

Module 3. Service delivery

Unit 3.1

In this third module of the Managing Service Quality in Sport Events course, we will focus on a key aspect of sport events: service delivery. Therefore, we will capture the key aspects of service delivery, beginning with service design and how a service delivery map or customer journey map can help a sport event, league, or competition organiser better appreciate the areas in which they could improve. We will then move on to the physical aspects of a service event called the servicescape. After discussing this, we will move on to the aspect of service execution in sport events, before we focus on the service personnel. In this section, we will discuss both sport events staff and sport volunteers and how to better manage either and both these groups.

Unit 3.2 Key aspects of service delivery

Service delivery refers to the process and activities involved in providing and fulfilling a service to customers. It encompasses all the steps and interactions from the initial point of contact with the customer to the final delivery and consumption of the service (Buswell *et al.*, 2016). Service delivery is essential in ensuring that the service meets or exceeds customer expectations and achieves the desired outcomes.

The service delivery involves several key aspects, the main of which are the following:

- **Service design.** It is about designing the service experience and defining the service offerings, features, and processes to meet customer needs and expectations (Buswell *et al.*, 2016). This involves considering factors such as service quality, convenience, customisation, and value proposition. While we captured this issue from the side of customer expectations, here we will focus on service design from the viewpoint of the service providers, namely the event, league, and competition organisers.
- **Service interaction:** interacting with customers at various touchpoints throughout the service delivery process (Buswell *et al.*, 2016). This includes communication, customer support, and handling customer inquiries, feedback, and complaints. This aspect focuses on all the points of contact between the service organisers (or the staff employed/authorised by the service organisers, such as employees and volunteers) and the service customers, and it will be explored below alongside the service personnel aspect.



- Service execution: carrying out the operational processes and tasks required to deliver the service (Buswell *et al.*, 2016). This involves coordinating resources, managing timelines, and ensuring the smooth execution of service activities. In other words, this aspect focuses on logistical issues that are key in delivering an effective and successful sport event, league, or competition, as we will discuss below.
- Service personnel: the people who deliver the service directly to customers, such as service providers, staff, or employees (Buswell *et al.*, 2016). Service personnel play a critical role in delivering the service experience, maintaining customer satisfaction, and addressing customer needs. This aspect focuses greatly on the human element and, as such, on employees and volunteers, the two main categories of individuals employed by the service organiser or, in our case, the event, league, and competition organiser. This ensures that the service is delivered to the customer, and it will be covered in this module.
- Service quality: ensuring that the service meets or exceeds customer expectations in terms of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles (Buswell *et al.*, 2016). Service quality is a crucial aspect of service delivery that impacts on customer satisfaction and loyalty. This important aspect of the perceived service quality, or the service quality that each individual customer perceives, which might be different from the service quality that other customers of the same service perceive—in our case, sport events, leagues, or competitions—, will be detailed upon in the following module.
- Service recovery: addressing and resolving any service failures or issues that may occur during the delivery process (Buswell *et al.*, 2016). Effective service recovery involves promptly addressing customer concerns, providing solutions, and compensating for any inconveniences or dissatisfaction. Service recovery will be addressed in the following module.
- Service evaluation: assessing and monitoring the effectiveness of service delivery through customer feedback, performance metrics, and continuous improvement efforts (Buswell *et al.*, 2016). Regular evaluation helps identify areas for improvement and enhances the overall service delivery process. This key aspect of service delivery has been already covered in the first two modules of the course, in which we focused on the customer side of the service.

Having introduced the key aspects of service delivery, we will now move on to exploring each one of them in detail in the context of sport events, leagues, and competitions, beginning with the issue of service design.



Service quality refer to:

