered the deadliest mass shooting by an individual in United States history. Many students have heard of the incident and will likely remember some of the details due to its publicity and media coverage, making the topic timely and interesting. In addition, the violence of the incident could sensationalize a perhaps mundane topic (event stakeholders), further developing interest and student engagement. Using a tragedy as a case study will reinforce to students that event planners must consider all possible scenarios for their events from many different perspectives during the planning process and use the case study as an example of what can happen when planners fail to do so.

### Theoretical Background

Stakeholder theory states that an organization's success is dependent upon more than profits (Freeman, 1984). Stakeholder theory suggests that it is important to develop and maintain relationships with those the organization affects or could potentially affect (Reid, 2011). The central idea in stakeholder theory is that an organization's success relies on its ability to meet the needs of key groups and individuals who may be affected (Gargalianos, Toohey, & Stotlar, 2015). Applying stakeholder theory to events, organizers should include their current and potential stakeholders in the event planning process to ensure its success. Using the stakeholder theory approach can help event organizers identify existing and potential event stakeholders, better understand their relationships, and respond to the expectations of the identified stakeholders (Reid, 2011). Reid stated in 2011:

Stakeholder theory provides a management approach to identifying event stakeholders, monitoring satisfaction levels with their involvement and ensuring improvements to stakeholder relationships can be implemented prior to their withdrawal from involvement. Engaging stakeholders throughout the event planning process provides a stronger likelihood that the community is satisfied with and will support the event, providing competitive advantage to event organizers (p. 22).

Stakeholders are identified as having at least one of the following associations with an event: legitimacy, power, or urgency (Mitchell & Wood, 1997). Event stakeholders can typically be divided into primary and secondary groups with primary stakeholders including those directly involved in the event such as event organizers, employees, volunteers, suppliers, sponsors, and attendees. Secondary stakehold-

ers exist on the periphery of the event but are affected by the event and include local government, the host community, and emergency services (Reid, 2007). These stakeholders have a vested interest in the efficiency and operability of their related ancillary services and how they affect the local community (i.e. sanitation, waste management, noise ordinances, etc.). Secondary stakeholders have legitimacy, power, and urgency when there is an emergency at an event, reinforcing their importance in the event planning process. While most event organizers involve and consider primary stakeholders, secondary stakeholders can be overlooked during the event planning process, as evidenced by the incident at the Route 91 Harvest Festival in 2017 where emergency dispatchers and the local fire department were unaware that an event of that size was taking place in their jurisdiction.

A recent article on festival stakeholders noted the need for a "wider and consultative perspective where the sustainability of the festival is ensured as it complements the interest and contribution of the wider and often marginalized stakeholder groups" (Van Niekerk & Getz, 2016, p. 419). This reinforces the need to consider all stakeholder perspectives when planning events, especially secondary stakeholders.

### Target Audience

The target audience for this case study is both undergraduate and graduate students studying event management in courses that discuss event safety and risk management in the planning process. These courses could include meeting/event management and event tourism management.

### Teaching Objectives

After completion of this case study and its provided assignments, students should be able to:

- Define the concept of event stakeholders
- Explain the difference between primary and secondary event stakeholders
- Explain the importance of involving both primary and secondary event stakeholders in the event planning process
- Investigate and identify community resources for emergency planning
- Graduate students should also be able to:
  - Evaluate and summarize a government report
  - Relate stakeholder theory to an actual event

### Instruction Plan

This lesson will require approximately three hours to complete. Instructors should assign the case study as a reading assignment prior

to the initial class session.

### **Module 1: Video(s) and discussion questions 1–3**

Instructors should allow time for students to ask questions about the case study. Instructors should also show at least one of the following videos in class to familiarize students with the incident timeline. If in-class time is an issue for a one-hour video, the video could be assigned as a pre-class assignment.

- *Video – FOX5 NEWS Documentary – 1 October: One Month Later (58 minutes)*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=blg0aKdzB6c>  
Warning: this video includes live footage of the shooting and the victims at the incident and may be triggering to some students. The commentary provides perspectives from both the victims and the emergency responders at the event and was made by a Las Vegas television station one month after the shooting.
- *Video – New York Times Latest Video – 10 Minutes. 12 Gunfire Bursts. 30 Videos. Mapping the Las Vegas Massacre (11 minutes)*  
<https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000005473328/las-vegas-shooting-timeline-12-bursts.html>  
Warning: this video includes live footage of the shooting from 30 different collected video viewpoints and may be triggering to some students.
- *Video – CBS Evening News – Las Vegas Massacre: No motive definitively determined authorities say (2:30 minutes)*  
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/las-vegas-massacre-no-motive-definitively-determined-authorities-say-2018-08-03/>  
This video summarizes the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department's report and lack of motive for the shooting.
- *Video – ABC News – Killer on Floor 32 (33:54 minutes)*  
<https://abcnews.go.com/Nightline/video/killer-floor-32-59871638>  
Warning: this video includes live footage of the shooting and the victims at the incident and may be triggering to some students. The commentary provides perspectives from the victims, the emergency responders at the event, and the hotel and was made over a year after the shooting.

Instructors should pose the first three discussion questions to the class to encourage open debate and discussion:

1. How do you identify the stakeholders in an event?
2. Why is it important to work with the local community when planning an event?
3. What efforts can event organizers make to help emergency responders at their event?

### **Module 2: Discussion questions 4–6 (small group work)**

Instructors should assign small groups in class and have them work on the next three discussion questions (one question per group). Students should present their answers in a short presentation to the class at the end of the session.

