BOOK 2 *Marketing Risk? Information*

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Foreword

Country shows are one of regional and rural Australia's greatest and most enduring traditions. Many have been running successfully for decades — some for as long as 50, even 100 years. Much of the credit for this outstanding achievement is down to the commitment and dedication of the army of volunteers — young and old — who freely give their time to ensure country shows entertain, inform and help showcase the best of rural and regional Australia.

Unfortunately, many shows are facing modern day pressures. The planning and administration side is increasingly more complex and time consuming. Committees are finding it harder to attract new members. There are competing pressures on people's time and changes to local economies. Show organisers also have to contend with issues such as public liability insurance, and a growing competition from a range of other entertainments.

In fact, many committees are finding they need to behave more like small businesses in the way they prepare for each show and plan for their long-term futures. On the plus side, there is a significant depth of experience, talent and drive within Australia's show community and, more importantly, a willingness to turn things around.

The Commonwealth Government understands the importance of shows to country communities and early last year announced a $2 million development fund to help shore up their long-term future. The funding has been used to set up ShowSkills — a program to increase the business management skills of show society committee members across rural and regional Australia.

This manual is one of two designed for use in ShowSkills workshops. Each workbook deals with a specific management theme, and provides basic information and suggestions. Together, they form a comprehensive guide to dealing with the many issues affecting our show committees.

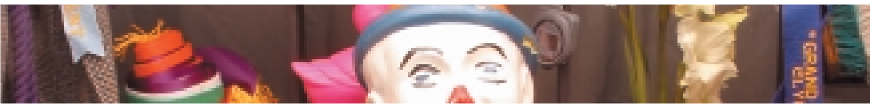
ShowSkills was developed after extensive consultation with Australia's show societies, and a successful pilot involving 12 societies from each State and the Northern Territory.

As well, seven show society representatives — one from each State — came together with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry – Australia to form an advisory committee for the project and to provide valuable guidance to the project consultants, PDF Management Services.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped develop ShowSkills, particularly the Advisory Committee, and the show societies that took part in the pilot workshops. I would also like to thank the thousands of people whose efforts ensure country shows enrich community life in regional centres and small towns around Australia every year. I trust that ShowSkills will help ensure this important work continues long into the future.

I am delighted to see this project up-and-running, and encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to learn new skills and share some of your own with other members of Australia's show movement.

Hon WARREN TRUSS MP
Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



ShowSkills – an outline

OVERVIEW

ShowSkills is the name given to the Business Management Training for Regional and Country Agricultural Show Committees project funded by Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia (AFFA). The objective of *ShowSkills* is to 'enhance and improve the business management capacity of show societies in Australia.'

The development of *ShowSkills* has involved a high level of consultation with a large number of show societies around Australia. Many issues identified in the consultation were unique to the particular show society. There were, however, many more areas of common concern, spanning the full range of business management areas.

ShowSkills is designed to be able to cover all areas of business management but with a delivery capacity to expand or contract topics based on the needs of particular workshop participants. This approach has been tested and proved successful, in pilot workshops involving small and medium-sized show societies from each state of Australia and the Northern Territory.

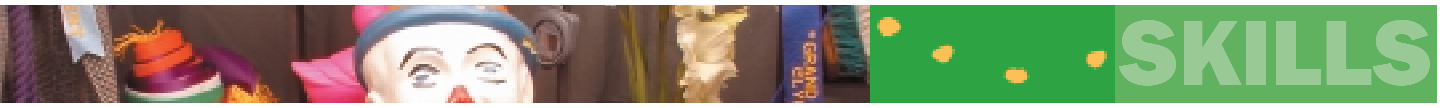
The clear message from consultation and the pilot workshops is that there is a keen interest in sharing experiences and ideas with other show societies and learning new skills in the process. *ShowSkills* is designed to support this learning in a structured way that assists participants to 'take home' practical ways to keep their shows thriving.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

ShowSkills is built around six themes that represent those things that Shows can do to continue to run successfully into the future. These themes are called:

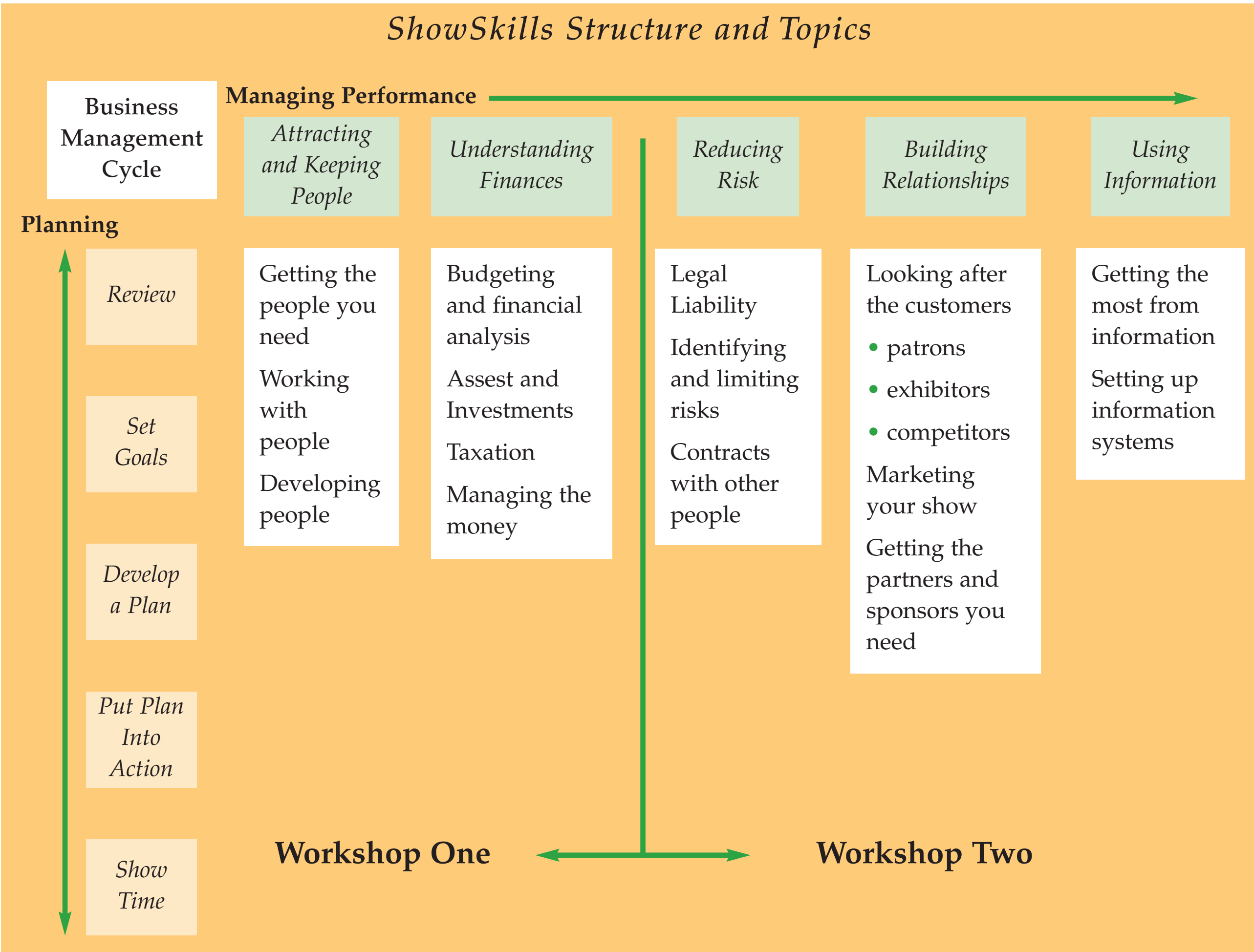
- Business Management Cycle
- Attracting and Keeping People
- Understanding Finances
- Reducing Risks
- Building Relationships
- Using Information

Each of these themes is divided into topic areas with stated learning objectives for participants. These objectives provide direction for the delivery of information and exercises that will be used in the *ShowSkills* training sessions. Of course, the experience and needs of workshop participants may affect the way the topic is covered in each workshop.



There are a number of skill areas that are important to running any small to medium-sized business that are dealt with as specific topics. Examples include leadership, managing change and problem solving. The *ShowSkills* method is to address a number of these areas in the delivery design, that is, the exercises used throughout the workshops will provide opportunities for participants to experience different ways of approaching challenges within their show societies.

The following diagram illustrates how the topics fit within a business management framework



Building Relationships

RATIONALE

A successful show relies on the support of the whole community: it relies on people coming through the gate, people competing and people exhibiting. It also relies on business and community partners and sponsors investing in the event.

The relationships you build also create expectations from your key stakeholder groups. Your society becomes a 'corporate citizen' – and takes on expectations of providing education, entertainment, excellence, value for money and a whole range of other contributions to your community.

This theme is about understanding where these relationships fit and how to build these relationships to grow the show. The theme looks at how to create a customer focus, how to market the show and how to attract partners and sponsors.

TOPICS

Looking after the customers

- Who are the show's customers?
- What is customer service?
- How do we know what the customers want?
- What do we do with complaints?