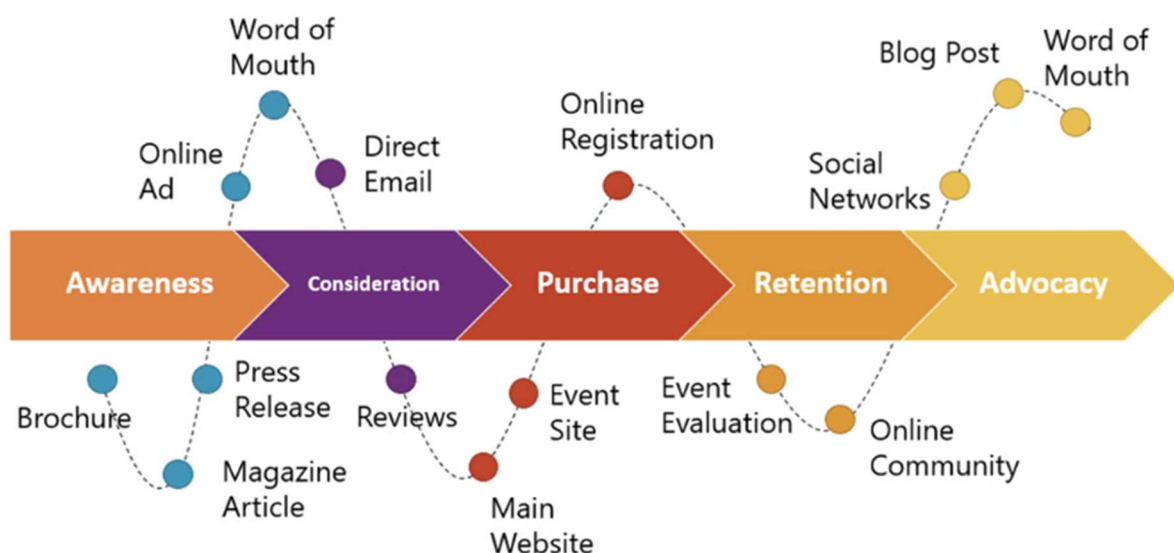
- **Ensuring that the service meets or exceeds customer expectations in terms of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles.**
- Interacting with customers at various touchpoints throughout the service delivery process.

Unit 3.3 Service design in sport events

Service design in sport events involves applying the principles and methods of service design to enhance the overall experience and satisfaction of attendees, participants, and other stakeholders involved in the event (Williams and Buswell, 2003). As such, it focuses on creating a seamless, customer-centric, and memorable service journey that aligns with the specific needs and expectations of sport event participants and spectators.

The service design begins with mapping out the end-to-end attendee journey, from the pre-event phase to post-event follow-up (Williams and Buswell, 2003). This includes identifying touchpoints, interactions, and key moments of engagement, both online and offline. Journey mapping helps visualise the attendee experience and identify areas for improvement or enhancement. Figure 1 illustrates a rather simple journey map for a customer.

Figure 1. Example of a simple service delivery or customer journey map



Source: [untitled image of example of a simple service delivery or customer journey map], (n. d.), <https://bit.ly/45K630V>.

As we can see in figure 1, this map focuses on the complete journey of a customer, starting from when they become aware of a service, or, in our case, of a sport event, league, or competition; how they begin to consider attending and, therefore, buying a ticket for it; how they do actually purchase a ticket; how they are retained as customers, and how do they advocate for it. In each step of the process, we can see that various sub-steps occur.

Let us look at the awareness phase, for example. It is worth noticing that the way through which potential customers are made aware matters. Was it a brochure, a print, or an online ad that got their attention? Which method of advertising worked for the customer service journey to begin? This is vital information for the service organiser—in our case, the sport event, league, or competition organiser—to know.

So, let us look at the second phase now, the one of consideration. If a customer is considering attending the event and therefore purchasing a ticket, it is important to understand how they are assessing information about it. Are they emailing us or are they emailing or contacting their own personal contacts to get comments on the event or the written reviews about it? Understanding this element can then help us better prepare on how to best ensure that awareness leads to purchase for our sport event, league, or competition.

In the third phase, the one in which our customers have decided they want to purchase tickets, it is also important to understand how individuals get information about us on ticketing. Do they register online? Do they purchase tickets in person? Are they attending the event by coming with friends or by themselves? But also, when do they come to the event? And how? Which mode of transport do they use? What do they do during the event? These are all important details that are maybe simplified in table 1; however, they are important for any sport event, league, or competition organiser.

In the next phase, the one of retention, we need to understand what people think. This is an important step of feedback that we mentioned in our previous modules. Here, we need to understand how the event is being evaluated by our existing customers. Therefore, we need to pay attention to the online community created because of the event and implement social listening to better appreciate customer retention (Williams and Buswell, 2003).

Finally, in the phase of advocacy, we need to make sure that our customers speak highly of the service they received; in other words, we need to make certain that the customers say they are happy with the service they received at our sport event, league, or competition. The word of mouth or the electronic word of mouth they used is therefore important because we know that, through that, other potential customers can become aware of the event, and they can start considering purchasing tickets for it (Williams and Buswell, 2003).



That being the case, we are being driven into another service map of other customers that is influenced by the service that one single customer received.

To better capture the more complex phase of purchase, we can use a service delivery map like the one depicted in the next table.

