Knowledge Management in Large Scale Events

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Management/leadership **Saturday, June 1, 2013** **20-minute oral presentation (including questions)**

Abstract 2013-276 **1:35 PM** **(Room 406)**

Introduction/Purpose

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has recognized knowledge as being valuable to an organization and through the Olympic Games Knowledge Management (OGKM) program has embraced the handling of that knowledge (Clarke, 2011). Second tier events, such as the Pan American Games, may possibly look to the IOC, as an industry leader for their best practices, but currently we have little understanding of the knowledge management (KM) process for these events or how they engage their stakeholders in the KM process. The stakeholders of the organizing committee in these large scale events include governments, sponsors, media, community, international delegations, sport federations, and organizing committee paid staff and volunteers (Parent, 2008). Thus, the purpose of our paper is to examine the KM of an Organizing Committee of Olympic Games and the KM of a lower tiered event such at the Organizing Committee of Pan American Games in order to highlight any differences that may be present.

Review of Relevant Literature

KM includes both tacit and explicit forms of knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) and the activities involved in the handling of knowledge. Although there are various activities associated with the KM process, Heisig (2009) found knowledge transfer, creation, application, identification, acquisition, and storage to be the most common activities. Arling and Chun (2011) offered a four-stage KM maturity model in which organizations may exist. The first stage, siloed knowledge, is characterized by limited KM participation and promotion of the organization. The second stage, standardized knowledge, is characterized by KM actions that make knowledge available to groups or teams. The third stage, integrated knowledge, is characterized by a greater focus on organizing knowledge and ensuring its dispersion across the organization. The fourth stage, generative knowledge, is characterized by engaging all four modes of Nonaka and Takeuchi's SECI process in order to ensure the creation of new knowledge.

Methodology and Data Analysis

We examined the stakeholders of the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Winter Games (VANOC) and the Toronto 2015 Pan American Games (TO2015) using interviews and online questionnaires. From the various stakeholder groups of VANOC 24 individuals participated, ensuring saturation was reached before ending the process. Interviews lasted an average of 51min and were mainly conducted by phone; however, four of the 24 interviewees completed the interview guide through an online survey. From the various stakeholder groups of TO2015 9 individuals participated. Interviews lasted an average of 48 min and were mainly conducted by phone; however, two of the interviewees completed the interview guide through an online survey. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and the transcripts and online data were inputted into ATLAS.ti 6.2 for data analysis. Deductive coding was used to highlight the different KM concepts, and inductive coding was used for any emerging information, pattern and/or theme. Coded passages were then put into a table to allow the patterns and themes to emerge (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Results

We found that although the parent organization of VANOC, the IOC, had a formal KM program in which VANOC participated, the parent organization of TO2015, the Pan American Sports Organization (PASO) did not have a formal KM program and that any implementation of KM was left up to the discretion of the organizing committee. Additionally, VANOC also included all of its main stakeholders within its KM program and there did not seem to be any discontent on the part of VANOC stakeholders regarding their transfer of knowledge while some key stakeholders of TO2015 (e.g. NSO, PSO) seemed to feel that they were not getting needed information in a timely fashion from the organizing committee. Lastly, there has been an informal knowledge transfer mechanism used from

VANOC to TO2015 in the form of employee transfer with transient workers, sometimes known in professional circles as Games gypsies.

Discussion/Implications

It appears that although the IOC's OGKM program had advanced KM to at least the third stage in Arling and Chun's (2011) maturity model, PASO has certainly not engaged in any type of KM program and therefore has left its members at the first stage. Independently, however, TO2015 has tried to advance the KM maturity of their organization past the maturity level of their parent organization, PASO. Additionally, the more developed organization seems to have included all of its stakeholders who seems to be, overall, quite satisfied with the knowledge transfer engaged in by VANOC. Alternately, TO2015 seems to be satisfying their partners (e.g. Federal Government, Provincial Government) while not engaging in knowledge transfer to a satisfactory level with other key stakeholders (e.g. NSO, PSO) up to this point at three years out from the Games. It seems that the importance of engagement in knowledge transfer is of lesser value or lesser capability to the organizers of the second tier event, the Pan American Games, than it is to the value or capability to the organizers of the mega event, the Olympic Winter Games.

A benefit to TO2015 was knowledge in the form of experience it was able to gain from employees who had been employed with the pre-existing VANOC. These types of employees are referred to as Games gypsies. Both VANOC and TO2015 operated within the same country, Canada, and therefore after VANOC employees ended their tenure they were able to move to the next large scale event and bring their knowledge of organizing a mega event to a new organizing committee, TO2015.

References

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