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# Knowledge Management in the Voluntary Sector: A Focus on Sharing Project Knowhow and Expertise[i]


## Abstract

Voluntary sector organisations are operated principally by volunteers who are not obliged to share their knowledge, as might be expected in a for profit company, with a greater consequent loss of knowledge should individuals leave. This research examines how a volunteer-led organisation, the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA), acquires, stores and shares its project knowledge in the context of event management. Three annual CAMRA festivals of different sizes and maturity were selected to see how volunteers' knowledge is managed in the process of organising their festivals. Key festival officers were interviewed and focus groups, comprising of festival volunteers, were conducted. While the maturity of a festival and its size seemed to influence the ways in which knowledge was managed there were some commonalities between festivals. Evident was a strong master-apprentice model of learning with little formal training or record keeping except, that is, where legislation and accountability in treasury and health and safety functions were necessary. Trust between volunteers and their need to know and to share information appeared to be dependent, in part, on their perception and confidence in the success of the overarching project organisation, and this helped shape volunteers' knowledge sharing practices. Whilst there was evidence of a *laissez-faire* approach to codification and the sharing of knowledge, this was less so when volunteers recognised a genuine lack of knowledge which would hinder the success of their festival. The analysis also highlighted factors related to the sharing of knowledge that, it is suggested, have not been identified in the for-profit sector.



**Keywords:** Knowledge sharing; projects; voluntary sector; case study.


## Introduction

Knowledge and expertise is not always routinely or freely shared amongst colleagues in the workplace, or amongst those who contribute to voluntary sector organisations. If knowledge is not shared then wasteful cycles of re-learning can occur and there could even be significant failures in an organisation. Not sharing knowledge could be a result of organisational members being unaware of each other's skills, being unsure how to tap into specialist knowledge, or where the organisational culture does not promote or support the sharing of knowhow and expertise. Whilst there has been continued and extensive research in the business sector to explore knowledge sharing processes (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Boisot, 1998; Lee, 2001; McDermott and O'Dell, 2001; Small and Sage, 2005; Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005; Lin, 2007;), few studies have examined these processes in the voluntary sector.

The way that knowledge is captured, stored and shared in voluntary sector organisations is of increasing interest as these organisations grow in size and importance to the general economy and to society. Much of the knowledge that volunteers acquire is not codified in any meaningful way and is often held tacitly by them for re-use when the occasion demands; this is particularly the case when, for example, the knowledge relates to a particular specialism such as event

management. For most not-for-profit organisations, successful event management is an important issue, especially when the events have the potential to raise significant funds that support the pursuit of the organisation's core activities. The case study organisation for this project, Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) is no exception: CAMRA's volunteers organise almost 200 festivals across the UK each year in a bid to raise the profile of real ale, to increase membership and to generate surplus funds.

The case study organisation, CAMRA, has around 200 branches across the UK; the majority of them hold a beer festival on a regular basis, mostly annually but some biannually. Besides differences in their size and venue, the festivals vary in a number of other respects. For instance, some festivals have featured for over thirty years in the organisational calendar and some are newcomers. From another perspective, festivals have different identities: some festivals are deemed to be national ones and retain a similar theme each year while others might follow a locally derived theme that is new for each festival. Other differences in the nature of the festivals may be influenced by local factors such as the number of volunteers and the skills that they can offer.

How and why CAMRA's festival committees and festival workers share their knowledge and expertise then is of interest, particularly when such expertise can easily be lost in the non-contractual and complex project environment in which these volunteers operate. So, this study aimed to identify how to effectively manage project knowledge in the context of event management in the voluntary sector. More specifically, this study examined the knowledge sharing practices of volunteers in three CAMRA festivals of varying sizes and maturity.

Given the importance of successful event management in the voluntary sector, the results of this study are not only of interest to the case study organisation, CAMRA, but also indicate how knowledge might be best shared in the wider voluntary sector. In addition, lessons for good knowledge practices can be taken from this study to the commercial sector and to public organisations, in light of the new organisational and management models that are being introduced in contemporary places of work. The growing need to work collaboratively within organisations, to collaborate in inter-organisational projects and to operate effectively in large, global, multi-cultural teams, for example, increases the transferability of lessons from this study.