Table 1. A detailed service delivery or customer journey map

STAGES	RESEARCH / INSPIRATION	BOOK TICKETS	ARRIVING AT THE EVENT	DURING THE EVENT
DOING				
THINKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What types of events and shows are on? What dates are they on? How much will tickets cost? What's on near me? What are the shows about? Can I watch a video or see photos of the show? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What dates/times is this event on? Are there discounts if I buy multiple tickets? What is the refund policy? Does the event have disability access? Can I choose my seats? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it easy to find and get there? Where can I park? Will I have to pay for parking? Will public transport be a better option? Which door or entrance do I need to go to? How early do I need to arrive before the show starts? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will I have time to get food before the event starts? Does the event actually start when it says on the ticket? Can I pay with eftpos at the food stand? Where are the closest bathrooms?
FEELING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confused - Can't find an easy way to view which events are on a particular day Lost - Presented with lots of events and shows but can't tell what they are or what they're about 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apprehensive - Don't want the tickets to sell out before I complete the purchase process Hopeful - I hope the seats I want are available Excited - Tickets are booked and now looking forward to the event! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncertain - Am I in the right place? Anxious - If I'm late, will I still be able to get in to the show? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unsure - Not sure if I have enough time to get food before the show starts Annoyed - Have to get money from the ATM to avoid potentially having to queue up twice at the food stand Excited - I'm finally watching the show! Anxious - Will the show finish on time? I have a babysitter
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE	<p>There's are lots of shows on, finding one that interests me and is on at a date and time I can go to may take some time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hard to work out which shows are on and when Not many images for each show The website doesn't inspire me to see a show 	<p>The ticket purchase process wasn't bad but has some areas that could be improved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only found out about multiple ticket discounts after starting the purchase process No indication of if the tickets are held for me during the checkout process The seating chart was difficult to understand 	<p>Getting in to the show wasn't difficult but took longer than expected.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The parking area for the show was tricky to find There was a large queue as only one person was checking tickets I had to have a printed ticket instead of a digital one I could have on my phone 	<p>Overall a good experience but could be improved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The event started later than I expected I had to pay a \$2 transaction fee at the ATM Getting out of the event took a long time due to lots of people trying to leave through one door
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow users to filter the events by date and genre Add a brief description to each event on the events list page Add larger image and video galleries for each event Include inspirational imagery and featured shows throughout the site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show a message during the checkout process letting the user know the tickets will be held for a certain amount of time Adjust the seating chart design to be more user friendly Link to a refund policy page from the event details page Show a message about multiple ticket discounts on the event detail page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure each event includes parking details on the event details page Improve the parking signage at events Have additional staff checking tickets for busy shows Introduce digital tickets instead of solely printed ones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make it clear when the 'doors open' and 'event start' times are. Make the bathroom signage obvious Put up eftpos signs at the food stand Inform event goers if an event is running behind schedule Improve the exit strategy to make it more efficient and quicker

Source: [untitled image of a detailed service delivery or customer journey map], (n. d.), <https://bit.ly/45K630V>.

In this more detailed service map, it is possible to see that the stages are presented in a timeline of what happens before the event, the research or inspiration phase and the



booking of the tickets, and what happens after that, including the arriving at the event and the specific service delivery during the event.

Consequently, this service map focuses on what happens before and during, and not so much on what happens after the sport event, league, or competition. This focus allows us to break down the aspects of the service delivery, to better comprehend the service we are delivering and the opportunities it bears for us as service organisers. Therefore, we are not only looking at what customers are doing, but also at what they are thinking, feeling, and experiencing, and the opportunities this presents us with.

So, let us start with the research and inspiration phase or phase one. This is the phase in which customers are becoming aware of the event and are trying to decide whether to attend it. This is the phase in which they try to understand what is going on near them, when does it happen, what is it about, and what can they find about the event before they attend it. This is a thinking phase, which is accompanied by a feeling aspect.

If individuals cannot find information, they might be confused and, therefore, never become paying customers. If potential customers cannot find enough information or details about the experience they will receive, then we might never convince them to book tickets. The customer experience at this point matters because we need to make sure that enough information—particularly positive information—is available for customers to find, in a way that would allow us to better appreciate them, which of course involves the accessibility factor (Williams and Buswell, 2003).

Pleasing photos can be provided, for example, alongside positive reviews of the service experience they will receive in the sport event, league, or competition. It is our opportunity to understand this and address it by ensuring that all this information is available.