Marketing your show

- What is effective marketing?
- How can we get the best from our marketing and promotion?
- What about marketing options?
- How can we get the most out of using the media?

Getting the partners and sponsors you need

- How do we sign up sponsors?
- What are 'in-kind' sponsorship deals?
- How do we develop other partnerships?
- How do we keep building relationships?

Looking After the Customers

THIS TOPIC AIMS TO PROVIDE PARTICIPANTS WITH:

1. a broad understanding of who the show's customers are
2. ways of identifying the needs of the key customers, including consultation
3. an understanding of the principles of excellent customer service
4. ways to ensure the best possible service to all customers.

KEY POINTS

- The success of any show depends on the people who come through the gates, exhibit their wares or take part in the show's competitions.
- The most effective way to increase their numbers and keep them coming back is to:
  - understand what the customer expects
  - provide high quality services.
- Remember the old adage – the customer is always right.
- Most unhappy customers just don't come back – and they tell their friends.
- Listen to complaints and find other ways for customers to provide feedback.

Who are the show's customers?

Customers are the people the show relies on for its success. Customers include:

- the crowd through the gate
- exhibitors
- competitors
- sponsors
- community groups (e.g. schools and charitable organisations).

Customers have an expectation of service. As a show you have told them that they will receive some benefit from you. You are offering different opportunities to different groups:

- the crowd – to see things, be entertained and have fun
- trade exhibitors – to promote and sell their wares
- competitors – to be assessed against their peers
- sponsors – to promote their product or service
- community groups – to promote their goals and their mission.

Each of these customers gives their money or time to you on the basis that they will receive something in return.

The needs of sponsors and community groups are dealt with under the topic *Partners and Sponsors.* This topic therefore deals with the 'front counter' customers.

What is customer service?

Customer service is making sure that you are meeting the customer's expectations as much as possible. It also means that each time the customer receives a service, it should be a positive and rewarding experience.

To develop a customer focus – put yourself in the customer's shoes.
For example: What would I expect as a visitor to the show?

Expectation	Response
Fun things to do	Attractions, novelty events
Places to sit and rest	Marquees and trees for shade, tables and chairs
Places to eat and drink	Variety of food, hot and cold drinks
Good access to buildings, stands and toilets*	Wide paths, clear signage
Atmosphere and entertainment	Narrow laneways or enclosed areas, tiered seating

**What if I have a baby with me? What if I use a wheelchair?*

In general, customers want:

- something a bit special – a memorable experience
- speed of service – no queues, simple transactions
- convenience – close by or easy parking
- reliability – advertisements that keep their promise.

We are all customers in some aspects of our lives – from buying the groceries to using power and telephones to purchasing machinery and equipment for the farm or home.

We all know what excellent service feels like and what poor or mediocre service feels like. When we can, we make decisions about whether we go back, pay on time or recommend suppliers to our friends – based on our experience as the customer.

We are even prepared to pay more if the service is good.

We don't care whether the supplier has thousands or millions of customers. We care how they treat us – each time we do business. These interactions are often termed *'moments of truth'*. They are the moments that shape how we feel about the supplier – they are not always logical, but they cannot be dismissed. Remember the old adage – **the customer is always right.**

In this case the supplier is you, the show society. You have an obligation to provide excellent service to the full range of customers who visit or exhibit at the show.

What are the show's moments of truth?

How do we know what the customer wants?

To know what the customer wants, you have to understand their expectations – that is, what they believe they are buying.

The expectations of some groups of customers will be different. For example, exhibitors will have very different expectations to competitors.

Try thinking about what you are offering to different customers as if they were different products – and try asking the questions:

- What are the features of our products?
- What are their benefits to the buyer?
- Are there some traders who prefer a quieter area – because they require a smaller volume of the right customer?
- Are there special needs for traders who want to build goodwill and trial products – with the aim of getting sales after the show?

To trade exhibitors, the features of the show include the pavilion in which they display their products and the number of people who will pass their display. The benefits to the trade exhibitors include sales of their goods, and the opportunity to directly promote their product to a large number of people in a relatively short time. So you will need to know what the trade exhibitor requires in terms of display space, lighting, accessibility, display equipment – all of which may help to increase the promotion and sales of their product.

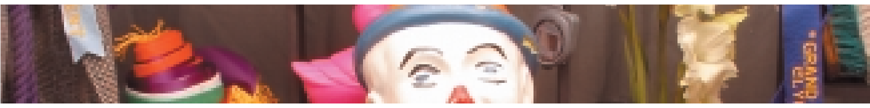
For the crowd coming through the gate, customer expectations also depend on their individual characteristics. These however can be grouped by looking at things like age group, gender, culture and geographic locality. These 'groupings' are often referred to as demographics. For a show these things will influence how to decide on show attractions or when to schedule events.

Finding out what the customer wants can be done in two ways:

- recording demand – e.g. keeping records of sale volumes
- asking the customer.

The customer can be asked in a number of ways depending on the type of customer. You could use:

- on-the-spot surveys of the crowd – e.g. exit poll
- consultation with local craft and community groups
- telephone polls for agricultural exhibitors
- personal contact with trade exhibitors
- regular meetings with organisations such as the Canine Association, Poultry Growers and Cattle Breeders Associations
- local community surveys – to find out why some people do not attend the show.



What do we do with complaints?

Sometimes the only time you hear from customers is when they complain. Some service providers often avoid— complaints or receive them reluctantly. This is because the customer is often unhappy, angry and frustrated.

A complaint, however, is a gift. It provides an insight into what might be irritating or putting off a large number of customers you are not hearing from. Most unhappy customers just don't come back – and they tell their friends.

By learning to calm the anger and listen to the complaint you will find new ways of attracting more customers. To deal with a complaint:

- Listen carefully to the complaint.
- Apologise for any error or oversight.
- Record their information in writing.
- Acknowledge the customer's feelings (anger, frustration, disappointment).
- Explain what action you will take to correct the problem.
- Thank the customer for bringing the problem to your attention.
- Fix the problem if you can, and let the person know what has been done.

Finding ways to invite customer feedback, like a suggestion box, makes it easier for people to complain – or provide useful suggestions. For those with a complaint it provides a simple, non-confrontational way to raise their concerns.

Meetings with stakeholder groups before and/or after the show can be a good way of managing situations so that the complaints process does not need to be used. Examples would be meetings with the different user groups such as sideshows, exhibitors and competitors.

Marketing Your Show

THIS TOPIC AIMS TO PROVIDE PARTICIPANTS WITH:

1. an understanding of marketing principles
2. a framework for setting marketing targets by customer group
3. ways to monitor the effectiveness of marketing and promotional activities.

KEY POINTS

- Marketing involves:
  - caring about your customers and understanding their needs
  - understanding your own business – your strengths, weaknesses, financial situation and needs
  - making sure your customers get what they are after – and what you have promised to deliver.
- Think laterally about marketing options – not just ads or flyers. What about student ambassadors, street parades, merchandise?
- Try to get the most from the media – learn what they need from you. Can you give them a good story, pictures, enough time to get it to press?

What is effective marketing?

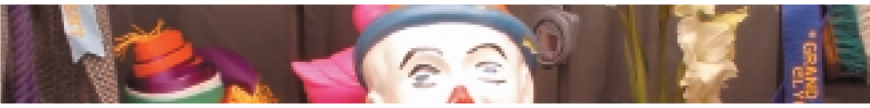
- We talk about a 'marketing mix' because marketing must be a mix, resulting in a total package that appeals to a wide range of customers. This market mix is often described as the four 'Ps':
  - **Product** – the range of options you provide to appeal to the customer. The 'product' is everything that the customer receives. The fact that the product worked for the customers in 2001, does not necessarily mean it will work in 2002 or 2003. You need to check that any new activities, events and attractions, changes or initiatives for your show continue to meet the needs of your community.
  - **Price** – the customers' costs of participating in the show as well as the price of supporting the range of activities and services provided. Think about any possible effects that an increase in your entry fee may have on your marketing outcomes. The general economic climate may also result in a corresponding increase or decrease in participation.
  - **Place** – the place of distribution for marketing activities and the manner in which you get the message about the show to the potential customers and other supporters of the show.
  - **Promotion** – anything you do to promote the show, attract attention, maintain people's interest, and encourage them to come to the show.
- There are also three more P's you might want to consider:
  - the way you **present** your show
  - your **position** in your marketplace or community
  - your **prospects** – the people to whom you are going to 'sell' the show.
- You should consider delegating the responsibility for marketing to a committee person or sub-committee. Their role would include determining the balance and mix of marketing activities for consideration and approval by the committee.

Marketing also involves a 'product life cycle', of four stages. In the context of the show, however, the 'product' has several meanings – the show itself is a product, but so too are the attractions, exhibits and events within it (such as the wine show or the sheep dog trials).