The next section introduces the literature that formed the foundations of the study while the third section discusses the research methods employed to collect data from three festivals. The focus of the data analysis is on a comparison of each of the roles selected for interview and their experiences of knowledge sharing in relation to their local festival. A thematic approach is taken for structuring the results of the analysis wherein similarities and differences between the three festivals' knowledge sharing practices are presented. Discussion of the study's findings leads to a set of lessons that, if practised, could prompt more effective knowledge sharing in similar settings and beyond; the findings also drew attention to topics to add to a knowledge management research agenda.

**Knowledge management and knowledge sharing in the voluntary sector**

Despite the modest amount of research into knowledge activities in the voluntary sector *per se*,, common issues around knowledge capture, storage and sharing in European not-for-profit organisations (NPOs) are emerging. For example, from a study of four Italian charities, Lettieri *et al*., (2004) noted the absence of neatly structured sources of information and knowledge that would be useful and accessible to its volunteers; rather such knowledge is "…rarely formalised and usable because it is split among different people [and] the fragmentation of knowledge (above all among the several branches of the same NPO) reduces the effectiveness of actions, restricts cost containment and makes difficult cross-fertilization between the individuals involved" (Lettieri *et al.,* 2004, p.17). Hume and Hume (2007, pp.129-140) concurred with the notion of fragmentation of knowledge and also commented on its transient nature, often due to changes in personnel and the high turnover of voluntary staff.

Lettieri *et al* (2004) also found that there was a tendency within NPOs to maintain knowledge at a tacit and individual level even when that knowledge could have been codified. Ragsdell's (2009) study with a Citizens Advice Bureau showed that, indeed, there was an obvious preference for informal interactions, use of notice boards, training sessions and meetings where tacit, rather than explicit and codified, knowledge was freely shared. Nonetheless, the disadvantages of this mode of operation cannot be ignored. Gilmour and Stancliffe (2004, p126) shared evidence from a study of the Voluntary Services Overseas' information management practices and procedures, and concluded that operating with a predominantly tacit focus had "resulted in a culture of localised storage and duplication and inevitable reinvention of the wheel".

Maturity was also seen to impact on an NPO's receptiveness to knowledge management strategies. Lettieri *et al*., (2004, p.28) observed that the more mature an organisation is in its management and its operation, the more likely it will be open to *ad hoc* procedures to knowledge management. Hume and Hume (2007, p131) approached the argument from the point of view of immaturity suggesting that such organisations are often described as being organisationally immature when their capabilities are measured in terms of their business practices, organisational structures, governance, and information communication technologies. If organisations lack these capabilities, they argue, this can hinder both the delivery of services and the introduction of new business tools and practices such as knowledge management.

So, organisational activities that promote a fragmentation of knowledge and a tendency towards maintaining knowledge at a tacit and individual level combined with an organisational immaturity does not sound a promising mix for the management of project knowledge in the voluntary sector. When it is then highlighted that events, such as CAMRA's annual festivals, are managed in a discontinuous environment where project teams of festival volunteers are assembled to achieve a particular outcome and then are disbanded, either to reform

into other festival teams or to lie dormant until the need and willingness arise to reassemble, it is easy to see that there is "the potential to lose or consolidate the knowledge and expertise gained from those projects" (Love *et al*, 2005, pp.xiv-xv).

The amount of knowledge needed to complete a project will, however, vary depending on its complexity and the point from which it starts. How effective any team is, will often depend on the processes of learning and knowledge retention that are incorporated into, and throughout, a project's lifecycle. If old and new knowledge are consequently retained and embedded through organisational and inter-organisational processes as transferrable assets, this can help inform future projects. Without the reuse of existing and new knowledge, project organisations are faced with the prospect of having to re-learn and create new solutions to solve every new problem (Love *et al,* 2005, p.xv) whether in the voluntary sector or not.

**Project management and knowledge management in commercial projects**

While literature related to knowledge management in the voluntary sector is sparse, literature related to managing knowledge in volunteer-led projects is even sparser. However, as projects have become more popular as a means for organisations to respond more quickly and gain competitive advantage, more attention has been paid as to how they manage knowledge. A plethora of work has emerged in the last decade with examples such as Disterer (2002), Leseure and Brookes (2004), Grillitsch *et al* (2007), Hanisch *et al* (2009), Ajmal *et al* (2010) and Gasik (2011) considering benchmarks and factors that influence knowledge practices within and between projects. Discussions of structural, procedural and cultural influences are also being pursued in the wider project literature and informed the design of the empirical research herein. For example, project-based organisations (Hobday, 2000; Thiry and Deguire, 2007) and project management offices (Desouza and Evaristo, 2006) have emerged in the conversations about the organisation of projects. Additionally, improved information and communication technologies have brought about the possibility of effective virtual project team working (Koh and Kim, 2004) and, in tandem, another series of challenges to overcome – with insufficient knowledge transfer being one of them (Reed and Knight, 2010).

