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A Study of Leadership Through the
Field of Events Planning

by

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A Study of Leadership Through the Field of Events Planning

During the past four years it seems as if I have always been in charge of something, and looking back that "thing" has always been an event. Whether it was Freshman Tree Planting Ceremony, Junior Ring Dance, or Sorority Rush the events have been a culmination of my creativity, organization, and leadership abilities. It is not everyone who wants to, or would be able to plan an event for a client (or even their friends) and be proud of the end results. It is stressful, time consuming, and done for other people. It is a test of leadership in a traditional way through personal and interpersonal skills but at the same tests in a way completely its own. The field demands creativity and relationships, relationship building and detail, pleasing the clients and promoting the community. Throughout my experiences and the insight I have gained during the past semester of research I have found that events planning is a field in which leadership and its theories very much exist, although quite often with a twist.

Events planning is a relatively new field which benefits all types of organizations. Roughly $35 billion dollars are spent on corporate events each year, and the market is continuing to grow. The event planner's job is to create something that will capture the imagination, then coordinate the endless array of details involved in making it happen.\(^1\) It is a field which crosses the boundaries of context; it is beneficial to businesses, communities, and the political arena. By studying the leadership of both

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1Rider, 38
events planners and the events planning business we are able to see traditional leadership in a new light through their unique approaches to situations, people, and ideas.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

An interesting dilemma is faced when dealing with the literature of events planning in regard to leadership: there was very little material. Events planning is a field which is growing as rapidly as is the demand for it. Most of the resources are "how to" instead of "why to" or even "the most effective way for this type of results". Rather than explain the nature of the business, a step-by-step process was presented in most articles. Some authors provided deeper insight into the realm of leadership but when compared with the elementary approaches to ordering a birthday cake, they were clearly in the minority.

One of the main issues addressed in the literature of events planning in relation to leadership is the importance of the people you are working for. Whether it is a client, a fund raising event, or for social reasons, the people attending must have their wishes met in order for the event to succeed. The number one priority is to meet the needs of the followers. While the actual goals may vary, the priority does not. Roxanne Roberts reported on the success of a fund-raiser held for the National Garden. "What made the event a success," the co-ordinators said, "is that it met the needs of those who attended and the cause."2

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2 Roberts, Cl
In her article, "Putting on the Big Event", Melody McDowell feels that the objective of an event is always the same, and this goal is relationships. Placing emphasis on the needs of the people rather than the needs of the event is a more effective way of reaching the desired end results. An article in Fund Raising Management also states the importance of the people in relationship to the goal of an event. "[Special events] create a glue which can hold people together... in ways which can never happen sitting in a meeting trying to 'get through the agenda'. It is the relationships fostered in conjunction with the goal of the event which allows the message of the event co-ordinator to be received."

When compared with traditional leader-follower literature it seems the relationship found in events planning has one more step. Rather than the two way relationship such as leader--->follower, leader<---follower, or leader<--> follower, the relationship could be seen as a triangle between the planner/leader, the client/event host, and the followers/participants. In order to reach the goal of the event the planner must meet the needs of both sides of the triangle (See Appendix 1). It is through focusing on the needs of these two sides rather than the demands of the event which lead to the successful relationship between the client and the follower.

Often the reason for an event is to foster the support of those who attend. These events range from political campaigns and charity functions to promotional marketing events. The success of the person or group depends upon the success of the event. It is a situation where the event needs to foster a spirit of trust, worthiness, and reward for those attending. It is an event designed to bring people to a new level of understanding,

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3McDowell, 380
(much like transformational leadership) and it is through this understanding that the event achieves its success. A middle school in Baltimore, Maryland was having a problem with the community surrounding it and by hosting a spaghetti supper around the theme of unity relations improved. The event allowed for interaction between the surrounding neighbors and the parents of children attending the school. By discussing together about the needs of both the neighbors were able to see that by helping the school they too could be helped. 4

Knowing the needs of the people who will be attending the event is another responsibility of the event planner. It is an understanding of the market, realizing the goal, and desires of the audience which must be mixed together and considered heavily when planning an event. "Some clients haven't got a clue, so we'll go in and evaluate what their needs are, what they want to accomplish, and then develop a realistic concept," said a noted events planner. 5 If the needs are not known the result is often failure; and second-guessing the needs of prospective event guests involves research, experience, and luck. 6

Much of the literature deals with characteristics of an events planner. These characteristics cover a broad spectrum of those discussed by previous attribute theories. While there is no magical combination of qualities possessed by a leader, the observation of these qualities help provide insight as to the type of person whom is likely to succeed in this type of field and environment. According to Alan Rider,

4Flanagan, 36
5Rider, 41
6Werth, 33
Some event planners specialize in a particular field, but share a few key personal characteristics. The two most important are creativity and organization. That means people thinking about entering the field need to cultivate a somewhat uncommon right brain-left brain balance.7

(It is important to notice the use of the term 'uncommon' in relation to events planners. One thing which makes the study of this field in relation to leadership interesting is the abnormal pairing of qualities and theories in comparison to the traditional business world. Most people are right brained or left brained, but not both.) Supporting Rider's observation of the creativity and organization involved in this field is Joan Boughton, owner of a San Diego events planning business. "All the creativity in the world means nothing if you can't pull off the event," she says, "There is no margin of error and organization is crucial. Murphy's Law just loves events."