An introductory period	In this stage, all the information you market is new and interesting, and the level of community response is high. Test the market response by promoting some of the activities the show may feature, and be prepared to change your ideas as you get feedback from surveys, community groups and businesses.
A growth stage	As potential customers learn more about the plans for the show, interest in participating increases, and you can see what sort of exhibitors, sponsors and partners the show attracts.
Market maturity	Towards show time, demand decreases because you have reached the 'point of saturation' for attracting exhibitors, sponsors and partners. This is the time to refine your plans to make sure the promises you have made can be delivered. The community may now be used to the type of promotion you have been using, and so this is the time to use different advertisements, new posters, catchy slogans.
Market decline	There is a natural market decline in community interest when the show is over for the year – and you have to start the cycle all over again for next year. There is also a longer-term effect in market decline, and it pays not to take the community for granted, or become too complacent in planning your show. Over time, you may find that the community loses interest in the show, unless it is bigger, better or different each time.

How can we get the best from marketing and promotion?

- Develop a marketing plan that covers the next five years, but review it and modify it each year. Set out:
  - what you want to achieve
  - when you want to achieve it
  - whom you want to attract
  - how you propose to market it
  - how much you are prepared to spend
  - how you can add value to the marketing activities – what opportunities are there for advertising partnerships, sponsorships, naming rights
  - the categories you should consider in your plan – exhibitors, competitors, sponsors, the public, the community.
- You are in the business of putting on a great show, but you must also be financially successful. Therefore, think about what else you can develop and market as part of your product – venue and facility hire, use of the show grounds for expos, dog trials, or horse sales. Put the same effort into promoting these activities too. Include details of hire options and other activities in the show program.



- You'll need to pitch your promotion to the right target group, so develop a framework for setting marketing targets by customer groups. For example:

School students	Let teachers know what educational exhibits are planned and how groups of students can be accommodated, and tell them about special attractions such as the animal nursery. Work with the school over the months preceding the show, so that students are working on material, produce or exhibits for display or competition entry at the show.
Teenagers	Put up posters showing the latest exciting ride – in discos, milk bars, skate parks, youth centres, your Web site and so on.
Cooks and 'foodies'	Attract their attention with posters and flyers at outlets such as delicatessens, cafés and retail outlets for cooking supplies.
Gardeners	Garden centres, garden clubs, and the gardening shows on radio and television will all help promote the show and the displays, competitions and events that will interest gardeners.
Farmers	Tap into existing networks such as the Farmers' and Graziers Association, and Women in Agriculture, to distribute information on the attractions and competitions at the show.
Townies	Let them know about events that may be novelties for them – the tractor pull, bull riding and the dog show. There may also be exhibits that will suit general interests such as camping, caravans, home renovations and so on.
Animal lovers	Use the local vet surgery, breed societies, pet shop, and animal food stores as well as the media.
People in arts and crafts	Work with local craft groups, giving talks on the prizes available and the value of contributing to exhibits, and arrange some working displays to attract novices.

- The Marketing Plan should recognise and manage the kind of situation where some members of the community see the show as a competitor – or think the show is the vehicle for 'outsiders' to come and raid the local economy

  Part of the management of this situation is to constantly be talking up the positive economic impact the show has in the district, and form active and effective partnerships and relationships with organisations like the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Tourism Associations, and Service Clubs.

- Monitor the effectiveness of your marketing and promotion. Use a variety of techniques to test audience reaction along the way, such as focus groups, questionnaires, interviews, phone polls, talkback radio, exit surveys and street surveys before and/or after the show.

What about marketing options?

- The choices in promoting and marketing the show are limited only by your imagination (and perhaps the budget!). You can produce some promotional material in-house, or choose to have it professionally prepared and presented. Similarly, you can handle the media yourself, or use a marketing agency. You can advertise the show in a number of ways, ranging from simple flyers to professional television commercials.
- There are lots of simple, effective and inexpensive options; challenge your committee and others for ideas, try them, monitor their success and be prepared to try again.
- Share and network ideas with other shows and major community events.
- Think laterally – what about street parades, student ambassadors, and so on?

How can we get the most out of using the media?

- Use press releases to inform the media about an aspect of the show that you'd like them to report – perhaps a celebrity will be attending, or a prize bull will be on display.
  - Keep press releases brief and to the point.
  - Use letterhead to identify where the story is coming from.
  - Use short sentences and short paragraphs, stick to one page and type the story with wide margins, and double spacing between the lines.
  - Put your most important information as the first sentence – that way, they will be sure to read the rest. Make sure your lead sentence is 'punchy' and concise – ideally no more than 22 words.
  - Always double-check what you have written to make sure there are no errors. If you have made a mistake, it may be printed.
  - Finish with the name and phone number of the person to be contacted for more details. Make sure they are available after hours and provide an after-hours phone number where they can be contacted.
  - Have a good logo.
  - Look at options for partnerships and joint ventures that will assist, attract or involve the media.
- Give as much notice as possible to the media, especially if you want a photographer there. Remember too that they are more likely to come, and to cover the event, if a well-known person is present.
- You can increase the likelihood of a story about the show appearing if you or one of your sponsors insert an advertisement to be printed or promoted next to it. Speak to the media outlet in advance about this.
- Television advertisements are expensive, so supplement them by negotiating appearances on locally produced shows: the news, or a current affairs program, or a daytime chat show.

- The media always have final say over what events they cover, so don’t be disappointed if the story on the show gets pushed out by something else. Contact them the next day to see if the story can still be used.
- After the show, send details such as prizewinners, and even some personal stories about them: the oldest person to ride the dodgem cars, the youngest exhibitor in the crafts area, the best dog in the sheep dog trials. This provides them with some ‘fillers’ as stories, and also increases community interest in your next show. And be aware that a good photo will increase the chances of your ‘quirky’ story being published in the print media.
- Consider professional help with publicity – from paying for an eye-catching design for your posters, to engaging the ongoing help of an advertising agency.

Getting Partners and Sponsors

THIS TOPIC AIMS TO PROVIDE PARTICIPANTS WITH:

1. ideas on how to increase community support and involvement in the show
2. ways of identifying potential sponsors and partners
3. ways that the show can demonstrate a return on investment (or value for money) to a sponsor or partner
4. ideas on alternatives to cash sponsorship.

KEY POINTS

- Sponsors and partners are looking for a mutually beneficial relationship with you.
- Sponsorship is not a donation – you are offering an investment, a commitment and a partnership. When a gift is given with no expectation of receiving anything in return, this is a donation.
- Your sponsors want opportunities that will raise awareness of their product or services within the community (particularly within their target market) through:
  - publicity and media exposure to acknowledge both their product and their sponsorship
  - opportunities to sell their product or service at the show to offset their sponsorship costs
  - opportunities to host functions
  - the opportunity to be seen as supportive of the community.
- Think about different layers of sponsorship, and different recognition packages for each level – such as Gold, Silver and Bronze.
- Look for possibilities of partnerships with other groups in your community. Do any have compatible goals? Can you both achieve more by working together?

How do we sign up sponsors?

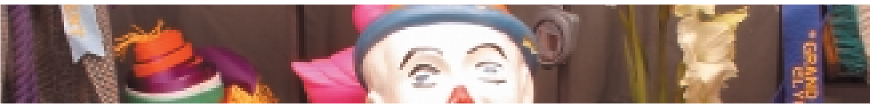
- Pick your sponsors carefully to achieve a match with the aims of the show. Try local businesses, local companies, national companies with local branches, your local council, and major makers of popular consumer goods such as hardware or stationery.
- Develop a structured sponsorship package, starting with the biggest sponsor first, then working down the smaller sponsors to outline the comparative benefits offered to each level. For example, you may decide on only one principal sponsor, and then limit numbers in three more levels before settling on an open-door policy for any number of sponsors for small amounts.
- Do your homework! Know about the company or organisation you are contacting, and about their product. Arrange an appointment with the key person in the organisation. If you do this by phone, you can often get a sense of how they might respond, and what they might be looking for in a sponsorship deal. Always follow up within the time frame you advise. If you don't follow up, they will assume you are no longer interested.
- Have a list of suitable items for their sponsorship, so that you can provide ready examples of how their support would help you, and bring them good publicity. Be imaginative about the things that can be sponsored – the opening ceremony and the grand parade, tickets and programs, the parcel pick-up centre, music, special events such as the wood-chop, prizes and trophies, afternoon teas, or 'happy hours' functions.
- Prepare a package of information for sponsors, attractively presented to highlight the key points. Provide statistics that support your case. Knowing the numbers through the gate is one way of demonstrating exposure to a potential sponsor. Keep it simple, readable, and brief.
  Let them know:
  - what your event is, and when it is
  - your aims and priorities for the show
  - whom the show will attract
  - what events will be featured at the show
  - what makes the show unique or special.
  - your anticipated operating budget, showing how it is professionally structured, presented and marketed (if this is appropriate)
  - your commitment to sponsors, details on the levels of sponsorship, and what they get for their investment.
- Have written agreements with your sponsors, showing what they will provide, and what they will get in return. Stipulate any time frames that are relevant, and any special conditions.
- Keep in touch with your sponsors – don't just sign the sponsorship contract and then forget about the sponsor until show day. Look after your sponsors well, and then feel confident about approaching them next year. Essentially, you are aiming to develop a long-term, mutually beneficial relationship.

What are 'in-kind' sponsorship deals?