In the same way that a variety of structures are used in the organisation of projects, there is a variety of methods and methodologies that might support project management processes. While emphasis is placed on following approaches that are suitable for tackling the changing nature of projects (Collyer and Warren, 2009) project management professionals are respectful of certification - PRINCE2 and PMBoK for instance fall into this category with PRINCE2 being the most used methodology in the UK (Patel, 2009). There is also great respect for internationally recognised methodologies (McHugh and Hogan, 2011). The lack of a competitive element (organisationally and individually) in voluntary sector project management minimises the need for certification of its processes but does not minimise the need to exploit opportunities for effective knowledge management practices that these methods and methodologies might bring.

Finally, Koskinen (2004) identified the project environment to be of critical importance in influencing the type of knowledge management strategies to be adopted to enhance a project outcome. Akin to Koskinen (2004), Hanisch *et al* (2009) noted that there seemed to be a greater level of information and knowledge exchange at the informal, tacit level, when there was a greater degree of specialisation or complexity in a project. However, Hanisch *et al's* (2009) key findings were that cultural factors were the most important determinants of whether knowledge management within and between projects was likely to be successful. Even when information technology systems were in evidence to support knowledge capture these were only really successful if the culture of the organisation promoted their use. But cultural aspects of a project are determined by a host of factors. Contributory factors include the project manager's leadership style (Müller and Turner, 2007; Lloyd-Walker and Walker, 2011), the wider organisational culture (Ajmal and Koskinen, 2008) and the ethical stance (Loo, 2002). These, along with other factors, in turn impact on the behaviours and attitudes within the project including knowledge management practices (Suppiah and Sandhu, 2011) and hence became part of the study discussed herein.

While the literature covering the for-profit sector contributed to the theoretical foundations for this study, there is no escaping the reality that volunteers are liberated from factors such as contracts, career progression and the need for accreditation. Volunteers enter projects with a set of values and motivations that are different from those of paid project team members. This led to the understanding that typical project structures, procedures and cultures evident in projects in for profit organisations may not support knowledge management practices in voluntary sector event management; an understanding that underpinned the empirical data collection.

## Methodology

Given the focus of the study was on individual behaviour with respect to knowledge sharing in three different festivals, , a qualitative, interpretivist approach was adopted; collecting rich information was considered to be key to achieving the study's aim. With this in mind, semi-structured interviews and focus groups were designed and employed. Semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2002) were used with the organising committee where the in-depth views of the different members and their particular areas of expertise and responsibilities could be explored relative to their festival. A collective approach, through focus groups (Morgan, 1997; Morgan and Krueger, 1997), was thought appropriate to gather the views of volunteers since many, it was believed, had extensive experience across a range of tasks. Thus there would be an accumulation of data as participants developed ideas and built on previous contributions. Since participants were all volunteers and not CAMRA employees, considerable flexibility was needed in terms of scheduling contact times and agreeing a meeting place.

### Sample and selection of festivals

Since the CAMRA's festivals vary in size and complexity, they offer the opportunity to examine how these local organisations manage their knowledge and expertise within differing sets of circumstances. A range of general parameters were considered prior to inviting festivals to be a part of the research; some key indicators were:

- Maturity of the festival in terms of number of years established
- Volume of business in terms of number of beers on sale
- Number of volunteers
- Location in terms of the type of venue

A total of 3 festivals were selected – this quantity was in keeping with the scope of the funding while the selection criteria enabled cross comparisons to be made. Table 1 illustrates the range of festivals involved in the research, their complexity, and the potential each has to allow some examination of the different facets of knowledge sharing and management at varying levels of aggregation.