Let us look at the booking of tickets phase. In this phase, customers or potential customers can be thinking whether the available dates and times are convenient for them (Williams and Buswell, 2003); whether they can buy tickets on discount; whether there is a refund policy on buying tickets; what is the disability access, and whether they can customise their seat. As we said in our previous module, customisation is a key aspect of service delivery. Therefore, in our sports event, league, or competition, allowing customers the opportunity to purchase a ticket whilst feeling that their own expectations are met is very important.

The feeling aspect then comes into play. This is where we need to acknowledge that our potential customers might want to see, for example, that tickets are available, but they are being sold fast. This might create the feeling of excitement to them, and that they need

to purchase their tickets as soon as possible. Customers might indeed be excited because they have booked their tickets, and they are expecting the event to happen.

We need to make sure that customers are looking forward to the event, so to be able to better help them and ensure that they are not confused about any of the aspects of the service delivery, we need to ensure that the process of purchasing tickets is easy to navigate for all customers available, even for those who might not be familiar with the booking system (Williams and Buswell, 2003). For example, online tickets, even though they are nowadays widely available for sport events, leagues, or competitions, might confuse some potentially elderly customers. In addition, customers with visibility issues might struggle to book online tickets, if the online system does not offer different methods. A customer service line to assist with any potential problems could also be used in this case to improve customer experience. These are all opportunities that we can identify through this detailed service delivery map.

Additional opportunities could arise from potential issues our customers might experience, such as the lack of a refund policy or the non-visible terms and conditions of purchase. Adding those links on our website and making sure that customers are provided with this vital information can improve their experience and ensure that the feelings of excitement for the event and not anxiety about purchasing the tickets are reinstated.

Let us look at phase three now: arriving at the event. In this phase, customers will start thinking of how they should arrive at the event. Which method of transport will they use to come? Is the stadium in which we are hosting the sport event, league, or competition close to public transport? If so, are trains or buses operating normally on the day of the event? If they are not using public transport, then will they be able to park their own vehicle upon arrival? How early do they need to arrive before the event starts? Where can they enter the stadium? Which gate is it that they have purchased the ticket for and how close will that be to public transport, or the parking used? These questions are all part of important information that customers are thinking about, and they are influencing their feelings, which, in this case, could be uncertainty. Customers can feel uncertain if they feel that they do not know the stadium enough or that they are confused about arriving potentially at the wrong side of the stadium. And they can also be anxious that they might be late for the event.

All these issues influence the customer experience, which will be defined by what customers are encountering there on the day. They might, indeed, find it all easy or difficult, and it is at this point where event execution is particularly important. The long queues that might exist upon entering the parking or the stadium and the huge crowds encountered on public transport on arrival to a popular sport event, league, or competition affect customers' experience significantly (Williams and Buswell, 2003).

This is an opportunity for us, as sport event, league, or competition organisers, to make sure that enough information on the parking facilities, costs, and maps, as well as public transport opportunities and operations on the day of the event, are available and easy to access on our own channels. We also need to make sure that any changes to planned transport schedules are also communicated to our customers, potentially through social media, so that our customers are informed of them before they begin their journey.

Having enough members of staff guiding the customers to the right parking spots and entrance to the stadium is also important (Williams and Buswell, 2003). As we noticed in our previous modules, the lack of adequate planning of staff checking tickets upon entrance to events has been the root of many problems and service failures in important sporting events, such as the UEFA Champions League Final of 2022 in Paris and the Commonwealth Games in the summer of 2022.

The introduction and adoption of appropriate technology can assist us in all these efforts with electronic tickets; for example, QR codes and QR scanners help potentially to overcome such issues (Williams and Buswell, 2003).

Having discussed here the importance of service design in a sport event, league, or competition, through the adoption of a useful tool such as a service delivery or customer journey map, we can identify the managerial implications and steps we can take to improve our service delivery in each phase before, during, and after the sport event, league, or competition. In the section below, we will focus on a vital aspect of the delivery of any sport event, league, or competition, the physical environment in which it takes place, which is referred to in the service quality literature as the servicescape.

Unit 3.4 Servicescape in sport events

Servicescape in sport events refers to the physical environment and setting in which the sporting event takes place (Fernandes and Neves, 2014). It encompasses the design, layout, amenities, and overall ambiance of the event venue that contributes to the attendees' experience. The servicescape of sport events plays a crucial role in shaping the atmosphere, enhancing engagement, and creating a memorable event experience for spectators and participants.

The design and layout of the sport event venue impact on the overall experience (Fernandes and Neves, 2014). This includes considerations such as seating arrangements, sightlines, crowd flow management, accessibility, and safety measures. As such, a well-designed venue ensures optimal viewing angles, ease of movement, and a comfortable environment for attendees.