Along these same lines is the importance of paying attention to detail. The theme, purpose, and location may be absolutely perfect but if there is something wrong with the guest list, entertainment, or food the event will be a disaster. Carolyn Odom, President of Creative Communications Options in New York City feels one should put as much time into developing the menu as deciding on the theme. Working with outside sources is a matter in which detail is exceedingly important. They must know who, what, where, and how much in order for things to be done correctly. One small oversight can be fatal.8 (This type of quality can be considered transactional in which the planner offers an exchange, usually payment, for a service, such as catering.)

7Rider, 39
8McDowell, 382
"The common denominator among people who succeed in this industry is that they have a real facility for dealing with people," notes a reporter of the San Francisco Chronicle. In an industry dealing with people in every aspect it is critical that the planner be able to relate to the event host as well as the people who will be working on the event. After all, there are no second chances if the event does not succeed.

While literature provides a general knowledge of the events planning business it leaves many questions unanswered. The majority of research came through participation in actual events and their planning and interviews with people in the field.

INTERVIEWS

Four organizations were consulted for the study. The first, Downtown Presents, is a non-profit organization dedicated to bringing the community together in the historical downtown area of Richmond city. The Children's Miracle Network is an organization associated with hospitals which helps provide quality medical care for children. The Republican Party of Virginia is a political organization dedicated to the goals and candidates of the party. The forth, OPUS, is an event marketing business which works with clients to promote products and companies through the use of events. All four of these organizations have different

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9 Liberatore, 2/Z1
goals, yet they all meet these goals through the same means: the planning and execution of events.

**Downtown Presents** - an interview with Artisena Croslin, Events Co-ordinator.

The mission of Downtown Presents is to bring people of the community into the downtown Richmond area where they can interact and lay aside any notion of job, race, age, or other stereotypes that they might hold. Downtown Presents wants to bring people of the community together in a setting which is very fun, very entertaining, and very Richmond.

This philosophy is a part of the every day work. As a non-profit organization, the motive is not money. Each person at the office is focused on the goal. Having many events throughout the year keeps the mission in sight. And by working on many events at the same time helps prevent boredom.

When dealing with the community, Croslin feels three aspects are crucial. The first is being open-minded. They want to appeal to all races and generations, and understanding the diversity of our community is important. She feels that in a creative, loosely structured environment such as Downtown Presents that this aspect is more readily attained. The employees are trusted and given free reign over much of what they do. The supervisor has final say, but she too is committed to the mission and so rarely does she edit any of the work they have done.

Providing variety is also a key component in an events planning business. Although beer and bands will always bring the people out they cannot and do not wish to provide that in every event. While Friday
Cheers is very successful, it is not the main focus of the organization, but rather an alternative they provide to the younger working crowd. There are activities for families, young adults, concerts aimed for the over fifty crowd, and events which welcome everyone. Since the goal includes everyone limiting events and markets is not beneficial to the organization.

Perhaps the most important aspect is listening to the views of the community. She said they seldom get good responses from individuals, (rather the newspaper will say that everything went well), but if something went wrong or the community found a problem with what was presented the phone will not stop ringing for weeks. This type of criticism is important "no matter how annoying," Croslin said, "because when you are able to piece together the gripes and complaints and come across the underlying reason for the disappointment you are given a great deal of insight and understanding. You know not only not to do it again but how to do it better than possibly expected." They cannot separate themselves from those they are trying to serve.

When it comes to dealing with volunteers, Hoop-It-Up, a three member basketball team contest, is the largest. One woman dealing with over one hundred volunteers tends to get out of hand, but by learning from experience things should run more smoothly this time. Unlike the paid positions during Friday Cheers, or the decorative positions (such as characters) at Easter of Parade, the volunteers at Hoop-It-Up keep the event running. A problem encountered last year was the fact that many of the volunteers were "just lookin' for a free t-shirt". By implementing a system of volunteer captains, having more volunteer stations where questions can be answered and directions can be given should help to keep those there working.
The most dependable volunteers are often the employees of businesses who have helped sponsor the event. They are more reliable when they are there and she knows that if Virginia Power says they have forty-five volunteers for both days they will have it. Phone in volunteers have around a fifty percent turn out at the actual event, and many give about fifty percent of their efforts when there.

Volunteers are given incentives, such as the T-shirt, but they are also given chances to win larger prizes based on the number of hours worked and this year by "spot checks" of the volunteer captains. Another successful motivator of the employees is the fact that it is an extremely fun, fast-paced event which does not allow much time for boredom. This keeps the volunteers active which makes them feel needed and important. "Having too many volunteers means that many of them don't have anything to do, so they bother those who are doing things and then nothing gets done."

Creativity plays a major role in the production of any event. Richmond loves tradition but does not like repetition. The people want to know what to expect but at the same time they want to be surprised at the changes. The ideas seem to conflict, but this expectation of their market is one thing that keeps the energy flowing in the office. Many of the answers are found in brainstorming sessions. With three creative and one practical mind in the room making things work is not uncommon. The employees also want to do something new for themselves. It is fun to surprise both the community and themselves by pulling off an event in a way never done before.

