

Information management at the 2001 Goodwill Games Brisbane

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In August/September 2001 Brisbane was host to the 2001 Goodwill Games. This was a multi-sport, international event where the best athletes in each of the fourteen sports featured at the Games were invited to compete.

The Queensland Government formed the company, 2001 Goodwill Games Brisbane Limited, as the local organising committee for the Games. By March 1999, a very small team was in place to begin the task of organising the event.

One of the first staff employed was the manager, information and records. Due to previous consultancy and contract experience, I was approached to undertake this role for the life of the company. The position was responsible for establishing guidelines and procedures for the management of all information in whatever format it took. All items, including videos, documents, books, reports and suppliers samples — including sand for the beach volleyball courts, flag poles, pieces of running track, and athlete uniforms — needed to be managed, sorted, catalogued and stored for rapid retrieval.

After an extensive search of similar events, such as the Olympics and Commonwealth Games, it was found that with the exception of the 2002 Sydney Olympics, very little had been done in the field of records management, let alone information management, in these organisations. A visit to the SOCOG offices in Sydney gave a valuable insight in to how this function was managed for a much larger organisation.

As a result the information and records section became the 'keeper of all knowledge' within the organisation. To do this, a database system was built to manage all aspects of information management. This was created in Microsoft Access due to budget constraints and the cost of purchasing off-the-shelf systems. The choice of Access caused a number of problems such as the number of users recommended by Microsoft. At Games time the total number of users needing to access the system at any one time was 160, while Microsoft recommends no more than ten! Through the use of very talented computer programming and networking people we were able to use the system without major problems.

This system allowed users to maintain their contacts in a centralised location as well as create documents, including

Word, Powerpoint, Excel and e-mail messages through Outlook. An electronic copy of each document was automatically saved to a pre-determined location on the network server. Incoming items including mail, samples, tenders, and reports were also entered into this system and assigned a location, a file number or storage details.

This comprehensive system meant that all information received and stored by the games' office could be located quickly by any member of staff. All files were bar-coded allowing a tracking system to be put in place.

The information stored on the network and the dissemination of information throughout the organisation using the network was also the responsibility of this section. This meant that at all times the information and records staff knew where to find electronic files and other information, and were able to maintain order over a traditionally disorganised resource.

At the end of the games the records and information staff had the task of sorting all material and arranging for the archiving of all relevant information. Over 8000 tonnes of paper were shredded, and more than 900 archive boxes containing relevant files, photographs, videos and reports were passed to the Queensland Department of Premier and Cabinet for safekeeping. This process took two staff members three months to complete!

A permanent record of the games has been sent to the National Library of Australia, the State Library of Queensland and the National Sport Information Centre in Canberra.

This contract was an interesting and, at times stressful experience, however it was also an opportunity to undertake a complex contract which has provided me with invaluable experience I can now take back to my own information management business. ■



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