For example, some of the facilities in which English Premier League or Championship matches are being hosted have been heavily criticised for the sightline of some of the seats offered. Illustrative examples of significantly obstructed views for the sport event attendees from the stadia of QPR FC and Liverpool FC in the photos below, can allow us to better appreciate how the servicescape can significantly impact on the service delivery.

_____ in sport events refers to the physical environment and setting in which the sporting event takes place.

Answer: Servicescape

Figure 2. Obstructed views in the QPR FC stadium



Source: [untitled image of obstructed views in the QPR FC stadium], (n. d.), <https://bit.ly/3t4zufW>.

Figure 3. Obstructed views in the Liverpool FC stadium



Source: [untitled image of obstructed views in the Liverpool FC stadium], (n. d.), <https://bit.ly/3t4zufW>.

In addition to the design and the layout, the actual facilities within each event venue, such as restrooms, concessions, food and beverage areas, merchandise stands, and VIP lounges, contribute to the overall servicescape (Fernandes and Neves, 2014). The availability, cleanliness, and convenience of these facilities enhance attendee comfort and satisfaction, while the level at which they are maintained can also positively or negatively influence customers.

An additional detail to consider are the visual aspects of the servicescape, including signage, branding, displays, and decorations, all of which contribute to the overall ambiance and create a sense of identity and excitement (Fernandes and Neves, 2014). Visual elements can include team logos, sponsor banners, video screens, scoreboards, and thematic decorations that align with the event or team branding. Fan created posters can also assist in this aspect, so, once again, the customer influence on other customers' experience of a sport event, league, or competition is emphasised.

Another aspect we have captured through the needs emerging by customer expectations regarding the servicescape of a sport event, league, or competition, is the lighting and sound systems used during the event, which can have a significant impact on the atmosphere and immersion in the event (Fernandes and Neves, 2014). Appropriate lighting creates the right mood and visibility, while sound systems provide clear

announcements, music, and crowd noise amplification to enhance the overall experience. The integration of digital technology elements, such as giant video screens, digital signage, interactive displays, or mobile apps, enhances the servicescape of sport events further and assists in the overall service experienced by the customers. This technology can provide real-time information, replays, interactive experiences, and social media engagement opportunities for attendees.

Supplementary aspects of servicescape to consider, that we have captured through our analysis of service design, include providing comfortable seating, adequate shade or shelter, and appropriate temperature control for the customers, ensuring that effective crowd management strategies, including ticketing systems, queue management, and security measures are in place, and securing planning for adequate parking facilities, public transportation access, and clear directions for attendees' arrival and departure (Fernandes and Neves, 2014).

Having captured the servicescape or the physical environment in which a sport event, league, or competition takes place, we can now focus on the key aspects of the service execution, which will be discussed below.

Unit 3.5 Service execution in sport events

Service execution in sport events refers to the operational processes and activities involved in delivering the planned services and experiences to attendees, athletes, officials, and other stakeholders (Shariff, 2012). It focuses on ensuring the smooth and efficient implementation of various elements that contribute to the overall event experience and, as such, effective service execution is crucial for delivering a well-organised, engaging, and memorable sport event.

Event execution focuses on managing the logistical aspects of the event, including venue preparation, setup, and layout (Shariff, 2012). It therefore involves coordinating the placement of seating, signage, facilities, equipment, and other infrastructure required for the event. Infrastructure that is suited for each event and its attendees is of vital importance, and managing it and preparing it appropriately to match the demand and its existing capacity should therefore be explored in more detail in this course. As such, we will analyse it further in the next module.

Another key aspect of event execution, logistics, or operations, is adhering to the planned schedule and maintaining punctuality in starting and ending various activities, matches, ceremonies, and other programme elements (Shariff, 2012). Effective time management helps create a seamless experience for attendees and ensures that the event stays on track. As such, the event, league, or competition organiser also needs to oversee the

operational aspects of the matches, races, or competitions taking place within the event. This includes coordinating officials, referees, timing systems, scoreboards, and other equipment necessary for the proper execution of the sporting activities.

Whilst such logistics can be easier in an event that comprises one single sporting match taking place, such as one single league match on a Sunday afternoon, we need to appreciate the complexities of managing a bigger, multi-sport event that comprises various smaller events taking place at the same time in different venues.

