

ACADEMIC WEEKLY DIGEST

YOUR WEEKLY DIGEST OF KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS



MAKING SHARED LEADERSHIP WORK IN EVENTS

In events businesses, it is common for temporary project teams to be formed of individuals with very diverse skills and experiences. In this situation, it can be difficult for traditional leadership models to succeed.

In this study, Dr Emma Abson, Dr Peter Schofield and Dr James Kennell argue that a focus on the value of shared leadership through the development of workplace trust can create significant benefits when delivering events.



TRUST IS THE CORNERSTONE FOR SHARED LEADERSHIP

Dr James Kennell

The interconnectedness of work, coupled with complex contemporary social and technological change, means that traditional leadership paradigms no longer provide clear routes to success in project-based organisations. This is particularly true in events, where the prevalence of temporary project teams that bring together specialised work areas can make leadership 'from the top down' impractical, or impossible. Despite this, leadership remains of vital importance to the delivery of events, and this research investigated the merits of the shared leadership approach in supporting event project teams.

This study drew on ethnographic fieldwork inside three experiential marketing agencies that were delivering events projects for corporate clients. This involved 34 interviews with project team members as well as months of observation and analysis to explore how leadership was taking place within the agencies, across multiple projects.

Findings demonstrated that most project teams exhibit aspects of shared leadership – individuals assuming leadership roles at different times, formally or informally, based on their expertise.

Crucial to this working well was the establishment and development of trust – between leaders and teams, and between team members. Building trust in project teams relies on the empowerment, recognition and rewarding of staff and transparency, honesty and accountability from leaders. Leadership in the events industry can - and should - be a collaborative activity. Shared leadership draws on the expertise of all team members, to allow those with the right skills or knowledge to lead at the right time to ensure the success of complex, time-sensitive projects.

Event businesses can increase the sharing of leadership through transparency, honesty and accountability. If employees feel empowered, recognised for their contribution at work and rewarded fairly, they will accept more leadership responsibility.

Abson, E., Schofield, P., & Kennell, J. (2024). Making shared leadership work: the importance of trust in project-based organisations. *International Journal of Project Management*

Link: bit.ly/43q8aa8