



Working with stakeholders

Definition

There is greater emphasis placed on the role of partnerships between carnivals and stakeholders. Successful carnival groups and organisers must be able to identify their stakeholders and manage their individual needs. Stakeholders often have an array of conflicting objectives. It is difficult particularly when assessing the intangible outcomes of carnival to satisfy all stakeholder expectations.

Stakeholder is a commonly used term by organisations working in the public sector. As such, the term is also in common usage in the arts and culture environment. It is not a new term however, it was first used in management literature in 1963 by the Stanford Research Institute.

Stakeholder tends to have many definitions. This article defines the term stakeholder as those groups or organisations without whose support a carnival group or organisation would cease to exist.

The On Route Carnival Conference in 2005 noted that people are the most important stakeholder for carnival, and without the artists, there is no carnival. In dealing with stakeholders, it is important not lose sight of your mission or goals – try not to get caught up in other people's agendas.

Prioritising of Stakeholders

Carnival groups should develop strategies to secure commitment from stakeholders. Most carnivals need the assistance and co-operation of stakeholders in order for an event to take place. Carnival groups can capitalise on opportunities and benefits by working in partnership.

Carnival groups and organisers should aim to build up a strong coalition of stakeholders and prioritise those that it considers are most powerful and most important.

Effective stakeholder working

Effective stakeholder working is not easy. It requires clear allocation of responsibility within organisations, with resources, time and incentive structures for partnership working. Stakeholders need to be prepared to change their cultures and ways of operating to accommodate the nature of carnival, that is, carnival is often delivered by the voluntary sector or community.



Managing stakeholders

In order to effectively manage stakeholders it is important to understand their different agendas and objectives. Assessing each stakeholder's level of interest in your carnival or group will enable you to prioritise your stakeholders.

You will probably need to adopt different management styles with each stakeholder depending on your assessment on their level of interest and importance. Regular briefings and consultation are important facets to successful stakeholder working.

Where possible, it is best to arrange stakeholder meetings with representatives that have power and authority within their organisation. There is nothing more frustrating than meetings where outcomes and decisions have to be ratified back at a stakeholder's office.

Many carnivals start on the basis of relationships and goodwill between a dedicated group of people. Successful carnivals are built on solid partnerships and strong links with loyal supporters (audiences, participants, volunteers, public bodies and corporate representatives). There is a common vision and shared understanding about the carnival event and a loose alliance between those who run it, those with a vested interest in its success and the people who participate and enjoy the event.

Type of stakeholder

Stakeholders within a carnival setting are broad. The list of stakeholders interested in carnival grows each year as more and more organisations recognise the benefits and value it brings to wider economic and social needs.

Carnivals have to serve a multitude of different agendas. Stakeholders are now a key component to successful carnival events. Not only must carnivals serve the needs of participants and audiences but also they have to take responsibility for satisfying governmental requirements and regulations; support social, cultural and economic objectives of public agencies; satisfy sponsors' needs; work with media, and finally, address the host community's expectations and concerns.

Stakeholders often provide one or more of the following:

- Money in the form of grant aid or sponsorship
- In kind support



- Public acknowledgement
- Involvement and participation
- Shared expertise and knowledge
- Human resources
- Logistical support

Reporting to stakeholders

Evaluation is critical to the carnival management process. It will incorporate observation, measurement and monitoring in order to accurately assess the Carnival event or group's outcomes. It enables carnival groups or organisers to create a profile of their activity that outlines its basic features and important statistics. Quantifying and disseminating the outcomes of the carnival to stakeholders assists the carnival organiser or group to promote support and acceptance of their carnival event or troupe.

Quite often stakeholders will be involved in carnival evaluation. They may offer observation; provide data; complete questionnaires or attend de-briefing meetings.

In order to meet the various reporting requirements of event stakeholders it is necessary to plan carefully the evaluation of the event. Key questions to consider are:

What data is needed?

How, when and by whom is it to be gathered

How will it be analysed

What format will be used for reporting?

It is also important to ensure that you document your event or the work of your carnival group. Powerful and vibrant photographic images or video are useful approaches to demonstrating the value of your work to stakeholders.