Let us consider the complexities of managing the Olympic Games, for example. Bearing in mind the very short period in which all the matches or races of all the sports need to be completed, we can understand how difficult it must be for the Olympic Games organisers to ensure that all logistics run smoothly in the multiple locations in which the events are hosted. Bearing in mind that a number of these events are taking place at the exact same time further stresses the importance of appropriate planning, timekeeping, and punctuality, to ensure that all operational aspects of all matches or races of all sports within the Olympic Games are executed appropriately.

Staff coordination plays a vital role in service execution, as we will discuss below. However, before we do that, it is worth recognising that, as we mentioned before, the planned service might not always materialise as expected. As such, contingency planning is of vital importance (Shariff, 2012). Developing strategies to address unforeseen circumstances and various emergencies that might indeed arise during an event is part of the event execution process. From simple backup systems, should any technological issues emerge, to alternative arrangements, if any of the existing arrangements fail, they are all important aspects of ensuring that a successful event is delivered.

To do so, protocols must be in place to mitigate any potential risks (Shariff, 2012). These protocols should involve worst-case scenarios, to ensure that a sport event, league, or competition organiser is well-prepared for the execution and continuation of the event, should anything unforeseen materialise. Whilst the extreme circumstances such as a potential security threat exceeds the purpose of this module, preparing for simple, yet probable, unforeseen circumstances such as bad weather, which might obstruct the timing of an event and the arrival of the fans, the officials, and the athletes, should be considered. Let us simply consider the number of times that sailing events have been postponed due to the weather conditions.

Take, for example, the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, in which the two opening series races in the men's and women's 470 classes, as well as the medal races in the 49er class for both genders, were postponed due to the lack of adequate wind that is required for the races (Reuters, 2021). In such a case, sport event, league, or competition organisers must



therefore be prepared to deliver the expected service at a different time, ensuring that the customers are communicated and provided with all the required information in time.

Having now captured the most important aspects of service execution, it is time we address an important issue, that of service personnel. This fundamental aspect of any service delivery and, of course, the service delivery of sport events, leagues, and competitions, will be discussed below.

Unit 3.6 Service personnel in sport events

Service personnel in sport events are the individuals who are directly involved in delivering services and interacting with attendees, athletes, officials, and other stakeholders during the event (Van der Wagen, 2009). These individuals play a crucial role in creating a positive and memorable experience for everyone involved and, therefore, they are a crucial aspect of the service delivery. Service personnel is a term encapsulating many individuals involved in the execution of the service. We can broadly argue that service personnel in sport events, leagues, and competitions cover two wide categories: event staff and event volunteers.

Event staff members are responsible for various tasks related to event operations and customer service (Van der Wagen, 2009). They may include ushers, ticketing personnel, information desk staff, security personnel, parking attendants, and crowd control staff. These individuals' primary role is to assist attendees, provide directions, address inquiries, and ensure a safe and organised environment.

It is worth highlighting that the event staff category is rather wide, and it includes both individuals that are visible to the attendees, such as the cashiers and the ticketing personnel, and customer service representatives, who tend to be invisible to those attending an event (Van der Wagen, 2009). These individuals are often located in the offices of the organisers, and thus they do not attend the event itself, but they make themselves readily available online or through the telephone to respond to any queries, inquiries, complaints, or special requests attendees can have.

At the same time, particular members of staff can only be responsible for the hospitality areas (Van der Wagen, 2009). The hospitality area personnel cater for the needs of VIP guests, sponsors, and premium ticket holders. These individuals are therefore tasked with providing personalised services, such as particular assistance or offering food and beverage service to the guests who have paid more to attend the event or to those who belong to the VIP category.



Media and press relations are often managed by the media office, whose employees play a key part in the way in which the service is executed and promoted to the world (Van der Wagen, 2009). Press staff are some of the least visible event staff; nevertheless, they are the ones that manage the interactions between the event organisers and the media, including journalists, reporters, and photographers, and, as such, they require access to most areas of an event.

Athlete liaisons are individuals responsible for assisting athletes, coaches, and team officials during the event (Van der Wagen, 2009). They again might not be directly visible to the attendees of the event, but they play a key role in the event execution.

Medical and first aid personnel are also a less visible category of event staff (Van der Wagen, 2009). These individuals include doctors, paramedics, and trained volunteers who are present at sporting events to ensure that any medical assistance required is provided, so that any emergencies or injuries that might occur are dealt with. These include both injuries that athletes might have and any potential accidents that attendees might experience.