Croslin credits her success to many different aspects and characteristics. Paying attention to detail is perhaps her largest
Responsibility. But fine-tuning it on paper does not ensure success. You do not know until the day if the food vendors will show, if the volunteers will be dependable, or sometimes if the band will remember their engagement. To keep her sanity she makes sure that there is a back up plan for nearly every aspect. She is also extremely laid back and is able to "go with the flow" when it is time. Many mistakes have lead to future improvements and many of the unexpected minor disasters have given a back up plan a chance to be even more successful than the original.

The stress and headaches pay off every time one of the events becomes a reality. The energy and thrill of seeing the plans in action is worth all of the telephone calls, last minute replacements, and paperwork. And when it is all said and done, instead of a thank-you from the community they ask her when the next event will be.

Republican Party of Virginia—an interview with Amy Mumpower, Events Co-ordinator.

There is a difference in planning an event to promote a product and planning an event to promote an idea. Or at least according to Amy Mumpower's experiences. The difference is the sight, the tangibility of an event which can show you something. In the political arena they can show you a candidate, but the events are to sell an idea. The difference is the spirit, when you are having an event for fun it does not matter as much what the participants viewpoints are, they are not there to discuss them. In the political arena you need to address the issues but at the same time give the event the opportunity to provide information from differing viewpoints because not all party members have the same ideas.
The goal of the organization is embedded in the daily activities. Although she is the only one dealing with the events, Mumpower is surrounded by people who are trying to promote Republican ideals through other means. If she did not believe in what she was promoting she would be unable to do her job. She is deeply committed to the ideas and principles of the Republican party and it is these ideals which keep her motivated.

While the Republican Party of Virginia may be promoting an event for a candidate, what they are trying to sell is leadership. The image a leader presents can make or break an election. The event must be able to create an image out of the man or woman that the people want. It is her responsibility to create and make this image apparent through an event.

Her largest responsibility thus far has been the organization of the 1995 Donald W. Huffman Republican Advance, a weekend conference with noted speakers and lectures. The goal of this event was to ensure enthusiasm within the party, foster the positive spirit about the upcoming months, and although not to raise money for the RPV but to plant the thought in the minds of the weekend participants. With this in mind, the job was not easy. One of the most important issues being discussed was the attraction of African-American voters to the Republican party. Although her job seems to be making sure that there is a room to hold this discussion and a place for everyone to eat lunch afterwards her real responsibility was how to present this conversation topic. She had to coordinate the speakers and experts on the subject and make sure that views from all sides of the party were to be addressed.

Relationships with volunteers are extremely important, but more importantly is the shared values they have. It is these values which have
caused many of the volunteers have been with the organization for years. The reason for their loyalty is their individual commitment to the movement, and the friendships they make are a positive bonus. The envelope stuffing and phone calling rooms are not comfortable or remotely modern. In order to keep the support of the volunteers they provide food and drink as well as a Christmas volunteer appreciation day where a state level Republican Congress members join the volunteers to express their thanks. The work performed by the volunteers is crucial and time consuming. The paid staff would not be able to accomplish all that they do without the help of volunteers.

This is where Mumpower feels her personal attributes are best utilized. She feels she is extremely patient when it comes to working with others but at the same time persistent so that they will accomplish what she needs and when she needs it. "Personality is key," she said, "dealing with people daily, both on the phone and in person is so much better when a relationship is formed. They are more committed to you when the relationship is formed and are more likely to do their job well if they are carrying out a task for a friend." Her personal touch when working with volunteers lets them know their importance. They are there because of beliefs, but it her personal touch which often makes them stay an extra thirty minutes instead of going home early.

She views creativity in a practical sense, as the willingness to look at and create options. By being open-minded to all ideas she can piece together the best approaches to planning an event and with the remaining alternatives develop a back-up plan. She does not view herself as imaginative, but rather innovative. A large part of being able to plan and
execute an event successfully is by exposing yourself to everything that could, might, and should happen, and every way that it could.

Other qualities she has found important have been her love for organization and detail. She keeps precise records of all actions taken regarding the planning of an event because she knows that in order to sell her event to Virginia Republicans she will have to know the answers to their questions, and when the answer is at her fingertips she has a much greater chance in gaining their support. She feels that without these skills she would never be able to plan such events.

You can call and double check, put it in writing and sign a contract, but you can never be too prepared because most likely something will go wrong and when you can prove that you are the one who has been wronged, not only will the person correct the mistake, but you can be almost positive that it will never happen again.

In conjunction with this, she has always been a people pleaser. Without ever being recognized for the work she puts into the planning of an event, it is the few "thank-you's" received and the smiles she notices which let her know that it was a success.

**Children's Miracle Network** - an interview with Nancy Estes, chairman of fundraising.

While most people associate CMN with the annual fundraising telethon, a majority of the work takes place long before the cameras roll. Telephone donors often do not represent one-quarter of the revenue presented on the over-hanging money sign. That money has been raised all year long through fund raising events.

One thing which makes Children's Miracle Network unique is that the money raised in the community stays within the community. For this
reason, Estes feels it is extremely important to keep up relations with all areas of the community. CMN sponsors events in many towns in conjunction with local organizations. The Kiwanas club may host an event which gives the profits to CMN, or Dairy Queen will offer quarter shoots where one can win ice cream---and those quarters add up. It is the duty of the CMN staff (which consists of 3) to make sure these events are successful. They help the organization develop a strategy, but at the same time let the organization sponsoring the event remain in control. "If the members of the store of restaurant or whatever feel like it is their idea and their program they are having the workers are much more likely to support the fund raiser, and their support brings us more money." Estes also feels that one of the main reasons they are so successful in coordinating events with other programs is because they allow for this feeling of ownership. A small store often supports only one charity, and by keeping the relations positive with these stores, they will continue to support CMN.