1. Using Figure 2 as a guideline, who were the primary stakeholders in the Route 91 Harvest Festival in 2017?
2. Using Figure 2 as a guideline, who were the secondary stakeholders in the event?
3. Why should event organizers include both primary and secondary stakeholders in the event planning process?

### **Module 3: Identifying stakeholders for a local event**

Assign an actual local community event for students to research in class. Students (in the same small groups from Module 2) should review the event's website to thoroughly understand the event's objectives and its easily identifiable stakeholders. Students should develop a list of all possible stakeholders that should be included in the event's planning process and explain why they are important. They can also investigate and provide specific information for the last discussion question:

1. What resources are available in your community for developing an emergency response plan?

Graduate level: Assign a university/college event for individual graduate students to research, with the same requirements of the small group assignment for undergraduate students.

## **Assesment**

### **Undergraduate:**

Undergraduate students should write a two-page summary paper about what they have learned about event stakeholders and why they should be involved in the planning process. They should also identify at least one "turning point" item that made them realize why it is important to consider an event's secondary stakeholders.

### **Graduate:**

#### **Required reading:**

1. Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2018). 1 October after-action report. Retrieved from <https://www.hsdil.org/?abstract&did=814668>
2. Gargalianos, D., Toohey, K., & Stotlar, D. K. (2015). Olympic Games Complexity Model (OGCM). *Event Management*, 19(1), 47–55. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599515X14229071392945>

Graduate students should be assigned a research paper relating stakeholder theory to the FEMA after-action report. The students should answer the following questions:

- What were the major successes of the emergency re-

sponse and why?

- What were the major challenges of the emergency response and why?
- The event organizers plan to relaunch the Route 91 Harvest Festival again in 2019. What changes do they need to make to the event and why?

## Analysis of Discussion Questions

- *How do you identify the stakeholders in any event?*

Event stakeholders are anyone that is or can be affected by the event. They are typically grouped into primary and secondary stakeholders. Primary stakeholders include event organizers, event staff and volunteers, event attendees, venue management and staff, event vendors/suppliers, event promoters, and artists/entertainers/speakers and their staff. Secondary stakeholders include community residents and local businesses, law enforcement, medical services, fire services, government officials, media, and tourism organizations.

- *Why is important to work with local agencies when planning an event?*

Local agencies provide expertise and knowledge about the area and venue that cannot be found anywhere else. In addition, they will be the responding parties if there is any kind of emergency or situation, so they need to be aware of the event and its details so they can plan accordingly.

- *What efforts can event organizers make to help emergency responders at their event?*

Getting emergency responders involved in the planning process allows them to help set up necessary procedures and services in a proactive and efficient manner for the event itself and in the case of an emergency. They can also provide advice and detail their requirements to the event organizer during the planning process which can prove for a more efficient and effective on-site set up and response plan. Using Figure 2 as a guideline, who were the primary stakeholders in the Route 91 Harvest Festival in 2017?

- *Using Figure 2 as a guideline, who were the primary stakeholders in the event?*

Using Figure 2, the primary stakeholders included the category headings of customers, employees, owners, suppliers, and senior management. The primary stakeholders specific to the festival included the event organizer and promoter (Live Nation), event staff and volunteers, event attendees, venue management and staff which includes security (MGM Resorts International and Contemporary Services Coordination), event vendors/suppliers (concessions, merchandise, and any related event services such as staging, etc.), and artists/performers/

speakers and their related staff (performers during the three day festival and their staff which can include management, security, family, etc.)

- *Using Figure 2 as a guideline, who were the secondary stakeholders in the event?*

Using Figure 2, the secondary stakeholders included the category headings of competitors, government, and special interest groups. The secondary stakeholders specific to the festival included Las Vegas residents and businesses, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, medical services (ambulance and hospital services), Clark County Fire Department, transportation services, government officials, media, and the Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority.

- *Why should event organizers include both primary and secondary stakeholders in the event planning process?*

All stakeholders should be involved in the event planning process in order to utilize their expertise and so that everyone is briefed on the event and its details. This allows stakeholders not to be caught unaware and forced to react to a situation but rather to be proactive and plan for the event and for any contingencies related to the event.

- *What resources are available in your community for developing an emergency response plan?*

Local community resources for emergency planning are typically offered through a city's website or by contacting the local city government. They can direct planners to the resources available as well as any community requirements for event approval (i.e., filing an application and emergency action plans before approving the event to happen, etc.). In addition, the federal government offers plentiful resources for risk assessment and emergency planning on their site: <https://www.ready.gov/business/implementation/emergency>

## Analysis of Teaching Objectives

### *Undergraduate and graduate students:*

- Understand the importance of event stakeholders: students will be able to explain that both primary and secondary event stakeholders can provide invaluable expertise and advice to aid in the planning process, provide a more efficient and effective event set up, as well as improve the event's success in the community.
- Recommending improvements to the event planning process by involving stakeholders: students will be able to identify recommendations from the case study (specifically the FEMA observations and recommendations) that event planners can use to improve the event planning process.
- Investigating and identifying community resources for

emergency planning: students will investigate and identify the resources available in their local region for emergency and crisis planning.

### *Graduate students:*

- Evaluate and summarize a government report: students will be able to review a government report about an event emergency to glean and summarize the details directly related to the event itself.
- Relate stakeholder theory to an actual event: students will be able to link the concept of stakeholder theory and its framework to an event and describe how the theory can help improve the event planning process.

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