The second category of service personnel that is worth examining in further detail is the one of volunteers (Van der Wagen, 2009). Volunteers play a crucial role in supporting various aspects of a sport event. They, as their name suggests, are unpaid individuals who are tasked with assisting in several ways. They often help in the event setup, in the registration, in distributing promotional material, in managing the crowd, and in providing general assistance to attendees and athletes, among other things. These volunteers contribute their own time and effort to ensure that the event is executed in the best way possible and need to be recognised for their importance in sport events, leagues, and competitions. We will discuss volunteers in more detail below. However, before we do so, we need to explore some key managerial implications of the importance of event staff.

In the next section, we will therefore focus on appropriate human resource management for customer-oriented delivery to be achieved, before we examine volunteers and how to best manage them.

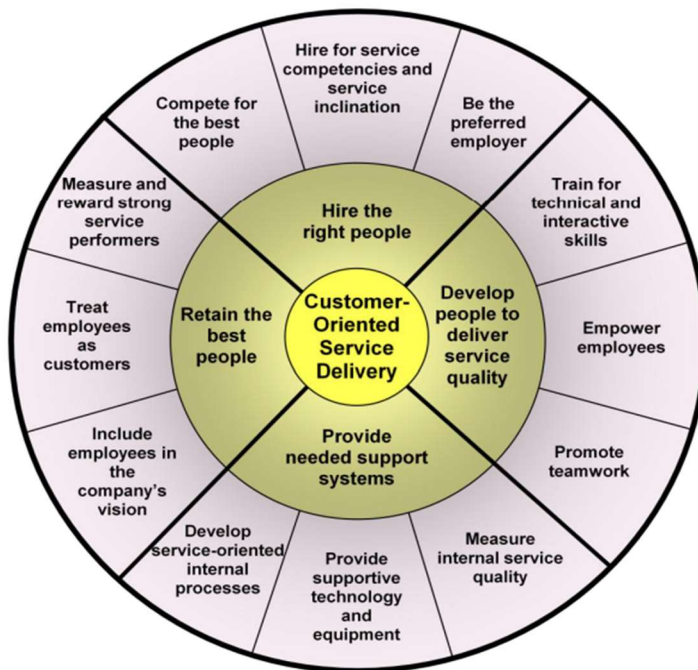
Service personnel in sport events are:

- **The individual who are directly involved in delivering services and interacting with attendees, athletes, officials and others stakeholders during the event.**
- The people who organize and make decisions in relation to the sporting event taking place, without having to liaise with the attendees, athletes or stakeholders during the event.

Unit 3.7 Human resource management for event staff

Since we have established that service personnel, including both event staff and event volunteers, play a vital role in ensuring that the service delivery meets or ideally exceeds the expectations of the customers, we therefore understand the importance of ensuring that this customer-oriented approach exists throughout the service delivery. This begins by ensuring that human resource management within the service organisations, in our case, the sport event, leagues, or competitions organisers, adheres to appropriate customer-oriented approaches. How human resource can help in achieving customer-oriented service delivery is illustrated in the next figure, and it will be discussed here in more detail.

Figure 4. Human resource strategies wheel



Source: Wilson *et al.*, 2008, as cited in Chen and Yu, 2009, p. 19.

As we can see in the figure above, the whole process starts with hiring the right people (Chen and Yu, 2009). Indeed, theory suggests that organisations need to compete for the best individuals and hire for their competencies and their service inclination, to ensure that they have hired the best people for their job. This means that they themselves need to be their preferred employer for these employees.

At the same time, as they do hire the right people, they also need to develop them further, to ensure that they deliver the expected service quality (Chen and Yu, 2009). That means that individuals need to be trained for any technical and interactive skills that are required and can enhance the service delivered. They also need to empower employees to ensure that they can handle situations when required and that they are able to always work independently and without supervision. Organisations should also promote teamwork, which can develop a positive spirit in the individuals working for an event.

Aligning with this, organisations should provide the needed support systems for their service personnel (Chen and Yu, 2009). They should therefore measure the internal service quality to ensure that their practices are up to standards. In line with this, organisations should provide supportive technology and equipment to assist employees and volunteers to perform their duties as required. Any supportive technology and equipment need to be up to the standards of the industry, which would suggest that any beneficial technological advances are also adopted quickly. Overall, they need to develop



service-oriented internal processes to ensure that a seamless service runs throughout the organisation.

Finally, organisations need to retain the best people and, as such, they need to measure and reward the strong service performers and treat their own employees as customers (Chen and Yu, 2009). After all, it is only after pleasing the employees that you can retain them and ensure that the best talent you have selected stays within the same service provider. It is also suggested that employees should be included in the overall company's vision to ensure that they are all working towards the same unifying goal.