- Not all sponsors can provide cash, but they may be able to supply goods and services from their business. For example, a local business may agree to photocopy your program or a local printer may print it for you at cost rather than retail price.
- Review your budget and plans for items that might be sponsored, and then try and match a company with those items. For example, the local rural supply store may be able to provide a marquee, the printing company may be prepared to sponsor printing the programs, or the Telecentre may develop and/or maintain a Web site on your behalf.
- Set up a meeting with key people at the local council and show them what services they could provide, and what you estimate the costs to be. This might include photocopying, free hire of facilities such as chairs and tables, the use of equipment, help with grounds maintenance, or help with line marking or setting up the grounds ready for the show.
- Your budget needs to identify the value of in-kind sponsorship, both as income and as costs saved. Make sure your Treasurer knows the details of all sponsorship packages.

How do we develop other partnerships?

- Increase community involvement in the show through developing partnerships and relationships with local groups and organisations – your local council, Chamber of Commerce, schools, online access centre, Rural Youth and the cricket or netball club, for example.
- Look for the possibilities in those relationships. A competition at the local school for this year's show poster may lead to an arrangement where students paint the rubbish tins; the local Landcare group may grow native plants for you and then help plant them; membership of the local Chamber of Commerce may provide you with training opportunities; and free publicity may be one benefit from joining the tourism association.
- Support from your local council will help the ongoing success of the show. Talk to them about sponsorship in cash or kind. Suggest a partnership agreement whereby they maintain the facilities (yours or theirs); provide signs for traffic management; give you publicity in their newsletters; feature you in the Mayor's column in the local paper or on the Web site. They can also work on and provide support for committees. They can give you advice, membership, or even just photocopying.
- Negotiate with the local radio station for them to broadcast from the show and to provide you with a public address system; ask local shop owners to put posters in their windows; talk to the newspaper editor about a regular feature spot in Saturday's paper.
- Work with other shows, and other organisations, to increase your buying power. Share in the purchase of major equipment, consider a consortium for insurance purposes or negotiate to bulk-purchase your radio and newspaper advertising.
- Develop written agreements with organisations for long-term maintenance of the relationships, and use those partnerships to maintain the profile of the show throughout the year.



How do we keep building relationships?

- Whether you are negotiating with a sponsor, developing a partnership, or working with other community groups, the relationships should:
  - be built on shared objectives and common goals
  - be based on mutual understanding of each other's business
  - be flexible and adaptable
  - have a foundation of honesty and integrity
  - provide tangible and measurable benefits on both sides
  - be reviewed regularly
  - recognise your not-for-profit status, and the value that the show (and therefore, their sponsorship) adds to the local community.

Reducing Risk

RATIONALE

As organisations that open their doors to the public, show societies need to be particularly aware of their responsibilities to provide a safe environment for visitors to the show. This same care needs to be provided to the volunteers, staff and others who supply their services to the society. For show societies this also means doing as much as possible to protect the individuals who give up their time to run the show – the committee.

This theme is about how to run a safe show by applying effective risk management policies and procedures, and how to make sure that if something does go wrong, the right insurances are in place.

TOPICS

Legal Liability

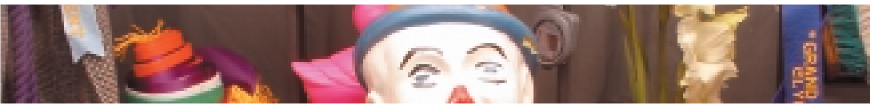
- What is our legal status?
- What is due care and diligence?
- What legal obligations do we have?
- What steps can we take to make sure we can meet our obligations?

Identifying and limiting risks

- What is risk management?
- How do we manage risk?
- How do we identify risks?
- How can we minimise our risks?
- How do we get the insurances we need?
- How do we look after our assets?

Contracts with other people

- When do we need to purchase services?
- How do we describe what we want to buy?
- How do we go about getting the best provider?
- What kind of agreement or contract do we need?



Legal Liability

THIS TOPIC AIMS TO PROVIDE PARTICIPANTS WITH:

1. an understanding of the participants' and the society's legal obligations in relation to managing and running the show
2. ways of helping the committee to comply with its legal responsibilities.

KEY POINTS

- Many members of non-profit committees have little knowledge of their legal obligations – often being unaware that in certain circumstances they can be held personally liable.
- Incorporating as an association, or similar, provides the individual with some protection as long as they act honestly and with due care and diligence.
- It is not possible in this material to discuss or list every single duty or obligation of a member of the Committee. There are many technical areas of law covered by legislation and the Common Law. Committees should always seek expert advice from lawyers if required by the particular circumstances.

What is our legal status?

Laws are a set of rules that guide the way our communities behave. We are all well aware of the laws that affect our daily lives, such as traffic laws and the criminal code.

However, once you become involved in providing services to the public, you become subject to a range of Federal, State or Territory, Local Government legislation and common law.

If a society is unincorporated, each member of the society is responsible for the liabilities of the society. Forming an association means that the show society, rather than the individual, becomes liable to observe the laws that govern the show society's activities. Show societies generally incorporate under State or Territory legislation known as the Associations Incorporations Act. These vary from state to state.

The incorporated show society:

- exists as a separate legal entity
- may own property and enter into contracts
- can accept gifts and bequests
- may borrow money
- can sue and be sued in its own right.

This protects the members of the society from legal action in the case of a financial calamity – the members only have to pay the amount they have agreed in the constitution of the society, which is normally only a nominal amount. The members should take reasonable steps to make sure the society operates within acceptable business and community standards. In a general sense, the more members a society has the better. This is because the number of people who might pick up on an issue is increased and the responsibility is shared across more people. Of course, committee members must act honestly, in good faith and with due care and diligence.

What is due care and diligence?

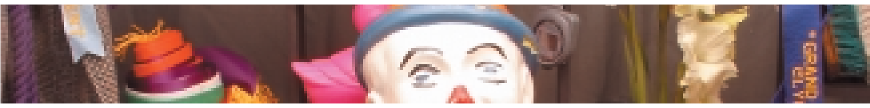
Taking due care and diligence means making sure that you:

- familiarise yourself with the affairs of the society
- become aware of the laws that govern the society's activities
- take reasonable steps to abide by them.

All committee members are expected to exercise their powers and discharge their duties with a degree of care and diligence that a reasonable person would exercise in similar circumstances.

As a Treasurer, this may entail having an understanding of the legal requirements of accounting.

For all committee members, it may mean having policies in place that reflect legal obligations, and being expected to see and read relevant reports



To succeed against you, a claim of negligence has to prove that a duty to exercise care exists; that the society (or its committee members) have failed to act as a reasonable person would under similar circumstances; that an injury or damage has occurred; and that the breach of the duty of care contributed directly to the injury or damage.

The law is a very complex area. If there is any doubt about a matter, legal advice should be sought. Remember, what 'should be OK' is not always legally OK.

What legal obligations do we have?

The Associations Incorporations Act, under which you may be incorporated, sets out your obligations as an association. Your Constitution sets out the rules that govern your show society. The Constitution is the prime document that guides the way your society conducts itself. Every committee member should be familiar with the Constitution, and should preferably have a copy.

Many legal obligations are dealt with elsewhere under topics such as *Taxation, Managing the Money, Identifying and Managing Risk, Contracts,* and *Getting the People You Need.* There are a number of other laws that cover civil and criminal negligence, discrimination and harassment, defamation, copyright, food handling and preparation, occupational health and safety, environmental laws and so on.

What steps can we take to make sure we can meet our legal obligations?

The array of laws can be daunting. However, taking them one by one you can develop an approach that satisfies your obligations.

One way of ensuring that the laws affecting the show's business are clear, and are dealt with appropriately, is to consider them within your Risk Management strategy under the topic *Identifying and Limiting Risks.* Under this approach you can ensure that the relevant laws are linked to the operational risks they cover. Consider including on your risk register:

- relevant Acts and their source (so you can periodically check for changes – most Federal and State & Territory legislation is accessible through the Internet)
- the applicable clause or clauses
- the activity affected – e.g. animal control or food handling.

A lawyer or risk assessor can check such a register for accuracy and advise on risk management strategies. Remember, the best way to avoid legal action is to be proactive about managing risks.

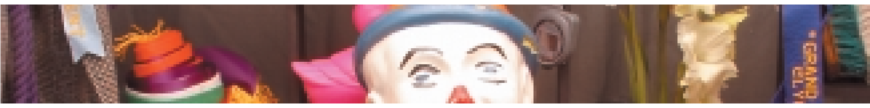
Identifying and Limiting Risks

THIS TOPIC AIMS TO PROVIDE PARTICIPANTS WITH:

1. a structured approach to the identification of risks
2. ways to manage the identified risks, including insurance strategies
3. an understanding of the principles of managing and maintaining assets.

KEY POINTS

- In the broadest sense, effective risk management ensures the successful delivery and continuity of your show.
- Risk comes in many shapes and forms: from threats to public safety, to the danger of fraud or property loss, and many more.
- Risk management is a logical step-by-step process designed to minimise risks to your property, interests, volunteers, employees, exhibitors and attendees.
- There are a number of areas where insurance of assets and operations needs to be considered.
- Obtaining advice and putting in place appropriate and adequate insurances is a critical risk management strategy. The relationship between the society and the insurer is extremely important in achieving this.
- Once you invest in assets it is important to maintain them well, and to make plans to replace them – long before they become inefficient, dangerous or costly to use.



