

## **SITE MANAGER**

### **Overview**

The job of Site Manager is to take overall control of an, event site or installation, including budget, timing, personnel, equipment rental and structural decisions. The Site Manager is a key link in the chain of legal responsibility for the Health & Safety of all workers and operations, and is required to ensure that the health & safety policy of the company they're working for is adhered to e.g. staff are trained for the jobs they carry out and that safe working practices followed.

The Site Manager is the single most important and influential member of the event team. They must be aware of every development in the site management process; keeping tabs on its cost, schedule and viability

Site Managers usually work in one of two ways; either as a regular employee of an organisation whose job it is to oversee specific projects; or, more commonly as a freelancer who is employed on a short term contract to co-ordinate particular events or performances such as a festival. If they fall into the latter category they must make sure they possess adequate Public Liability/Employers/Professional Indemnity Insurance for the work they intend to carry out.

### **Consultation & Pre-Planning**

Usually a Site Manager will be appointed early in the development of a project. They will often work with a client in developing key design and event site concepts. To do this effectively the Site Manager will have excellent written and verbal communication skills. They must be capable of rapidly grasping the requirements of the client/project and should be able to make practical suggestions as to how the project might be realised. A thorough understanding of the journey from concept to presentation is vital. At this stage the client will be looking for:

- Realistic scheduling - how long will each stage of the process take
- Outline budgeting, or an idea of what is possible within the budget offered
- What number and type of staff will be required to undertake the work satisfactorily
- The venue or performance structure required to stage the event
- Any legal or regulatory obligations that need to be addressed
- An estimate of the type of hardware required for the event

It is often difficult to give definitive answers to all these questions, but a basic (and fundamentally accurate) estimate will be required by the Promoter or Event Organiser

### **Production Planning**

During the planning stage the Site Manager will investigate and make basic decisions on:

- The site management schedule, who will do what and when.
- Begin the process of drawing up a technical specification for the event, this should be as detailed as possible.
- Budget allocation: how much will be available to spend on the various areas of the site.
- Appointment of key personnel
- Conducting planning meetings

## Health & Safety

As the main conduit for information pertaining to a show, the Site Manager is in a unique position to oversee the health and safety provision for all people working on the event and for audiences. In order to fulfil this key role adequately they must:

- Understand the safety policy statement of the company by whom they are employed, or for whom they are working.
- Have thorough grasp of H and S issues affecting the event industry and the given site in particular.
- Identify any specific hazards and outline ways to minimise Risk.
- Be familiar with legislation such as HSW Act
- Familiar with advisory documents such as the Event Safety Guide or "Pop Code" and industry ACOP's
- Have in place a system for H&S management
- Have an understanding of how to draw up practical, relevant and realistic Risk Assessments
- Draw up Risk Assessments for all jobs & operations to be undertaken that present a significant risk to personnel or equipment.
- Ensure documentation is kept.
- Ensure that all staff are informed of H and S issues that may affect them.
- Ensure that staff are adequately trained for the work they undertake.
- Ensure staff are aware of their legal obligations.
- Ensure sub-contractors are competent and have necessary insurance, documentation etc. to carry out the job.
- Ensure adequate provision is made for H&S inspection.
- Establish a system for monitoring H&S.
- Institute an awareness of H&S issues among staff & encourage a safety culture within production team.

## Contracts

Whilst the drawing up of contracts for personnel may be carried out by a specialist Personnel Dept. it is important that the Site Manager keeps tabs on who is employed and under what conditions. They must ensure that contracts issued:

- Are legal & binding and are signed. Remember a verbal contract may also be binding.
- That they are issued to all people working on the production.
- That they accurately reflect the work to be undertaken and are free from ambiguity.
- That contracts do not exceed allocated budgets.
- Do not bind either party to an agreement they are unable to keep.
- Work hours, times, dates and places are clearly specified.
- That the tax and NI position is clearly defined.
- Times and methods of payment are agreed.