The success of CMN is also sponsored on a national level through chains such as Wal-Mart and Eckerd Drugs. The support here is given from the national office to the regional stores, but it is up to Estes and her staff to turn the orders into a fun reality. This often means driving an hour to a small town's Wal-Mart to meet the employees before the store opens. "It is going the extra mile for them which makes them want to go the extra mile for you," Estes says.

The programs are run by volunteers within the organization and many have never heard of CMN. One of the things which motivates the employees is that the money stays in the community and benefits the children's hospital where there children, or their friend's children, would
be taken if need arise. "When they understand what we're about they take our goals and make them their own. It is a challenge and a responsibility at the same time. We try and make the events fun, but they know how serious it really is. And besides, everyone can relate to children." Many charities give their volunteers t-shirts for participating, but CMN gives them for individual contributions. They offer volunteers and hospital workers a way to show their support by joining the CMN Miracle Club for a relatively low fee, and with this "membership" they receive a shirt. "The volunteers appreciate this because they know that the money they raise for the hospital is not spent on buying the Dairy Queen staff next door a bunch of shirts. They can do that themselves."

Creativity plays a large role in fund raising events. Adding twists to last year's activities or offering new programs keeps the community interested. Other personal qualities she feels essential are organization, being able to relate to people, and paying attention to everything and everyone.

The personal reward? Estes says she sees it every time she walks through the children's hospital and sees a child riding in a racing-car wheelchair and not being so frightened. The magical castle mural and the state of the art equipment are important, but not nearly as inspiring as seeing a sick child smile because of something the hospital is able to offer through the help of CMN.
OPUS - interview with Andy Stefanovich, President and founder; Matt Zemon, Creative Director; and Victoria Sugrue, Production Supervisor.

Richmond's newest and hottest event planning/marketing firm has their eyes on being the best. The first step in doing this requires creating a culture which will in turn bring in the clients. Fostering a climate in which there are no hidden agendas and no hierarchy helps bond the staff members together. They understand that it is from a collaboration of their efforts which will bring the clients, and in turn, the checks.

All of the staff members give and expect more than one hundred percent, always. Stefanovich says one reason the staff feels so strongly is because it is a new company and they are watching it grow. They have seen what happens when they work hard and like the results. As the president, he feels it is his duty to show the colleagues—not employees—what they can do. To brainstorming sessions he brings a bag of blocks, and with each suggestion a block is added to the middle of the table. As the suggestions are manipulated and grow, so does the block statue. This activity shows that everyone is in the project together, everyone follows everyone and each is a leader. The organization is built on a team structure, but at the same time allows for individualism. As each person tests their own limit, the outcome is heightened.

Because the tasks are divided among the organization's members it is interesting to observe the qualities needed in the different areas. Stefanovich feels that as president it is crucial he is able to think alternatively, creatively, and critically. An event may sound perfect but if it is not practical they must start over. He feels it is important to use the whole person, living is working and you are the same person at home as you are in the office. By "pulling people from their shells" and allowing
them to be themselves he feels they get better results. His biggest leadership challenge, he feels, is creating a team which works together in a mutually benefiting way. His colleagues are hand-picked for their abilities but equally as important are compatible personalities.

The director of productions, Victoria Sugrue, is detail oriented. She sees her creativity in the realm of her resourcefulness. She is not the one who comes up with the plan but rather she is the one who is able to come up with the strategy which makes it possible. She feels she is very service oriented, coming up with plans for others and making events possible where people can enjoy themselves and the client is pleased is "right up my alley." She loves seeing every one's efforts come together in the end and her positive energy and enthusiasm relay this feeling to the people she works with. Being in charge of hiring outside help she feels it is her obligation to convince these people of the wonderful opportunity which OPUS is presenting them. Sugrue uses her spunk (for there is no better word to describe it) to motivate others in giving their all. She feels that when they realize they are working with a professional group who is desiring to be the best, and their organization is included in the plans there is a much better response and effort on their part. By including the outside organizations involved in the success of an event with the goal OPUS has set for themselves, the end results are phenomenal.

Creative Director, Matt Zemon, feels the vitality of the company comes from its future plans. He is a part of its future and wants the best for both the firm and himself. He feels creativity is a part of his every move, and without it he would not be would neither be in nor enjoy this field. He feels leadership is about adaptability and it is through creativity that one adapts. Being able to think of creative options to problems, see
new ways to approach the ordinary, and keeping an open mind to possibilities are ways in which his creative talents are utilized.

As a marketing technique, meeting the clients needs is a top priority. When they understand the goals of the client, and what they desire to achieve from an event marketing function they share the goals of OPUS with the client. The desired effect of the event is to develop a relationship between the client and consumer, and the goal of OPUS is to create this relationship. The success of the formed relationship will in turn help OPUS reach its vision of being the premier firm for events marketing. By sharing goals and creating a trust through the goals OPUS is allowed a greater freedom and opportunities because the client knows that they are together in the project.