What is risk management?

Risk management is described by Standards Australia as action that prevents 'the chance of something happening that will have an impact on our objectives.' This is a broad statement. It recognises that risk comes in many shapes and forms, from threats to public safety to the danger of fraud or theft.

The importance of risk management has grown steadily over the last few years. There is increasing awareness and expectation of the need to manage risks, rather than leave them solely to insurance.

The risk environment is evolving rapidly – new risks are emerging that threaten public safety, electronic data and health, and increase our exposure to legal and other liability

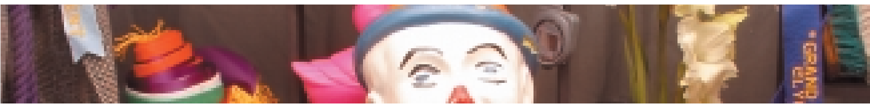
You have an obligation to be aware of current risk management issues, and to prevent losses and unnecessary expenditure, damage and injury.

Risk management may seem time-consuming, but it is very cost-effective. Assessing your risks properly, and determining the most economical way of reducing them (or avoiding them entirely), can lead to real savings – or at least help you avoid high costs.

How can we manage risk?

- Managing risk starts with developing a risk management policy. A risk management policy provides a safeguard for your property and interests, and the interests of volunteers and employees, while you plan and put on your show.
- Effective risk management may result in lower insurance premiums because it shows that you understand the risks involved, and work actively to reduce them. Lack of effective risk management may do more than put pressure on your insurance premium; it may in fact make it difficult to get insurance at all. Industries that cannot demonstrate active risk management practices are finding it more difficult to obtain insurance.
- Your risk management policy should include statements about your commitment to:
  - identifying and recording the potential risks to which your show is exposed
  - analysing and assessing those risks, and implementing cost-effective control measures for risk prevention, reduction or avoidance
  - minimising and containing any harmful effects in the event of an incident or accident arising from those risks
  - planning and budgeting for containment, compensation, restoration and disaster recovery
  - identifying your recovery measures, and activating emergency organisations, systems and contingency plans
  - investigating incidents and accidents to determine their causes, and assessing the extent of damage and potential legal liability
  - keeping incident and accident reports
  - implementing an Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) program to minimise the likelihood of injuries to employees
  - providing feedback to improve your risk management system.

- You will also need to:
  - repair or replace damaged assets and operating systems, to return operations to normal as soon as possible
  - include in each year's financial report all payments of claims against the show; all ex-gratia payments; all court awards; and all losses including accidental destruction of, damage to, or theft of assets that would normally be covered by insurance (had insurance existed)
  - report to the police any losses that are due to suspected illegal activity
  - maintain your own files as part of your management information (including computer file back-up and offsite storage)
  - establish new or improved measures to prevent the recurrence of incidents and accidents, and to recover from disasters.
  - review the effectiveness of your policy and strategies each year
  - consider policies and procedures that cover things like authority to talk with the media about incidents, accidents, or health and safety issues. Often such policies will prescribe, for example, that the President shall be the only person authorised to speak to the media under such circumstances.
- The strategy you adopt for managing risk must:
  - identify and assess risks where you may be exposed to some form of liability or loss
  - put in place policies and procedures to minimise risk and maximise your protection
  - protect your employees and volunteers, and the members of the public, from injury and risk as far as possible
  - provide a way of dealing with any incidents or accidents that do occur
  - protect you from exposure to professional and public liability claims.



How do we identify risks?

- Risk analysis identifies the type and likelihood of risk to any given asset or activity.
- If you have never carried out any risk management analysis, you may need to conduct an audit first. Be prepared to engage expert assistance for this. (Some insurance companies provide assistance in this area – at no cost.)
- List all your operational areas and assets. It would be useful to look at the following areas and ask the following kind of questions:
  - **property, buildings, vehicles and equipment** – Is the machinery safe to use? Are the buildings secured from fire or damage? Are paths slippery or uneven? Do the trees drop limbs? Are offices and vehicles locked – and who has keys?
  - **hazardous materials** – Do you know which chemicals are dangerous? Are they safely stored?
  - **livestock** – Can they harm anyone? Can anyone harm them?
  - **activities or entertainment** – Are they dangerous? Do you need special signs, exclusion zones or evacuation plans?
  - **refreshments** – Is food and drink safe to eat? If you serve alcohol, are you licensed appropriately?
  - **contracts** – Do your contractors have appropriate licenses? Do you have signed agreements with them?
  - **finances** – How are the gate takings accounted for? Who is authorised (and how) to spend society funds?
  - **information** – Do you back up computer files and keep a copy off site? Do you make sure private and confidential information is secure?.
  - **people** – Do your volunteers understand how to handle hazardous waste? If they deal with the public, do they know about anti-discrimination laws? If you have staff, are they paid award wages?
- Remember to think in terms of the different circumstances that arise for these areas. For example, the risk associated with a marquee will be different while it is being used compared to when it is being erected or dismantled. Similarly, the risks associated with livestock will change when they are in pens, when they are being judged and when they are in the Grand Parade.
- Record your findings in a risk register. A sample risk register page is included in this Workbook.
- Assess and analyse these areas to establish the degree of risk (and its cost), to determine alternatives for minimising the risk, and to develop control procedures.
- Factors influencing risks include acts of nature (weather, earthquakes); human inefficiency, negligence, error, and wilfulness (fire, theft, fraud, violence); and physical factors (the availability and quality of materials and the state of a particular technology).
- Include risks to volunteers and employees. These might include injury and illness, accidents in their own vehicles, loss or damage to personal property they are using for show business and activities, and any loss or damage of personal property on show premises.
- Don't forget risks to your show such as the loss of a key committee member, or of society records, or of losing access to your showground, if you don't own it.

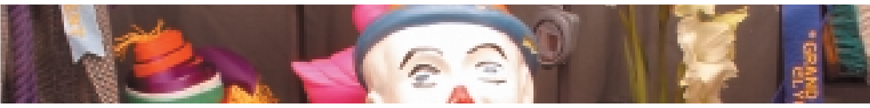
How do we minimise our risks?

- **eliminate or reduce the risk** – fix whatever you can, whether it is mending chairs, drawing up a fire evacuation plan or writing a policy on who holds the keys to buildings and how they are signed out. For example:
  - develop an occupational health and safety plan. Your employees and volunteers are important to your success, so you will want to protect their health and wellbeing. You have a legal obligation to provide a safe workplace for your employees and volunteers.
  - develop an incident response plan.
  - stop some activities. (This is usually acceptable only if the risk is very high.)
- **share the risk** – transfer some or all of the risk to others. For example:
  - to contractors or other organisations, such as the Pony Club that can take responsibility for safety around the gymkhana, and the food vans that can each take responsibility for food handling. Always ensure, however, that contractors and others have their own insurance. You should verify that any insurance cover is both current and the level of cover is adequate.
  - to individuals, by using signs to warn of dangers or asking people to sign waivers before they participate in certain activities. Neither of these approaches, however, excuses you from your duty of care. That is, it is not sufficient to use a sign when the problem could reasonably be fixed: a disclaimer is only effective if all foreseeable risks have been fully explained and everything has been reasonably done to reduce the risks.
- **insure the risk** – with all the good will and hard work you can muster, there will still be things you can't fix or predict. Remember, insurance is not the alternative to doing the hard work; it just softens the financial risk. So, when acceptance of the risk is inevitable, develop and implement cost-effective risk control practices. These include safety training, early detection, security precautions, emergency procedures – and finding insurance.

How do we get the insurances we need?

The process of identifying risks will help you identify the insurances you need. The next step is to talk with individual insurers or an insurance broker about getting quotes. Sometimes getting a package of insurances can result in a better price, but remember to compare things like:

- the limit of cover for each element
- any excesses that you have to pay
- the small print – any requirements on your conduct, any exclusions.



The insurances that you need may include:

Public Liability	insurance provides protection for the society against negligence claims made by a third party for injury or damage
Directors and Officers Liability Insurance	provides protection for individual committee members against negligence (where this is attributed to an individual committee member as opposed to the society)
Building Insurance	covers the premises you own (or in some cases lease) against fire, storm, vandalism and so on
Property Insurance	provides cover against damage or theft of property usually held on society premises but might include money in transit
Fidelity (Fraud) Insurance	provides cover against misappropriation of funds
Product Liability Insurance	provides protection if something you make or sell causes injury or damage
Personal Accident Insurance	covers members and volunteers for accidental injury
Worker's Compensation	**compulsory** insurance to cover employees who are injured in the workplace.

There are other insurances specific to shows that cover things like owners liability for animals, errors and omissions, trade space liability and trustees liability. Be sure to talk with your insurer or broker to make sure all possible insurance needs and options are considered.

