chapter ten

operational communications: the event manual & staff briefing document
This section describes two operational communication tools: 1) The Event Manual and 2) the Staff Briefing Document. Guides are provided to help you create your own versions.

1) The Event Manual

What is an Event Manual?

The Event Manual is a key tool that provides guidance and reference for all principal staff and advisors working on the event itself. It recounts final decisions taken by the project’s key planners on all operational aspects of the event and provides a practical operational guide.

Do I Need an Event Manual?

Our advice is ‘yes, you do’ because it will help you ensure that all the operational aspects that have been decided upon to date are logged in the one document. Therefore, when it comes to the event itself, the key decision makers in the event team and any outside agencies are all working from the same information. The information that follows may seem quite extensive but use it as a guide and include only what is relevant to your event. If your event is small and straightforward, your Event Manual should be pretty lean and it may have a very limited/internal distribution. If your event is more complex, for instance, if it is a large outdoor event or it takes in a number of venues, your Manual will feature more information and is likely to have a wider distribution list.

Who writes the Event Manual?

The event organisers should principally write the Event Manual. But if the operational aspects of your event have been planned with assistance and advice from outside agencies or partners who have an operational role, ensure that you reflect this in the way that you assemble the Manual. It’s important that all key planners and agencies
agree to the Manual’s methods and recommendations before it is published and distributed.

**Who should receive an Event Manual?**

The Event Manual may contain sensitive information and so the distribution should be confined to key individuals, agencies or authorities that have a decision-making role at the event and those who have contributed and agreed to important safety information that is included in the Manual.

**What’s in the Event Manual?**

The Manual is essentially a ‘How To’ guide. It should contain all information that is relevant to the operational aspects of the event. Assemble your Manual with clear chapters or sections and make sure each page is numbered. A suggested format may include the following:

- **Front Cover** – remember to state the event name and dates as well as the date of issue
- **Contents Page** – clearly set out the chapters/sections with page references. State who has prepared the Manual
- **Distribution List** – list all those who are to receive a Manual and who they represent
- **Contact Details** – for each individual
- **Roles and Responsibilities** – of all key agencies involved in the project in operational terms
- **Introduction and/or Statement of Intent** – a message from the event manager about the Event Manual’s use
- **The Event** – a general overview
- **Running Order** – of the main event and any ancillary attractions
- **Site/Venue Plans** – the physical layout of the event site
- **Method Statements** – on all operational and safety aspects of the event. This section may include information on production, access & egress (of artists, competitors, staff and public), security and stewarding provisions, traffic, transport and parking arrangements and site facilities (such as toilets, medical provisions, lost persons, drinking water, etc). Ensure all Facilities mentioned are plotted on the site/venue plans. Order these sections in a logical manner.
✓ Production Schedules – timed schedules for build-up, live event and take-down
✓ Event Communications – on all aspects of communication such as basic information about site contacts (where to find people and how to get in touch on site) and radio links (who has a radio, which channel are they on). A copy of the event permits and passes (i.e. parking passes, access all areas, staff, etc) could go in this section to inform everyone of what they look like and what they mean – but make sure the information cannot be duplicated. If the size or complexity of the event require a Joint Agency Control Room, an explanation of its function and identification of those who will be present could be included in this section.
✓ Emergencies and Protocol – detail procedures for lost persons, medical emergencies, show stopping, evacuation and any other emergency announcements should also be included.
✓ Appendices – for ancillary and support information that may be required for reference during the operation of the event. Risk assessments, site rules, safety memos, staff briefing document, pre-event control measures, outside agency statements of intent, etc can all be included here as appropriate.

How detailed should the Event Manual be?

Don’t underestimate how crucial the Event Manual can be in the smooth running of an event. It is a tool that should be continually referred to by those who receive a copy. The reader must be able to trust its contents and so the information should be as detailed and up-to-date as possible. The information should be presented in plain English and be clearly indexed. The Manual must be streamlined and portable. If the information you are providing is proving lengthy, decide whether appendices could be presented separately. However, ensure that all those who have agreed to the methods within the Event Manual are also familiar and subscribe to the information contained within any appendix.

When to write the Event Manual

An Event Manual should be as up-to-date as possible but don’t leave writing it until the last minute. Start the first draft of the Manual as soon as the project gets up and running. Add information when it becomes available and remove any obsolete information when the updated version is available. Make sure you keep a back up of the latest version of the Manual on disc or in hard-copy form.
When to distribute the Event Manual

A distribution date should be set in the early/mid planning stages. This provides a deadline for you to work to. The chosen date should be close enough to the event to allow for as much current and relevant information as possible to be included but time should be allowed for the recipient to read and reply. Any amendments and additions must be circulated to the full distribution list before the event is held (again, leave enough time for the new information to be read). Ensure amendments are dated so that the reader knows they are looking at the latest version. Mark copies ‘draft’ or ‘final’ as appropriate.

2) Staff Briefing Document

What is a Staff Briefing Document?

The purpose of a Staff Briefing Document (which may sometimes be referred to as a Code of Practice) is to provide a firm set of principles, practices and instructions to help guide event staff in their operational roles. This document can prove very useful by communicating a lot of vital information in a succinct manner. In doing so, it can ensure continuity, reduce the amount of briefing time and provide a level of comfort for staff working at the event.

Who should receive a Staff Briefing Document?

All event staff. It should also be included as an appendix to the Event Manual.

What is in a Staff Briefing Document?

All procedures, practices and regulations that dictate the conduct of staff should be included along with general information about the event. To help you get started, add to and adapt the following headings to create a Staff Briefing Document relevant to your particular event. Some elements may be taken from the Event Manual but, because of the casual distribution of the Staff Briefing Document, do not include sensitive information.

- Contents Page – that clearly sets out the section headings and where to find them
- Statement of Intent – informing the reader of the document’s purpose
- **Additional Copies** – including information about where to get one in the event of loss or damage

- **Who’s Who** – provide a list of the event staff, their roles, responsibilities and chain of command

- **Event Description** – including a programme or running order and a location map showing the venue layout, where the event elements are taking place and where all facilities are to be found (toilets, first aid, drinking water, etc)

- **Procedures, Practices and Regulations** that staff will be required to follow in their daily duties and implement in the event of an incident arising. You could separate this section into three broad categories:
  1) **Identification, Appearance & Conduct** – how different staff roles are identified (e.g. ID/laminates, what the staff are required to wear and how they are required to behave)
  2) **Operational Practices** – guidance on how to duties are to be carried out and how other procedural aspects work
  3) **Health & Safety Guidance** – event safety memo containing details of control measures, the procedures to deal with health and safety issues (e.g. accidents, fire, evacuation, etc)

- **Pro Forma Reports** – reports that staff may be required to complete. These could be time sheet, event property sign in/out sheets (uniforms, equipment, etc), accident report, incident report, etc. Ensure that it is clearly stated at the beginning of this section, and on each of the individual reports, the procedure for completing, reporting and filing.