**CONTEXTS**

The interviews showed many similarities, but at the same time the differences were obvious. It is important to understand that while they all are in charge of the planning and execution of events, that they achieve them in different ways. One place we notice this is through examining the individual goals.

The CMN is dedicated to the improvement of children's hospital facilities, very narrow and pointed goal. It is important to the CMN that their goal be understood by the organizations they work with when trying to reach this goal because it is only through the efforts of these organizations that their goal can be met. On the other hand, Downtown Presents reaches its goal through the events.
The people who go to Friday Cheers need not understand that the people in charge are trying to break down barriers and allow people of all backgrounds to come together downtown and enjoy themselves together. Their presence is the goal, and in order to reach it all of the work must come from the staff. The volunteers have specific tasks which enable the event to run more smoothly, but they have no direct connection to Downtown Present's goal.

The Republican Party of Virginia is dedicated to the advancement of the party's ideals and candidates. Through their events they try to show the participants in the rally or conference that the organization's goals are the same as the individual goals. Here we notice a combination of both personal and organizational goals being combined to achieve the desired result. Finally, OPUS desires to be the best in the industry. This requires personal commitment from all employees as well as the understanding of the other organizations they work with. The employees expect nothing less than one hundred and fifty percent from their co-workers and at the same time nothing less of themselves. They expect to see this same attitude in the outside companies they work with, both clients and outside companies needed to work with an event. They take their goal, incorporate it into the companies they work with, and demand it in individual performance. (See Appendix 2.)

Another difference is the treatment of volunteers. The Republican Party of Virginia does not feel they have to solicit for volunteers. They have a history of good relations with the people they work with because they are all committed to the same ideas. They do not have to train the volunteers to the mind-set of the organization, because that mind-set is already there. This does not mean that they neglect the needs of the
volunteers, they provide them with physical comfort and are nice to them, but the relationship is one of "this-is-what-you-do-thank-you". The task of the volunteers is important. As long as the punch is served or the decorations are put up correctly they are not concerned with the personal aspects of the volunteers. The rewards are intrinsic, the volunteers support a cause they believe in and when the task is complete they go home and hopefully come back and help again.

On the other hand, it is extremely important that CMN is directly involved with the volunteers. Staff members are right beside the volunteers talking with them, getting to know them on an individual level. The support they have for the volunteers is essential for the volunteers to keep their support with CMN. There are hundreds of charities which these people could support which means maintaining good relations with the volunteers is crucial.

Downtown Presents works with volunteers in large events and relies on sponsors such as Ukrops or other businesses who are also sponsoring the event to provide the volunteers. The volunteers are often there for a limited amount of time and in order to make sure they don't leave they entice them with prizes and shirts and free food. Tangible rewards given by Downtown Presents are highly effective. Volunteers are also rewarded through their employers by having an extra afternoon off or having their vacation time weighed more seriously because of their community involvement.

In this comparison we see that CMN develops a personal relationship with the volunteers to keep their support, RPV relies on the shared values their volunteers have with the party, and DP offers actual rewards to the volunteers to show their appreciation. Each organization relies on
volunteers to carry off the events, but in a way all its own. The importance of followers in the success of a leader or an organization is directly linked. By understanding the needs of the followers the organization is more inclined to have "effective followers". This concept refers to followers, in this case volunteers, who are able to think for themselves and carry out duties effectively. They are committed to the ideals of the organization - we see this in the beliefs held by the RPV supporters. They are able to use their efforts for maximum effect - this is obvious in the efforts of the organizations which work with CMN. Although they are under the guidance of CMN and not responsible for the actual event planning, they are the ones who make the event possible through their manpower and decision-making skills.¹⁰

As we have seen a difference in the relationship between the volunteers of the contexts we also notice a difference in the needs of those served through the events. The needs met by the CMN participants are indirectly linked to the goal of the organization. The donors and participants in events most likely will neither utilize nor see the results of their actions. They may know what was bought with the money raised but they will not understand to what degree it is used. The needs of the people involved are personal, they wish to be involved in an effort to help a cause they believe in and feel that they made a difference in a child's life. The children and the families who benefit from CMN are often not directly involved with CMN. Here we see no direct link between those who work with CMN (not including staff) and those benefited other than the indirect link of the actual organization. The needs of the volunteers are met

¹⁰Kelley, 143-144
through working with CMN, and in turn CMN helps the children's hospital.

The clients who work with OPUS in developing an event are trying to form a relationship with the consumers who participate in the event. Their need is to develop a market and get their company's name and product known. Together, OPUS and the client will try to produce an event to market the product in hopes that this event will meet the need of the consumer. The need of the client can only be met if the result is successful and that is if the event participants begin to support the client sponsoring the event through purchasing power. Indirectly, this hopefully newly formed client/consumer relationship will meet the needs of others in establishing new clients because of past successes.

The needs of those participating with RPV are directly related to the success of RPV. Because the participants have a vested interest in the success of the event, the success for RPV means success for the participants. The needs are mutual and while it is RPV in charge of the event, when the needs of the participants are met so are the needs of RPV.

Downtown Presents deals with the needs of those they serve, whether they are aware of these needs or not. They cater to the idea that the community needs events in which they can all come together. The people at Downtown Presents do not necessarily have a good time at the events sponsored, but rather the enjoyable time of the participants meets the needs of this organization.