**Table 1 Characteristics of festivals selected**

| Festival | A | B | C |
|---|---|---|---|
| Years established | 33 | 30 | 1 |
| N$^{o}$ volunteers | 1300 | 90 | 25 |
| Type of venue | Open air/tented | Modern building | Historic building |
| | | | |
| N$^{o}$ of beers on sale | 700+ | 80+ | 40+ |

**Interviews**

Participants were chosen whose roles would be representative of generic roles in other voluntary sector organisations involved in event management. This approach increased the possibility of transferability of any lessons learned from the chosen organisation to other voluntary sector organisations. Those chosen for interview from each festival were the Festival Organiser, Treasurer, Health and Safety Officer and Staffing Officer. In the case of the smallest and newest festival, the Staffing Officer was not available so, in total, eleven semi-structured interviews were undertaken.

Semi-structured interview schedules for the committee members were developed from themes identified from the literature and focussed on the roles of individuals. Once the individuals had shared a description of their responsibilities, questions were asked about their festival knowledge and expertise in relation to:

- How the knowledge and expertise had been gained
- How the knowledge and expertise is stored
- With whom and why they shared their knowledge and expertise
- How knowledge and expertise was shared
- Barriers and enablers to sharing knowledge and expertise
- Whether strategies were in place for sharing knowledge and expertise

**Focus groups**

Focus group questions were developed in parallel with the interview schedules - the two sets of questions were very similar but worded and structured to accommodate interview participants as individuals or focus group members. Focus groups of five members were undertaken) and drew from a wide range of volunteers who had assumed different responsibilities at their local festival; facilitating the process for five members meant that group dynamics could be managed so as to ensure that each individual was able to contribute to the same level in keeping with guidelines from a range of authors (Remenyi et al, 2005; Walliman 2006; Webster and Mertova 2007).

In the case of the largest festival, Festival A, participants were drawn from an *ad hoc* group of volunteers who were attending a branch meeting to which the FO had been instrumental in selecting and encouraging volunteers to attend. In the case of the second largest festival, Festival B, participants were drawn from a post festival review meeting; they had accepted an invitation from the Principal Investigator and were selected on the basis of a variety of aspects such as their age, role at the festival and the number of festivals where they had worked as volunteers. Since the volunteer base from Festival C was comparatively small, insufficient volunteers were available to join a focus group.

**Analysis of data**

The semi-structured and focus group interviews were undertaken over a five week period. All interviewees had permitted the recording of their responses, enabling almost-verbatim transcripts to be made. Some consideration was given to transcript analysis using proprietary software, but it was decided to do this on a manual basis since there was a manageable number of transcripts and there was some degree of consensus in the responses. Manual analysis also kept the researchers closer to the data and 'in tune' with the individual meanings of the respondents. Transcripts were therefore analysed using a cross tabular matrix, as shown below in Table 2, where example interview questions and some typical responses by individuals have been summarised.

**Table 2: Example of Analysis of Typical Responses**

| Roles → Questions↓ | Festival Organiser | Treasurer | Staffing Officer | H&S Officer |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| How did you gain your know-how and how long did it take to acquire your expertise? | Learning by doing master-apprentice role. External work experience. Festival committee meetings. No talking to other | Previous experience. Organic process of learning. Asking people. Meetings. External work experience. | Learn by doing. Came as new recruit tried different things out. Asking people. No courses done. External work experience. | By working with others. Master-apprentice. On the job training. Train, practise, observe, approve, licence. External work experience. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | festivals. Past experience as treasurer. Asking people. | | Meetings. | Trust feedback & ask for advice. Taken under their wing. |
| How, when and what know-how and expertise do you share? | Guide on the festival. External work experience. Procedural type knowledge. | External work experience Show by example and observe. | Meetings. Send new person to a veteran. Verbal and email exchanges. Procedural information. Wash up meetings. Social thank you where some know how may be exchanged. Feedback forms introduced - suggestions type box. | Uses verbal communication. H&S issues. Communication board, contact details/phone etc. Induction processes. Bounce things off each other. Festival committees. Through training processes - handling etc onsite. Plans made and emailed around. |
| Why and with whom is know-how shared within the committee, with volunteers or other festivals? | Wash up meetings - review festival. All involved review festival. Learn from festival for next year. Little sharing beyond the meeting. No sharing with other festivals. Share with venue. Share formally with CAMRA. Some minutes taken. | Wash up meetings. All involved review festival. Learn from festival for next year. Minutes from last year's wash up meeting used to prompt actions. Share with other festivals. Worked with other festival. | Exchange info with branch committee. Not aware of knowledge being shared. | Takes notes / will report back. Feedback to CAMRA. Through festival organiser. H&S policy in room. Information sheets on wall. |

Using this method meant all the responses could be seen in a snap shot making differences and similarities relatively easy to identify. Salient themes in relation to the festivals' knowledge management practices are presented in the next section. They are followed through in the penultimate section where their wider implications are discussed and 'lessons learned' emerge.