## Sub-contractors

The Site Manager is responsible for appointing sub contractors to undertake specific areas of work. Such contractors may have a short and transient role, such as a fencing

contractor, or they may be a core part of the project development. In either instance the Site Manager is responsible for ensuring:

- That all appropriate jobs are put out to tender, that written quotes are received for particular operations and that clear production parameters are put to companies tendering.
- The suitability for any contractor for the operation to be performed.
- That the contractor is actually *contracted* to carry out a particular service.
- The precise time, date and place of deliver of equipment or services is clearly identified.
- What penalties the contractor might incur should they fail to meet the terms of the contract - esp. lateness or failure to produce acceptable results.
- Remember that the figure charged by a contractor is negotiable until it is fixed by contract
- The contractor must provide Employers' Liability insurance for their own workers, and Public Liability insurance to cover others. Professional Indemnity & Product Liability might also be applicable.
- The Contractor must provide Risk Assessments for all the operations they plan to carry out, and must inform you if their activities present a health & safety risk to any other persons.
- Contractors with more than five employees should have a written health & safety policy statement. Make sure you get to see it before any contract is signed.
- Contractors must supply appropriate PPE for all their workers. Make sure the contractor is aware that you're not going to do it for them.
- Ensure that all staff provided are adequately trained for the jobs they undertake.

#### Contingency and Emergency Planning

As part of the Risk Assessment process the Site Manager should draw up, in consultation with relevant personnel or external bodies, plans for:

- Venue evacuation, coded messages & warnings
- The role played by individual staff members in the event of emergency
- The deployment of emergency services
- Access of emergency service vehicles and staff
- The provision of adequate first aid and fire fighting equipment
- A system for monitoring the progress of events during an emergency
- A system for communicating information between key staff
- Any other contingency plans as may be required

#### Personnel

The Site Manager is responsible for the most part for the hiring and firing of people working on the site. This may vary from key personnel to casual workers, but in every instance the Site Manager should be aware of the legal responsibilities they have with regard to staff:

- Ensure that anyone taken on to do work of any kind, no matter how short the duration, is covered by employers liability insurance. Make sure the policy covers people for the kinds of jobs they'll be doing.
- Ensure that proper contracts are issued

- Make sure people take on understand the terms and conditions of their employment, its duration, the rate of pay and so on.
- Identify key staff posts e.g. Concessions Manager, Traffic Manager and appoint people to posts in consultation with client.
- Ensure appointees understand key production concepts and their role within the team.
- Ensure that sufficient people are employed to undertake the job safely and within the constraints set by the budget and the production schedule.
- Establish a system whereby staff suggestions, complaints and incident reports can be made.
- Ensure you meet the various duties you have as an employer under the 1974 Health & Safety at Work Act, and associated legislation.

### Communication

Clear communication between a variety of staff, sub-contractors, local authorities, statutory bodies and clients is vital to any successful event. A great deal of information will flow through the Site Manager, so it is important a system exists for speeding its passage.

- Make sure you have contact numbers, addresses etc. for all production staff, crew, contractors and so on. Log the information in a central register or book. Don't rely on a million Post-Its on the walls of the office.
- Make sure sufficient money has been allocated from the budget to meet the communication needs of the production.
- Set up a Site Office so that information is collected and disseminated from a central point. Make sure everyone knows how to contact that office.
- Ensure that people working on the event know what they are supposed to do, when, where and how much they can spend getting it done.
- Try to standardise as much as possible. Use a similar format for budgets or schedule updates, and try to use the same software as others to facilitate file transfer.
- Where possible use an assistant or secretary to answer phone calls and mail - it's easy to get bogged down in conversations that should have been fielded by other staff or that are simply a waste of time.
- Use a variety of methods to communicate complex information, flow charts, diagrams & annotations can a lot easier to understand than plain text. Always remember to use an indication of scale on plots, plans and drawings.
- Always keep back ups of material held on computer hard drives.
- Try to maintain open communication with key staff so important information is relayed quickly.
- Establish a system of regular production meetings to monitor progress and pass on new information, tasks or deadlines.
- Learn to delegate. The Site Managers' role is to oversee work rather than to undertake it all.

### Scheduling

The Site Manager is responsible for drawing up the overall event management schedule, and for ensuring that personnel and sub-contractors abide by it. The production schedule

is a crucial management tool that requires considerable thought. It should include detailed information on the following

- The overall timetable of work, ranging from design and development stages through building to the event it's self.
- The schedule indicates when and where staff are required and will be central to accurate budgeting as well as the drawing up of contracts.
- The schedule will indicate when certain operations must be put into action for example structure construction, so that other work like installing toilets will not conflict. It will also set out the timetable for dealing with licensing, police, EHO's and so on.
- The schedule allows contracts and subcontracted services to be booked for the correct period, as well as venues, transport and so on.
- The schedule set performance and completion targets for production work. It may form the basis of penalty clauses for failure to complete work undertaken by sub-contractors.
- As the production process develops the schedule will be constantly amended, becoming more detailed as the event gets closer. Instead of broad brushstrokes it will finely detail the activity of production crew. Other staff such as Production and Stage managers will also produce production schedules to add more detail to their specific area.
- Once the show is running or the tour is out the Site Manager needs to constantly monitor the schedule to ensure it is viable and being adhered to
- A schedule is of little use unless it's widely distributed. Key personnel should have copies, and should be informed of changes and updates.