Insurance can be costly, so when buying insurance think about the following:

- Get advice from an insurance broker or lawyer – it may cost a bit now but can save you money in the long run.
- Don't just renew current policies – make sure they are what you need, not just what you've always had.
- Check to see whether you need your own insurance – you may get coverage through a Government or State association scheme.
- Get quotes and give the insurer time to review your circumstances – the less time they have to consider your operations, the more likely it is that you will get a cautious price.
- Convince the insurer what a good risk you are – do your risk assessment first, put the time in to answer their questions and show them your risk management policies and safety records.
- Be straightforward with information – glossing over or concealing information may get a better price in the short term but if discovered, can lead to a denied claim – this is the same as having no insurance at all.

- If the insurer declines insurance or has particular areas of concern, offer to include insurer-approved actions in your risk management plan or accept a higher excess.
- Consider payment options – monthly instalments may be preferable to an annual lump sum.
- Maintain a good working relationship with your Insurance Company and/or Broker. Ensure that you obtain regular advice on the types and amounts of insurance cover you need – and make arrangements accordingly.
- Your relationship with your Insurer(s) should also include advising of extraordinary incidents or events, to ensure you are covered. For example, all activities for your show may be covered, but you may need to advise your Insurer to ensure cover is in place for the Rodeo or any other such activity (either at the show, or another time during the year).
- Make sure your Insurer is aware of any discussions or agreements relating to waivers. If your society is asked to sign any waivers check with your Insurer first. Similarly, if you are asking any of your customers to sign waivers or any other contracts or documents that may impact on your insurance situation, check the wording with your Insurer.
- Beware of under-insuring. Any insurance claim you may be eligible for may be calculated on the sum insured. Where you have under-insured – the amount you receive may be well short of replacement costs. Seek advice to ensure that your insurance cover is adequate.

How do we look after our assets?

- There may be some items of equipment or resources that have specified legal or regulatory maintenance requirements where your society needs to demonstrate compliance. An example is the testing of electrical cords, fire extinguishers, boilers and so on.
- Similarly, there may be items of equipment that require technical testing or calibration. Examples would be the scales for the live steer competition, or the lift in the grandstand.
- Making sure your assets are safe to use means setting up a maintenance and replacement program. You also need to consider security measures such as locked areas, monitoring keys, security patrols, lighting and access.

- For risk and asset management it may be useful to map maintenance needs as illustrated below:

ASSET	MAINTENANCE REQUIRED	FREQUENCY	ESTIMATED COST	COMMENTS
International tractor	Major service	Annual	$150	
	Inspection for oil leaks and any other obvious maintenance needs	Every use		At least every three months if not used
Grandstand	Minor repairs such as re-nailing or replace-ment of odd boards	Annual	$200	
	Painting	Every 10 years	$8,000	Next due in 2008. Cost of paint $2,000, labour $6,000
Fire Extinguishers	Servicing	As per fire regulations	$250 annually	Legal requirement – and must be done by authorised personnel

- You can see from the above table that a picture is emerging about provisions that need to be put aside for maintenance. If a program such as 'Work for the Dole' is able to provide some of the labour for painting the grandstand, the cost of painting may be halved. Similarly, the committee may choose to do the painting; the cost would then be reduced to $2,000.
- The idea is that by mapping the needs and the options, provisions can be made or funding can be sought well in advance. If you know the cost of painting is going to be about $8,000 in six years' time, you can start talking to council about dollar-for-dollar funding. You then know you need to accumulate $4,000 between now and then, or obtain a sponsorship from a paint company or other organisation to further reduce your cash contribution.
- Where you have sub-committees responsible for different aspects of the show, such as Cattle, Main Arena, Arts and Crafts, Home Produce and so on, it is advisable for each of these sub-committees to have their own budget allocation, and for them to be responsible for predicting, managing and budgeting for their own maintenance requirements. The President or Treasurer, and the overall committee, should oversee this process to ensure that adequate and appropriate provisions are being made. There are some capital items, such as the grounds and the grandstand, that may be included in the overall society budget.
- Processes need to be in place to ensure that inspection and risk management obligations are met. Once tasks are delegated, as detailed above, you may consider making it a standing agenda item to check that all necessary requirements have been completed.

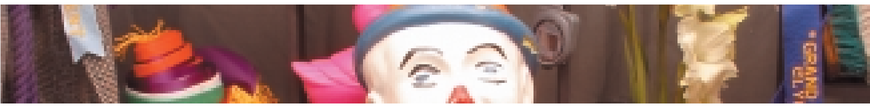
Contracts with Other People

THIS TOPIC AIMS TO PROVIDE PARTICIPANTS WITH:

1. an understanding of the benefits of formalising agreements with providers of goods and services
2. ways of formalising agreements with providers.

KEY POINTS

- There are some occasions when it is more sensible to use the services of an organisation outside the show society.
- Sometimes this is done to get particular expertise, like an electrician or a plumber. At other times, it is a way of dividing up some of the jobs to be done so that the show society members and volunteers can focus on key tasks.
- Even though someone else does the job, the show society is still responsible for getting it done properly.
- Making sure the right person or organisation is chosen, and ensuring that they do the job well, is a critical concern, irrespective of whether the job is collecting the gate takings, providing security or managing the bar.



When do we need to purchase services?

The decision to get someone else to undertake a job for the show society (often called purchasing services) will usually be made on the basis of a 'business case'. This means weighing up the pros and cons of doing it yourself, versus the pros and cons of an external person or organisation providing you with the service.

The pros and cons will consider things like

- What is the cost of the service and its impact on the budget and cash flow?
- Do you have the expertise internally (especially in relation to trades or professional service)?
- Are your own people available, or do they have other priorities?
- Are there opportunities to develop relationships with other community groups by getting them to do it?
- Are there any industry standards that need to be complied with?
- How does using external people fit with your future direction? For example, do you want to develop the skills yourselves?

How do we describe what we want to buy?

It is important to decide what the job is that you are getting someone else to do, and fully describe it. This is often referred to as 'writing the specifications'. Writing specifications may seem like too much work at times, particularly when the jobs seem pretty obvious.

For example, for electrical jobs, you generally describe the end result you want and leave the technical aspects to the qualified tradesman. The job might be described as 'the wiring in the pavilion needs to be replaced'. Of course, you will make sure the electrician is qualified and a member of the Master Electricians Association. That way you can be assured that their work will meet the electrical safety standards. You will also ask for the job to be described in writing on the quote.

Other jobs also need to be described in terms of what you want, but sometimes there are no industry standards that you can refer to. In these cases you may need to specify the standards that you expect. For example, the job of collecting the gate takings will include clarifying:

- gate opening and closing times
- prices to be charged
- recognising valid tickets
- recording the number of members' tickets and free passes used
- dealing with people who have left passes or badges at home
- procedures for dealing with money
- recording money taken
- recording people through the gate
- pass-out policy
- standards for dealing with customers.

If you cannot describe the job or the standard you expect, the people providing the service are left to make up their own. Their standards (or lack of them) may not suit you, and may have unwanted consequences like customer dissatisfaction and/or a poor reflection on the quality and image of the show. You cannot rely on 'common sense'. The 'common sense' of someone providing a service can be clouded by what suits them best.

How do we go about getting the best provider?

The way you go about finding the best provider will depend on the size of the job, the expertise required, the availability of providers and the timeframe to start and finish the job. Broadly, there are three approaches you can use: quotes, tenders or using a preferred provider. Irrespective of the approach you choose, try to provide plenty of lead time. A quote or tender provided at the last minute is likely to cost more.

If possible, ask to see evidence of previous work. You might look at samples of sashes or badges, ask to visit the plant or workshop to check their capacity to do the job, and ask for (and check) references.

Quotes

Getting quotes involves approaching known service providers and asking them to give you a price for the job you describe. It is best to approach at least three providers so you can compare what they are offering in terms of price and quality. If the job is described in writing and provided to the service provider, then you can be more certain that all the quotes are based on providing the same job outcome. Verbal descriptions can change as they are told to a string of people.

Get quotes in writing. Beware of estimates unless they are capped at a maximum price or likely variations to price are identified.

Using quotes is usually for smaller jobs that have a clear beginning and end. The show committee will need to decide what level of spending it will use for quotes.

The advantage of quotes is that service providers can do them reasonably quickly. This can make for a quicker decision-making process, and getting the job done in a shorter timeframe.

When seeking a price for a job, be clear that you are looking for a quote, not an estimate, as these two terms have quite different meanings. A quote is a price indicated for a job, where the supplier is bound by that price. An estimate is an indicative cost for goods or services, and the supplier is not bound by that price.

Tenders

Running a tender process involves seeking proposals to get a job done. Tenders can be made open to any capable organisation and advertised in the press. This is often called an 'open tender' process. Alternatively, they can be sought by approaching known providers on a similar basis to quotes. This is often called a 'selected tender' process.

In either case, the job will need to be described in writing, setting out:

- what the show society wants to buy, i.e. what will you have at the end of the job
- the standards you expect
- the timeframes – i.e. when will it start and finish, and are there parts of the job that need to be completed at set times along the way?
- how the project will be managed by the show society
- who the service provider will report to, and when
- any other special information, or scope for the tenderer to propose innovative or value-added options in their bid
- the criteria you will use to select the successful tenderer
- a timeframe for the selection of the successful tenderer.

You can choose to include the price range you have in mind, or you can ask the tenderer to provide a price. Not providing a price range has the advantage of testing what a number of providers think is a reasonable price for the job. However, this may produce quite a wide array of prices and methods that can make it more difficult to compare tenders.