The differences are clear; CMN helps meet the needs of the volunteers by offering personal support and a feeling of importance. In turn, the volunteers help CMN meet the needs of the hospital. Together, OPUS and the client work to serve the event participants. A successful
event will open a new market to both the client served and OPUS through a continuously positive reputation. RPV is another organization which meets its needs only with the help of the supporters. The needs of the party met through the event are only possible when the needs of the participants are also met. The relationship is mutual, both will succeed or fail together. Finally, Downtown Presents aims at pleasing those who come to the events and the number of people who participate meets the organization's goal of bringing people together. While those served have no direct impact upon the organization, the organization is responsible for the good feelings fostered by the participants. In this context we see the organization in control of meeting both needs; for it is through their action and their action alone that the goal can be met. (See Appendix 3.)

The main similarity when examining context is seen in the structure of the actual organizations. Although on the outside CMN and RPV had stricter dress codes and more formal titles than the other two, the structure was loose and allowed members to work with each other regardless of rank. (The seemingly more organized structure of CMN and RPV may be partially due to the outside influences of the hospital and the Republican party.) The structures are conducive to communication between levels and titles seem to play no role in the decision-making process. One way we see this is through the flattened hierarchy. No emphasis is placed on titles; and although only one person is directly responsible for the event in the case of RPV and Downtown Presents, they consult with all members of the organization in working with ideas and for support. An aspect of the teamwork demanded by OPUS is that while the event may be divided into pieces where individuals are responsible for certain aspects everyone works together. The creative works with production through a system of checks
and balances which allows the project to remain as one even though there are numerous parts.

Physical structure plays a large part in the atmosphere of an organization. All of those studied were very open and inviting. The conference room was an important aspect to each; not as a place to entertain possible donors or clients, but rather as a place for brainstorming and bonding. Such an open structure helps to promote group cohesiveness because the organization members do not feel separated from each other.

Members of the organizations observed were extremely bonded. Although group conflict is often unavoidable it can be lessened when the group has a high cohesion. Organization leaders have a great impact upon the cohesion of the members, and it is noticed that in the area of events planning high group effectiveness is important. One way to promote this is through creating an environment which is conducive to forming relationships. The idea of group-maintenance is a relationship-oriented behavior which includes leadership improving interpersonal relations, satisfying needs for acceptance aiding in conflict.11

By examining the events planners in relationship to their environment we are able to see the same activities reached by differing measures. While the goal of one organization may be important to all who come in contact with the organization, or only the ones within, we notice the similarity in the personal dedication to the goal among the events planners. Their jobs are the same with outside factors determining much of the style; yet all allow for individuality and promote teamwork. Contexts

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11Yukl, 239
play a substantial role in events planning, however, it is not the only
driving force behind the success of these individuals.

**LEADERSHIP ASPECTS**

An interesting commonalty noticed is the high ratio of women to
men both in interviews and as sources in the literature review. Victoria
Sugrue, of OPUS, feels this is because in general women are more likely to
notice the small aspects of what goes on around them. Women are the ones
who notice the decorations and table centerpieces and therefore are more
likely to think of the details necessary in events planning. (She added that
women seem to be more competent than men and wanted to enter a field
where most men were not.) The idea of women as leaders has long been a
part of leadership literature. The nontraditional style of leadership chosen
by many women seems to fit the mold of an occupation such as events
planning. Businesses no longer demand the top-down leadership structure
where men are kings, and this industry stands to support that point.
According to "Ways Women Lead", an article in *Harvard Business Review*,
women are more adaptable to change in the organization. The events
planning industry is new, fast-paced business which must bend to meet the
needs of the targeted audience. When change is apparent what is needed is
skills, people do not stop and notice gender as long as someone is able to
get the job done well.12 Another quality noticed in women is the attitude
taken towards others. Women are often enthusiastic about what they do
and have a desire to share this enthusiasm with others.13

12 Rosener, 125
13 Rosener, 124
This enthusiasm was noticed much more among the women than the men when interviewing. Although both genders were equally dedicated to their chosen profession, the energy given by the women was contagious; whereas the men's dedication was obvious through their discussions of past successes and end results. When planning an event it is important to spark enthusiasm with those attending and those you are working with. Getting them to believe in the event and be excited about it are crucial starts to a successful ending.

Being a motivator is an important role for any leader. When speaking with the events planners, they touched upon this subject and the importance of it. Getting people to support a cause and tying them emotionally to it is a strong motivator, according to Mumpower and Estes. It is this tie which keeps them motivated and because their beliefs are so strong it is easy to share these feelings. Instilling personal motivation factors within the followers are highly effective because the people have a personal interest deeper than a materialistic desire.