### Budgeting

The Site Manager is responsible for overseeing total expenditure on an event. This involves agreeing the budget available with the producer or agent, allocation of budgets to different headings. This division should then be written up and will form the basis of expenditure targets for the various departments. When drawing up a budget it is vital that:

- The figures add up and that any excess of expenditure over income is identified and understood.
- Budgets should be written up clearly with expenditure grouped into types rather than each individual expense being listed.
- All expenditure should be accounted for, as should any income.
- Income and expenditure should be listed on separate sheets.
- Times of income & expenditure should be analysed to create a cash-flow forecast.
- Brutal honesty is required when drawing up and allocating budgets. Always keep things as tight as possible, overestimate costs rather than underestimate.
- Always allow a contingency of at least 5% for unexpected circumstances.
- Once on tour accurate budget updates should be made after every show, or at least once a week to calculate how expenditure is balancing with income.

Large events will often have a specialist accountant to look after all aspects of finance.

## Documentation

A certain amount of documentation will be produced by a production. This will fall into several categories.

- Firstly, there will be a file containing all the **legal information** and forms, including Insurance Certificates, Policy Statements, Risk Assessments, fireproofing certificates, public entertainment license documents and so on. This folder should be kept safely in the Site Office and should not be available for general use. It should be available upon request from Local Authority, Police and HSE inspectors.
- More general but important documentation such as budgets, contracts, tender bids schedules etc. are commercially sensitive and should be kept securely.
- Minutes of site meetings and other relevant staff meetings should be kept and filed.
- Promoters and event managers will expect to see final budgets & reconciliation's. These can only be done if accurate records are kept throughout the process.
- A petty cash book should be kept, and money only paid out when receipts are presented with the relevant budget indicated.
- A daily log of income and expenditure should be kept once the production is running, or the show is out on tour.
- A final set of accounts should be presented along with a brief analysis of the production and how it progressed.

## Accountability

- Although the key figure in the production process the Site Manager is not a law unto themselves. They are accountable to:
  - The production company or promoter who has put up the finance
  - Most importantly the Site Manager is accountable in Law for the actions of their staff and subcontractors. Sloppy work on the part of a crew member could lead to an accident, but the Site Manager might find themselves in court for not training personnel, or informing them of correct procedure.

## Technical Understanding

The Site Manager should be thoroughly familiar with all technical aspects of event. They should understand the terminology and the processes involved, although not necessarily the minutiae of every operation.

- The Site Manager is responsible for drawing up a full technical rider for the event and so must have a thorough grasp of all technical issues relating to the event.
- Often the Site Manager will be in the role of assessing contracts and tenders for technical services, they should understand the contents of such contracts, or at least be aware of the limits of their knowledge so specialists might be brought in to advise.
- During the build process it may be necessary to chivvy people along or make shortcuts, or chop out unnecessary expenditure. It is only with a good underpinning knowledge that the Site Manager can tackle staff and contractors on these issues.
- A thorough knowledge of how the law relates to technical aspects of production is crucial. The Site Manager really should be familiar with regulations regarding employment, temporary structures, electricity at work, manual handling, weather, plant operation, traffic and waste disposal regulations.

They should understand the risks and dangers to which workers and contractors are exposed and takes “all steps practicable” to eliminate them.

### Authority Liaison

It is up to the Site Manager to ensure that the criteria for Entertainment Licenses and any other certificate required by the production are met. They must

- Liaise with Local Authority, Police, Fire, Ambulance and HSE officers to ensure they are satisfied with the progress of the event.
- The Site Manager must be proactive in making contact with authorities and in seeking their suggestions, requirements and ultimate approval.
- Compliance must be ensured with all criteria set by Licensing Authorities etc. It's no good just agreeing with everything they ask for - you must make sure such requests are acted upon.
- All certificates, Risk Assessments and legal documents must be made available upon request by Local Authority or HSE inspecting officers