## Results

As a first step, the analysis shows that, despite the range in parameters of the three festivals with respect to aspects such as size and number of volunteers, there were obvious similarities in some of the ways in which they operated with respect to sharing project knowledge. On the other hand, some differences were evident.

### Master-apprentice model

It was clear that most of the members of organising committees brought relevant expertise from their workplace experiences for the benefit of the festival. Apart from the use of email and social interaction which clearly enabled knowledge transfer and sharing between individuals and with larger groups, 'learning by doing'

approaches were the commonest processes by which this, and other, project knowhow was shared. Such approaches formed part of a strategy to embed knowledge and expertise within festival teams and, more broadly, in the organisation. The model most often used in this process was that of a master-apprentice style, where those who were new to the job worked with, shadowed or were simply shown by those that were experienced in the task, to varying levels depending on its complexity. Once the newcomers (apprentices) become skilled, they are then left to work independently with the opportunity to seek more guidance from the 'master' as necessary. In time, the apprentices become the masters.

**Trust**

In addition to the development of trust that is based on an ability to perform assigned responsibilities ie competence trust, and trust that is based on goodwill and extends beyond a contractual agreement (Green, 2003; Twyman et al, 2008; Ibrahim and Ribbers, 2009; Lui, 2009 and Ko, 2010), it would seem that different types of trust have developed at the three festivals.

*Trust in the management of the event.* There was evidence of an inverse relationship between the degree of certainty that festival success will ensue, and the extent to which knowledge needs to be shared. For example, at Festival B, knowledge and expertise was clearly being shared with those who were new to the task. Conversely, when the Festival Organiser was trying to complete his project plan and task list, there were those who appeared to be "reluctant to share" their knowledge. These volunteers had judged that the sharing of their knowledge was incidental to the process in hand, and perceived thatthe Festival Organiser did not actually need their input. This appeared to be reflected in the non-sharers' view that they can assure the success of the festival by their continued involvement, but would become knowledge sharers if they perceived a genuine need or risk of failure. Thus their high level of confidence in the management of the event suppressed the sharing of their project knowledge.

*Trust in the quality of project knowledge*. Levels of trust in terms of the quality and validity of shared project knowledge were high between volunteers throughout all three festivals. Indeed, recipients rarely questioned or doubted the credibility of the information and knowledge that was being shared with them. While the complexity of the task may have been an important factor in their reaction, other factors such as the lack of a competitive environment can curb processes of enquiry amongst volunteers. If organisations do not actively foster an eagerness to 'do well', complacency can become commonplace. In practice this can mean that there is a ready acceptance of current knowledge that can hinder the search for new knowledge, perpetuate a process of repeating mistakes and prevent the introduction of new, improved ways of working.

**Motivations and rewards**

Although there were occasions when project knowledge was not shared due to a lack of time and awareness of the value of doing so, the motivation for all three

sets of festival volunteers to share knowledge seemed to be based on an eagerness to "do the job well". While all three festivals exhibited pride in a job well done, this seemed to be collectively understood rather than expressed in any open and congratulatory way. Indeed, one Festival Organiser made a comment that the organisation was "too macho" for such expressions and another interviewee suggested that a metaphorical "pat on the back" was quite sufficient.

**Lack of strategies for knowledge sharing**

The final key similarity that arose out of an analysis of the collected data relates to the lack of strategies for knowledge sharing. Despite strategies for storing and codifying project knowledge being limited, it was evident that the greater the accountability for such matters as health and safety and the development of acceptable budgets, the greater the need to have written records. For all three festivals this was the case and all three had information sources which reflected this importance.