Human resource management, as we can see, plays thus a vital role in ensuring that service personnel are up to the standards required for a customer-oriented service delivery to be achieved. Therefore, sport events, leagues, and competitions need to take notes on what steps to take to improve their service accordingly.

Unit 3.8 Volunteers in sport events

Volunteers play a crucial role in sport events, providing valuable support and contributing to the overall success of the event. Volunteers are particularly important in sport events for a myriad of reasons (Hoye *et al.*, 2019). Firstly, they assist with various operational tasks, as we mentioned above and, as such, they help ensure the smooth functioning of the event by handling logistics and supporting event staff.

Volunteers provide their time and services without monetary compensation, making them a cost-effective resource for event organisers (Hoye *et al.*, 2019). By relying on volunteers, organisers can reduce staffing expenses and allocate resources to other areas of the event. However, at the same time, sport events often bring together communities and provide an opportunity for individuals to get involved and contribute. In this way, volunteering in sport events allows community members to actively participate in the event, fostering a sense of belonging and pride.

In line with these feelings, volunteers are often passionate about sports and the event they are supporting (Hoye *et al.*, 2019). Their enthusiasm and dedication can be contagious, creating a positive and energetic atmosphere that enhances the event experience for participants and attendees. Indeed, volunteers often offer a personal touch and friendly assistance to participants and attendees. Their approachability and willingness to help create a welcoming environment, enhance the attendee experience, and contribute to overall satisfaction.

At the same time, sport event volunteers can play a role in promoting the event, both before and during the event (Hoye *et al.*, 2019). They can distribute promotional materials,



engage with participants and attendees on social media, and act as ambassadors for the event, helping to generate excitement and interest. As a consequence, volunteers contribute to the legacy of sport events by being actively involved and making a positive impact on the community. Their efforts help create lasting memories and leave a positive impression on participants and attendees.

However, and for volunteers to be able to achieve all the above, event organisers need to recognise the importance of volunteers and provide training, orientation, and support to ensure their effective involvement. How volunteers can be managed is discussed in the section below.

Unit 3.9 Volunteer management in sport events

Volunteer management in sport events involves effectively recruiting, organising, training, and coordinating volunteers, to ensure their meaningful contribution and enhance the overall success of the event (Hoye *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, the process begins with volunteer recruitment. Event, leagues, and competition organisers need to develop a clear recruitment strategy to attract potential volunteers. This may involve outreach through social media, community organisations, sports clubs, schools, or online volunteer platforms, while clear communication about the event details, expectations, and benefits of volunteering can help attract enthusiastic individuals.

At the same time, and before the volunteers are recruited, sport event, league, and competition organisers need to clearly define the roles and responsibilities for volunteers based on the event's needs (Hoye *et al.*, 2019). This would involve assigning volunteers to specific areas or tasks, such as registration, information desk, crowd control, hospitality, or event operations, and it would also entail the matching of volunteer skills, interests, and availability with appropriate roles to ensure a good fit.

Once the volunteers are recruited and appointed to well-defined roles, training and orientation needs to occur (Hoye *et al.*, 2019). This involves comprehensive training and orientation provided to volunteers before the event, including educating them about the event's purpose, schedule, safety protocols, and specific tasks they will be responsible for. Training can also cover customer service skills, event-specific knowledge, and any necessary technical or operational information.

Before any sport event starts, effective communication channels need to be established, to keep volunteers informed and engaged (Hoye *et al.*, 2019). These channels need to be regularly updated with event-related information, schedule changes, and any additional instructions. This communication can help volunteers feel supported throughout their involvement in the event in question. Additional on-site support, accessible team leaders,



and a point of contact for questions or concerns during the event can also be provided. It is suggested that regular check-ins with volunteers to address any issues, recognise their efforts, and provide feedback to enhance their experience should also be used.

Another key element of managing sport event volunteers is that of recognition. It is suggested that the efforts of volunteers should be appreciated to show gratitude for their contributions (Hoye *et al.*, 2019). This can include certificates, volunteer appreciation events, thank-you notes, or tokens of appreciation, while publicly acknowledging volunteers' contributions through event announcements, social media posts, or other forms of recognition can also be beneficial.

Summary

In this third module of the Managing Service Quality in Sport Events course, we focused on service delivery. Therefore, we began our analysis by focusing on the various aspects of service delivery, beginning with service design. We analysed how a service delivery or customer journey map can be used, before we moved on to the physical servicescape of a sport event and the aspect of service execution. Finally, we moved on to the human aspect of the event personnel, involving both event staff and event volunteers, as well as the managerial implications, and thus how to best manage either of these personnel categories.

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