

Power and Control in Event Management: A Case Study in Managing the Unstable Budget

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Numerous disciplines have studied and reported on the importance of understanding power in the initiation, development and maintenance of relationships (Brick et al., 2022). Power can be explicit or implicit; in the event planning industry, understanding both forms of power are important to successful event execution. The interdependent nature of an event and the use or misuse of power has the potential to impact one or more vendors involved with the event process and the overall event outcome.

This case study reports a client's use and abuse of power during a special event at a private university and analyzes how the event planning team used knowledge, skills and abilities associated with event planner's competencies to develop and execute a successful event. A special event, according to Fenich and Malek (2021) is "an umbrella term that encompasses all functions that bring people together for a unique purpose" (p.260). The Events Industry Council (EIC) glossary provides an even more succinct definition for a special event as a one-time event staged for the purpose of celebration; a unique activity (www.eic.glossary/specialevent). The special event reported on in this case study was the inauguration of the eighth president at a private University in western Pennsylvania. The special event committee was co-chaired by the VP of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the Provost. The committee members were selected by the co-chairs for their strengths in aspects of event planning. The event had an initial budget of approximately \$30,000 and with two months had shifted numerous times. The event budget

controls most aspects of decision making and problem solving and establishes guidelines for most actions/activities.

The data used to analyze the case included field notes from the co-chairs and committee members, in-depth interviews with the co-chairs and members of the planning committee, artifacts from the actual event and personal reflection.

MBEC has established standards divided into domains with skills and subskills. While B. Project Management and D. Financial Management appear to be the most violated standards, all 12 domains will be analyzed and explored to ascertain explicit and implicit use or abuse of power by the client. Further, the analysis will provide suggested ways to highlight best practices associated with the KSAs and manage conflicts during the planning and execution of a specialty event.

References

- Brick, D. J., Zhou, L., Chartrand, T. L., & Fitzsimons, G. J. (2021). Better to Decide Together: Shared Consumer Decision Making, Perceived Power, and Relationship Satisfaction. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 32(3), 387-405.
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- Events Industry Council (www.eic.glossary/specialevent).
- Fenich, G. and Malek, K. (2021). *Meetings, Expositions, Events & Conventions: An Introduction to the Industry*. 6th ed., Kendall Hunt.