Providing a price range lets the tenderer know what you are prepared to spend. You can expect that most tenderers will be very close to the figure, and it will be their experience and methods that are the major difference.

Calling for tenders is usually done for larger jobs, particularly where the job is complex or requires the coordination of different expertise – for example, the construction of a new pavilion. The show committee will need to decide what size or type of job will require the use of tenders.

Tenders generally require a lot more time than a quotation process, to allow tenderers to respond to the invitation and permit sufficient time for assessment.

Preferred providers

'Preferred provider' is a term used to describe those service providers with whom the show society has previously done business and who have a proven track record. Many preferred providers may have an already agreed price and may be called upon from time to time to do similar jobs. In this case you need to make sure the quality of the work is regularly reviewed. This makes sure that complacency does not set in and the quality of the work does not slip.

It is a good idea to get quotes or tenders (whichever is more appropriate) every year or two, in order to make sure the preferred provider does not take advantage of the arrangement and increase prices unreasonably.

A preferred provider may be identified originally through a quote or tender process. It may be another community organisation with goals that the show society is happy to support such as Red Cross, Rotary or Apex.

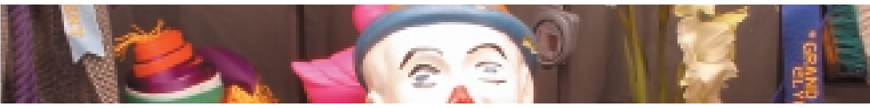
Conflict of interest

Irrespective of the method used, the show society should make sure that there are no conflicts of interest for those awarding jobs to external people. For example, if a tenderer is a relative of a committee member, the committee member should not be on the selection panel for the job. Such a conflict of interest can compromise the accountability of the show society, complicate business arrangements and seriously tarnish the society's reputation in the community.

What kind of agreement or contract do we need?

Whether the external service provider is large or small, a private business or a community organisation, make sure there is an agreement in writing that clearly sets out:

- job description
- price
- timeframe
- standards
- payment arrangements
- dispute resolution processes
- any penalties or termination provisions.



Contracts

There are many ways of creating a contract between the show society and the service provider. These include, for example, *Australian Standard 4122 – 2000 General conditions of contract for engagement of consultants.* This is a proforma contract largely for use in the construction industry but adaptable to other circumstances as well.

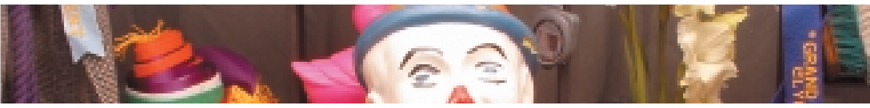
Other such proformas exist, which can simplify the task of writing of the contract. It is often useful to include a copy of the blank contract in tender documents in order to make it plain to prospective tenderers what they will be expected to sign.

For smaller jobs, writing a letter to the service provider may be a sufficient form of contract. The letter can then be signed and returned to the show society. The letter will still need to provide the key information.

If you have written the job description down, this might be referred to in the contract or letter and attached for initialing. You may also wish to include their tender or quote. This will make complying with these documents part of the formal contract.

Whatever method you use, the advice of a lawyer should be sought before finalising or signing any contract or letter of agreement.

Writing long contracts or getting legal advice can seem like a lot of trouble, and taking short cuts can look attractive. Remember, the safety of visitors to your show or the reputation of your show and your personal liability might be at stake. It is worth getting it right.



Using Information

RATIONALE

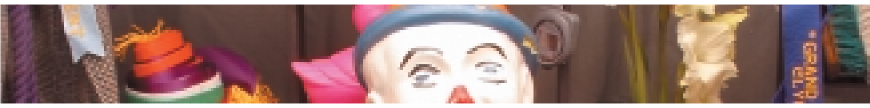
There is an old adage – 'Information is power'. For show societies information means being able to make clear decisions about the future and being able to demonstrate to others the scope, benefits and opportunities the show might provide. For example, if the show society can provide sponsors and trade exhibitors with demographic information about the crowd, these partners can then make quicker and more informed decisions about supporting the show.

Collecting and maintaining information, however, is not always straightforward, so it's important to make sure that you collect what you need in the simplest and most reliable way.

This theme is about how to identify, manage and access the information that can be of most benefit to the show.

TOPICS

Getting the most from information	Setting up information
• What is information and why do we need it? • How do we use the information we have? • Information checklist.	• How do we get the information we need? • How do we look after the information we collect? • How do we deal with private and confidential information? • What information systems do we need? • What are the elements of an information system? • How can we get the most from computer technology? • What if we don't have a computer?



Getting the Most from Information

THIS TOPIC AIMS TO PROVIDE PARTICIPANTS WITH:

1. an appreciation of the importance of information
2. ideas on how to make information work for the society
3. ways to identify the most useful information
4. ways to use information to help with planning and to make more informed decisions.

KEY POINTS

- The information you need is information directly relevant to your show. You need information to assist in planning, reviewing and making decisions about your show.
- Information must be accurate, reliable and available when it's needed. Reliable information helps to take the risk out of decision-making, and provides an objective way of avoiding differences of opinion.
- Accurate records enable you to plan cash flows, reduce overheads and know where you are in relation to your goals and plans.

What is information and why do we need it?

- Information consists of facts, knowledge and opinions (often called data), which are relevant to your show.
- Information is essential throughout all aspects of your show. Some examples are:

Planning	**Examples**
Planning without adequate information is like trying to control a ship without a rudder. Information tells you what to plan, and provides the basis for developing plans.	■ If you know how many people have attended your show over the last few years, what they spent and which events they watched, you have some basic facts to use in preparing for the next show. ■ Knowing what other events are taking place around the same time as your show, and knowing what other groups may be interested in taking part or working cooperatively with your show, will make it easier to keep the program interesting and avoid unnecessary competition. ■ If you know the numbers of different classes of animals that will be shown, you can work out the accommodation needed for each group.
Monitoring	**Examples**
Look at information you have recorded. It will tell you whether you are achieving your goals, whether you are behind or ahead of schedule, and what still lies ahead.	■ Knowing the sponsorship funds available six months before show day, compared with the total needed, tells you how much you still need to obtain. ■ As part of the business management cycle review process, you also need to check whether the systems you have in place for information collecting and reporting are effective. Was information available when you needed it? Was it accurate and reliable?

Reporting	Examples
Being able to 'tell the story' about your show to the media, patrons and the wider community can make the difference to the amount of support you get.	■ Providing information about the objectives and attractions of your show well in advance will improve the likelihood of a good attendance at the show. Try to have the show featured in as many different media as possible.
Making Decisions	**Examples**
You are often called upon to make choices between a range of options.	■ If you find that you are short of space, the profit figures and popularity ratings for the various show activities will help you determine what you should keep in, and what you should leave out. ■ Finding it hard to choose between two contractors? The more information they can provide you with, the better choice you can make.
Marketing to sponsors and exhibitors	**Examples**
Just as you need to 'tell the story' about your show to the media, patrons and the wider community, you also need to convince sponsors and exhibitors that getting involved with your show is a good investment.	■ Most sponsors expect that their sponsorship will bring some rewards, if not in the short term, at least in the medium to long term. Knowledge of the audience your show attracts will help you approach the right sponsors, and convince them to give you their support. ■ A range of government authorities require reports that you must produce to satisfy statutory requirements, such as agendas and minutes for your committee meetings, annual reports, and financial reports. ■ Prepare a package for exhibitors which welcomes them, explains their (and your) responsibilities, and describes the accommodation they can expect, the conditions of entry, prize money, insurance and likely numbers of entries. This will convince them that your show is well run and is a good choice for their entry.

Looking after the customers	Examples
Improvements in customer service result from having information on your past performance, and suggestions for change.	■ Finding out what customers like and what they don't like leads to changes in what is offered at the show. Some of this information will come from within your committee; other data may be obtained through surveying exhibitors or sideshow operators. ■ Often it is the little things, or not knowing and responding to the customers' needs, that cause negative comment about the show. You might ask 50 people leaving the show what they liked, and what needed to be improved – and 18 of them might say 'We didn't know where the toilets were'. A couple of signs can fix that for next year – but you might not have known that without asking.

How do we use the information we have?

- The form in which information is presented has a significant effect on how useful it is. Most facts come to us as 'raw data' – that is, as numbers, opinions or lists. These will need to be interpreted, or analysed, before they can be used easily.
- Some data will require little or no work. For instance, the number of people attending the show each day is a simple, single figure which requires no interpretation, unless you want to look at the many factors influencing that number. Did it rain on show day? How many other events were being held in the area? What was the economic climate at the time? What was the gender mix?
- Financial information is likely to be summarised and used in reports, but sufficient detail must be kept to allow audits to be carried out.
- Contact details may be used for both telephone calls and correspondence, so easy access is important. If the contacts include exhibitors, some kind of categorisation will be necessary, so that you can find out details – like the number of people exhibiting different breeds of cattle, for instance.
- Knowing whether a show has made an overall profit might rely on the profit and loss statement, but can you tell how much each different show activity contributed to that profit?
- Both the content and format of a report can be significant when it comes to putting the report to use. Two contrasting examples are the detailed report, such as a complete list of sponsors to be contacted during the planning cycle, and the exception report, such as a list of sponsors for whom you have no telephone numbers. These will have different content, and require quite different responses from committee members.