Downtown Presents keeps a high level of motivation among themselves by having fun. They are casual and support each other if things are not going as expected and are there for each other "when someone is just having a rotten day," said Wells. She feels those who work together have crested their own family, and this feeling gives a sense of belonging and need by the group for individual members. A major aspect of motivation involves meeting people's needs. Of Maslow's hierarchy of needs those met through the events planning field are belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization.¹⁴

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¹⁴Prince, 54
Another way they motivate is through verbal praise. The organizations are small and not in the situation for finical rewards. At OPUS, Stefanovich said, the reward will come in time. The people there understand the financial priority lies within the company for expansion. By doing their personal best and achieving more than the client expected, the rewards are internal, with the possibility of a "true reward" in the future. While rewards are positive reinforcements for a job well done, the main rewards provided by the leaders come through sharing the success of the events with others. The rewards contribute to esteem because they show respect for work done by the individuals. Personal motivation is seen through their own desires for self-actualization. By setting high standards and reaching them people are motivated through their own actions. They prove to themselves what they are capable of accomplishing and are proud of developing their own potential.\textsuperscript{15}

A high level of group performance is noticed whether the organizations are working internally or with outside participants. Member satisfaction is one way of determining this effectiveness. When members are satisfied there is a lower turn-over rate and absenteeism. This is seen in the loyalty of the RPV volunteers, some of them who have been serving the organization for over twenty years. Another determinant of effectiveness is task-achievement. When the Children's Miracle Network finishes their fund-raising campaign with the annual telethon, they allow representatives of the organizations who helped in the event execution and raising of capital to present CMN with a check on television. This shows the gratitude of CMN and shows the accomplishment of their actions to the

\textsuperscript{15}Prince, 55
viewing audience. As previously mentioned, when group members feel their work is appreciated they feel needed.\(^\text{16}\) It is rewards such as these which help contribute to group satisfaction.

Ethical issues do not escape this field. According to Zemon,

> Even though we [OPUS] are a small firm, it is important to us the clients we represent have ethical standards. We would not plan an event for a company we felt was presenting a harm to society and at the same time we will not be in charge of an event which does not represent our company as we want it seen. Even though we may need the income, it is not to our benefit to sacrifice standards.

Morals are not cast aside in the fund-raising scheme of CMN either. They will not let an organization sponsor a CMN event which they feel do not support children through the products or services they produce. Having high moral standards and incorporating them into the organization allows people to feel better about their job. It also makes them more committed to the vision and goals of the organization because members know they will not be sacrificing their standards to meet the needs of the organization.

Events planning presents a unique combination of both transactional and transformational leadership. Because the field requires creativity, close working relations with people both inside and outside the organization, as well as organization and professionalism, a combination of these two styles contributes to the success of the individuals and the events.

According to Burns, transformational leadership occurs when "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation."\(^\text{17}\) When a representative of CMN joins the community Jaycees

\(^{16}\text{Prince, 170}\)

\(^{17}\text{Burns, 20}\)
and together they plan an event, set goals, and commit themselves to its achievement we see transformational leadership. By making those who are working with CMN aware of their importance and how their actions can have a significant impact upon their community's children's hospital the leaders are raising their colleagues to new heights. When OPUS joins with a client and together they set goals for an event and expect the very best from each other we see a change in attitude and dedication to the success of the event. They put aside individual interests and begin working towards a shared goal which benefits all sides. Other areas in which we see transformational leadership is through the arousal of strong emotions.18 Mumpower of RPV is a charismatic person whose enthusiasm excites those under her, when this attribute is coupled with her experience and knowledge she is able to act as a coach—guiding, motivating, and inspiring others to do their best.

Transactional leadership is seen in the details and organization. This relationship is based on an exchange between the leader and follower.19 We see transactional leadership in the contracts and trades made on the organization of the event. This includes areas such as agreements with bands, getting the volunteers to perform their tasks correctly as well as following up on checks pledged by donors. While the events planners often like to develop personal relationships they recognize the need to establish fair exchanges for the events.

The adaptability to change styles of leadership depending upon the need of the relationship is noted by many theories. The multiple influence

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18 Yukl, 210-211

19 Burns, 20
model states that managers in large organizations are influenced by situations. This would hold true if the organizations studied were large, and if the patterns of behavior were influenced entirely by the situation. Observation suggest, however, that the change in attitude between leader and follower is influenced by the task at hand in conjunction with outside influences. Being able to read the situation, know what is needed, and the best way to achieve these needs are strong qualities possessed by all those interviewed, suggesting that leadership styles are not necessarily either/or.

By examining qualities seen in events planners, we also notice the personal satisfaction of those involved in planning an event. There is not an announcement at the end of the event which gives credit to those who planned it, nor is there a receiving line where the people who participate in the event thank those in charge. The reward is intrinsic and found through doing things for others. Whether the indirect result of an event is the election of a candidate, a referral to a new client and a large check, or being able to buy new equipment for the nursing staff; all of the people in charge of the events find their happiness comes when the event is over and they know that they have done their best in making the event not only possible, but also successful.

Critical thinking is seen in the daily responsibilities of events planners. The first stages of an event call for a thorough examination of all options. These range from themes to locations, entertainment to janitorial service used. Being able to investigate options available and from those possibilities invent new ones calls for in depth analysis of every options. The event planner must be able to critically examine any

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20 Osborne and Hunt, 1975
publication used promoting the event as well as analyze contracts between their organization and outside hired firms. By asking the right questions of those they are working with, the events planners have a better chance at reaching the desired goal.

There are many common attributes mentioned by all those interviewed. These are: attention to detail, organization, creativity and flexibility, being open-minded, and good communication skills. These skills allow them to remain in control of the task at hand, making sure that all of those in charge of one aspect or another will meet the needs of the event. The skills allow them to work with others to collectively come up with a goal for the event which meets the needs of those being served. As mentioned in the literature review, these characteristics are a combination of right and left-brain skills. The creativity helps their events be more memorable than the next and keeps the participants involved. If their attention is captured the goal is more likely to be reached. Creativity is viewed multiple ways; while being able to come up with original ideas is valuable it is no more so than being able to carefully examine all possible options. Creativity is viewed as adaptability, and adaptability, Zemon feels, is directly related to leadership.