- If you have a database of all the people who entered each division last year, then you can use these people as part of the marketing process – sending out personal invitations to ask for their support again this year.

Information Checklist

- It's easy to overlook some important or useful bit of information, so compile a checklist of the information that will be needed for planning and running the show.

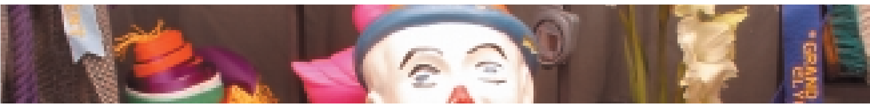
Setting up Information Systems

THIS TOPIC AIMS TO PROVIDE PARTICIPANTS WITH:

1. an understanding of a range of data and information collection and management systems
2. both computer-based and non-computer-based options for information management.

KEY POINTS

- Information must be recorded accurately, and organised so that it is easily available.
- Information comes from a variety of sources, and in different forms.
- Don't spend valuable time collecting information that is not directly relevant to your show.
- A computer is not essential, but it can help to organise records effectively, and to retrieve information quickly.



How do we get the information we need?

- It is important to use authoritative sources. Some government departments, such as the Taxation Department, will send out regular updates on new developments on request. Much of the information you will need from these sources is available through the Internet, or through mailing lists your show can be placed on – and these are easy ways to keep up to date.
- Other useful sources of information are:
  - Australian Bureau of Statistics
  - industry journals and newsletters
  - your local council
  - people who have been to your show – or to other shows
  - Government departments of Agriculture or Primary Industry
  - sponsors and exhibitors from previous shows
  - other show societies
  - newspapers, radio and television.
- If information is available from another source, use it – don't waste time and effort collecting it again. However, a lot of important information will relate only to your show, and you will have to find it yourselves. Some common ways of collecting data, and examples of their use, include:

Method	**Use**
Interviews	to explore how you can develop mutually beneficial relationships with sponsors and partners – what's in it for them and what's in it for you.
Exit polls	to identify the features of your show that people liked best and those that were less popular. Use prepared questions to make sure you're getting comparable responses.
Questionnaires	for getting information from volunteer groups on how they might be involved in your show.
Observation	for counting the numbers of 'punters' at different events on show day
Examining existing reports	for preparation of plans and budgets. Looking at what other show societies have done can also provide a check on what you've done and offers a potential source of new ideas.
Group discussions	to canvas exhibitors' ideas on the quality of the facilities you provided and what might be done differently.

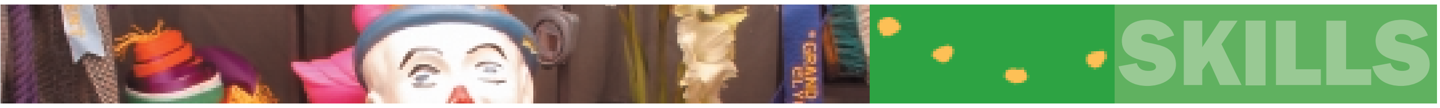
- The information you collect must be accurate, or it cannot be relied upon, and it must be at an appropriate level of detail. Ensure that data is recorded promptly – don't rely on memory.
- Use consistent and easy recording methods. It takes very little time to develop a simple form, for instance, and press-button counters are ideal for attendance numbers at the entrance, as well as providing a useful check on gate takings.
- Thinking about the ultimate use of each piece of information, usually in a report of some kind, will help determine how it should be collected, and in what form.
- Re-use the same information wherever possible – try to avoid collecting the same information twice, or duplicating it once it's collected.

How do we look after the information we collect?

- Committees and sub-committees should collect and maintain the information about their area of responsibility.
- Decide who's responsible for collecting, recording and analysing data. Check that it's being done, but don't duplicate the effort.
- Treasurers, Secretaries and Public Officers have particular responsibilities for keeping formal records and providing reports, according to the rules governing the society and relevant government regulations.
- When you know what other information you plan to keep, consider asking someone with a background in record keeping – perhaps a retired schoolteacher, or the local librarian – to look after it for your society.

How do we deal with private and confidential information?

- Recent privacy legislation means that some personal details cannot be collected, or only under certain conditions. For example, individuals concerned must be aware that you have this information, why you require it and how you will use it.
- Always deal with personal information securely and carefully. Make sure you really need it before collecting it.
- Respect people's rights to confidentiality, particularly when they are applying for positions, or submitting tenders and contracts.



What information systems do we need?

- Develop systems to organise the information you need in ways which:
  - make it easy to record and check information.
  - provide facilities for organising and extracting information, both for regular reporting purposes and to answer ad hoc queries.
  - don't keep multiple copies of the same information in different files. Keeping several copies of what was once the same information is a common source of error and confusion. Instead use references, always pointing back to a single accurate source.
- Remember – KISS (Keep It Short and Simple). The simpler your systems are, the less there is to go wrong.

What are the elements of an information system?

- Information is managed through the processes of recording data, collating, storing, analysing and interpreting those data, and producing reports.
- Grouping related items of data into records, and grouping the records into files, provides a basic way of organising information.
- The data in a record are referred to as fields. An example of some of the fields in a record describing entrants in a cattle class might be:

2 y-o BULLS	**Field 1: Owner**	**Field 2: Name**	**Field 3: Breed**	**Field 4: Date of Birth**	**Field 5: Weight**
Record 1	K Howe	Insatiabull	Galloway	12.07.00	800kg
Record 2	D Jones	Irritabull	Jersey	23.05.00	950kg
Record 3	R Binny	Unbelievabull	Charolais	06.06.00	1830kg

Each field in each record contains one piece of data, or a fact. Together, these facts have meaning and context – they provide us with information. Individually, they mean very little.

- Information is stored in files; you may have files for sponsors, for each class of exhibit, for tax information, for finance, for statistics and for the history of the show society. If you use a computer for generating documents, printing the file name (and perhaps the path or folder name) in document footers makes finding files easier.
- Classifying information in files helps to ensure that all necessary records are being kept, and that related records are kept together. An example of a classification system is the Dewey decimal system used in libraries, where ten major classifications are subdivided repeatedly to provide groups of manageable size. If you don't already have one, check classification systems used by local organisations such as the council, or a rural business, and pick one that works for you.

- Filing and retrieving information in a manual filing system relies on applying a consistent method of filing information, but can come unstuck where a document covers multiple topics. In this case, use references to ensure that information is not overlooked.
- A table of contents acts as a map to a filing system, showing the locations of sets of documents, or as a quick guide to a single document, where it will typically include chapter or section headings.
- Creating an index provides quick access to information using words or phrases selected from individual documents. These might include topics or section headings, the goals in your plan, or references to events held over a number of years.
- Files and information need to be reviewed on a regular basis, and where large amounts of out of date information is being kept – consideration needs to be given to removing it from the current information system. Some of the old information might be destroyed, whilst other valuable information may be archived so that it is still accessible but not taking up precious space in the current system.

How can we get the most from computer technology?

- While it is not necessary to use computers to record and manage information, even the smallest organisations can benefit from their use. Think about using:
  - word processors – for correspondence, agendas, minutes, contracts
  - spreadsheets – for budgets, records of expenditure, cash flow projections, comparison charts such as attendance trends
  - data bases – for records of sponsors, names and addresses of contacts, success factors, exhibitors, competitors, asset registers
- Computers provide relatively simple methods for recording, storing and sharing information, and help to contain costs and time. For example, the information in your contacts file can be used to produce address labels, saving substantial time when preparing envelopes for mailing.
- Computer systems can automatically generate tables of contents for documents, and, with some work, indexes as well. They also show you all the documents in a file, and can produce tables of contents or indexes that span more than one document.
- Delivering your information regarding the program to the printing firm on computer disk or by e-mail should help minimise the cost of external printing.
- Scanners provide a convenient way of adding logos and pictures to documents, which can improve both appearance and ease of use.

What if we don't have a computer?

- A simple way of organising many kinds of information is to use a card file. Cards are available in a variety of sizes and styles, from simple lined varieties to more complex cards showing a number of predefined fields. Storage systems for cards range from simple boxes to semi-automatic types such as Rolodexes.

- Many types of information can be kept in a notebook, and again these can be obtained in specialised varieties, such as those for use by treasurers and secretaries.
- Ring binders allow you to keep together related information – for example, correspondence in and correspondence out. Within each category, you can keep the records in chronological or alphabetical order.
- No matter what type of system is used, the information must be kept up to date and must be accessible to people who need it.
- The main thing with all these manual systems is keep information together and organised. When a transfer of information and systems to someone else is required (such as when the Secretary or President retire or move out of the district), the transition will be made easier for them and the committee, if the relevant information and history is handed over in an organised and efficient manner.
- If you feel you could benefit from using a computer, but your society can't justify the expense, perhaps you could arrange to use one occasionally at a local organisation such as the council, school, or online access centre.

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