Other attributes noticed when interviewing but not mentioned by those being interviewed may be more insightful. All of those involved were charismatic, full of life and energy. Charisma has long been associated with leadership; it is seen as a quality which inspires and motivates others.21 Their energy is contagious and When speaking of events they had planned and those in the future you could hear the

21Gardner, 34-35
excitement in their voice. When speaking of different events which served different markets it was obvious they realized changes in the types of people meant a desire for different events, and when dealing with a new mind-set the approach should change. The changes in contexts and goals of the organization did not reveal great differences in the types of people who worked in the field. While some showed a greater tendency to enjoy the details and others preferred the creative side it was obvious that they enjoyed their job tremendously. Those interviewed were articulate, making their thoughts very clear. It is easy to see that in working with all areas in planning the event giving clear directions is valuable and necessary quality.

While the combination of characteristics is unusual we see its occurrence again through the idea of the task and relationship-oriented behavior. Each agreed that in order to be successful a combination of the these behaviors is neccessary. They feel that it is the balance of both task proficeincy and personality which allows individuals and groups to be successful. While Fielder's Contingency Model (1967) states that a person is one of the two, leaders of the events planning field argue that it is the combination which allows for achievement. When hiring, these organizations look for competent workers, but at the same time have a lengthy interview process to ensure the personalities are compatible. While tasks can be taught, determination cannot. Cohesion between personalities cannot be forced, it is something which comes naturally over time. The qualities of being task as well as relationship-oriented is not an option for employees; it is a must from day one.

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22Yukl, 194
Personal factors impact the approach taken when planning an event, and being able to judge when to use certain characteristics contributes to the success of the organizations which planned the event. It is the juggling and balancing of leadership styles, assessment of the situation, and knowing what is needed that helps these people achieve the highest results.

**Personal Reflections**

When planning events such as Ring Dance and Sorority Rush I faced leadership challenges every day. The events required that every detail be covered and that a back-up plan be established for each detail. It involved the checking and double checking with the organization working with the event, be it the Jefferson Hotel or Panhellenic Council. These relationships were friendly but at the same time professional, we were helping each other yet held high expectations for the other's performance. While Ring Dance required patient work with over three hundred class mates, Rush required a never ending enthusiasm and ability to motivate. And for both, I needed all of the answers because that is what the people I was leading expected of me, and I expected even more of myself.

I found that I have many of the same qualities as the people I spoke with, we seemed to understand each other before words were spoken. The field is a marriage of leadership and creativity; one which requires constant energy and organization. I have always felt that many leadership theories do not take into consideration the fact that both, or all, of the alternatives they offer can combine in order to form leadership. One can be transactional and transformational at the same time and you do not have to
choose between tasks or relationships. This field proves that through both structural and individual aspects.

The study of the events planning field is valuable to the understanding of leadership because it shows a unique combination of previous findings. We are able to see the impact of contexts as well as individuals on an field which is intrinsically creative. The personal qualities which these individuals share when placed in environments desiring differing results show a leader’s response to outside forces as well as the flexibility of these outside influences to change. Perhaps it is because the field of events planning is new or its creative nature which allows for personal influence upon the context. Perhaps it is the dynamic personalities which create the open structure in the traditionally formal business world. Perhaps, but most likely it is a combination of these with leadership aspects from each side which allow for both personal satisfaction and successful business practices. Whatever the reason, seeing traditional theories in a new light gives reason to believe that leadership cannot be bound by context or individual, nor can it be bound by any one theory.
References


Mumpower, Amy. Personal interview, 30 Mar 1990.


Appendix 1

A Diagram Representing the Relationship Formed by the Events Planner in Order to Meet the Needs of the Client.

leader

client

participant

The arrow connecting the leader to the client represents a mutual understanding of needs and goals.

The arrow connecting the leader to the participant represents the leader's indirect assessment of the participants' needs.

The arrow between the client and the participant represents the desired outcome which is the development of a relationship between the two parties.

The arrow which cuts the middle of the triangle represents the efforts of the leader to foster the desired relationship through the means of the event planned.
Appendix 2

A Comparison of Goals

It is a combined effort and understanding of the CMN goal which makes it attainable.

The goal of the Republican Party of Virginia is shared by organization members and those involved in the events.
OPUS reaches its goal by involving others into their plan. Although the clients are top priority they draw them into their own organization by offering a goal which is appealing and inclusive.

Downtown Presents reaches its goal when they meet the needs of individuals through their events.
Appendix 3

Needs of Those Served

The Children's Miracle Network meets the needs of both the volunteers and the children's hospital. Though it is the volunteers who do most of the fund-raising they do not directly meet the needs of the children.

Together OPUS and their clients plan an event to meet the needs of the participants. If this event is successful the needs of the client will be met which in turn meets the needs of OPUS.
Downtown Presents

community

volunteers

Through the work of the volunteers Downtown Presents is able to serve the greater Richmond community.

RPV

members

needs

volunteers

By working together to reach shared needs the RPV and those involved are helped by the needs met.