**An operation or a project?**

Operations management and project management are two different activities that require different mindsets, a different set of tools and a different structure. In turn, operations and projects encourage different types of knowledge management practices. While festivals are often seen as discrete, one-off events and, consequently managed as projects, it is clear that the annual recurrence of most festivals brings forward the opportunity to treat them as operations. As a result of its size and longevity, Festival A's Officers exhibited a markedly different mindset from the other two festivals. Noticeably this festival was organised on a continuous basis i.e. as an operation. There was a significant interplay between the Festival Officers and their roles in their local branch; to a certain extent their roles seemed to be interchangeable within the two strands i.e. branch and festival responsibilities had become subsumed. Thus there was no clear separation between festival activities and branch activities, and both were ongoing. This was less the case in Festivals B and C where, although there was some overlap in roles, these festivals were more discrete and compartmentalised events i.e. were more akin to projects than operations. The different mindset for the festival led to a different appreciation of post project review meetings which present the opportunity for sharing experiences of the most recent festival and for improving the management of future ones. Hence, they can be a valuable forum for the sharing of project knowledge.

There is evidence (Zedtwitz, 20002; Anbari *et al*, 2008; Williams, 2003 and 2008;) to suggest that post-project reviews are often ignored or overlooked in the urgency to move on from a project. Thus the opportunity to reflect on project activities and generate new learning for future projects is often lost – this was not the case for the case study festivals although they valued post project review meetings differently. Moreover there is evidence to suggest that face to face project review meetings bring greater value than capturing project experiences using information technology (Newell *et al*, 2006) which supports the management of review meetings highlighted in this study. Review meetings, for example, were seen as important to Festival B and a prime opportunity by the smallest festival, C, to

learn from its experience and to circulate a report on its first festival. A reciprocal exchange of knowledge between enthusiastic attendees underpinned a process whereby improvement cycles were instigated and recorded, ready for implementation in future festivals. Hence, project knowledge was readily shared and used. For the largest festival, A, review meetings seemed a less prominent occasion for the exchange of knowledge with colleagues who were on the fringes of the festival organisation. This seems to be a reflection of the size and organisational structure of the festival committee, its maturity and its continuous operation. Festival A's Committee Members seemed to be engaged in a continuous review and improvement cycle that has its roots in the sub-committee structure; when faced with new problems these members seem to innovate and improve their processes to match. These new processes then become the subject of discussion and lobbying by their sponsors and then are agreed, amended or rejected at steering group meetings.

**Festival structure**

The two models of festival organisation i.e. as an operation or as a project, coupled with different festival sizes led to two different repositories of knowledge. Festival A was managed by a steering group whose members then directed the work of sub-committees who carried out the detailed work. It was evident that this led to a more bureaucratic structure where sub-committees became the repositories of detailed knowledge and knowhow, and this was shared through committee intermediaries to volunteers. This was unlike the smaller festivals, B and C, which had single tier structures where Festival Organisers communicated closely with their Officers and directly with volunteers; hence knowhow was spread more openly. This was further aided by the two smaller festivals occupying buildings which had clear physical boundaries that contained the festivals. This arrangement allowed volunteers, organisers and visitors to be in close proximity to each other and facilitated rapid exchanges of information and knowledge when necessary.

**Self-imposed knowledge boundaries**

Festival C recognised and utilised a host of internal and external sources of information and knowledge. In its first year, it engaged with its venue owners and local services such as its council and police in a much more exploratory and open way, when compared to its older counterparts where routines, knowledge and processes had become much more established. Festival C's approach was in marked contrast to Festivals A and B; neither of these festivals tended to receive or exchange new knowledge from external parties.

From an examination of the similarities in knowledge sharing behaviour identified above, it appears that each festival fulfilled some of Reich's (2007, pp.13-15) five broad principles for reducing knowledge based risks in projects. The first three were followed through in all three CAMRA festivals that were studied - (i) create a climate where participants feel trusted and safe and one where there is a shared learning process, (ii) establish a basic level of process and domain knowledge amongst team members, (iii) establish channels that enable the sharing of knowledge which are interactive, easy to activate and effective amongst project team members. Fulfilment of the remaining two principles – (iv) developing a team

memory and (v) reducing knowledge risks - forms one of the strands of discussion in the next section.

**Discussion**

The purpose of the research was to examine how members gain and share know-how and expertise in a voluntary project and to identify the distinct features that the knowledge sharing processes have in such an environment. Appreciating the implications of these features in a wider context enables lessons to be drawn out for knowledge management practice in the voluntary sector and beyond.

The results of this study suggest that the learning process orientation is not an explicit motivator for volunteers; likewise for those in charge of managing it. However, the prevalence of the master-apprentice model suggests that the volunteers have a willingness to 'learn by doing' and an associated willingness to pass on expertise. Research about mentoring (as a synonym for the master-apprentice model) has been couched in the context of knowledge management (Bryant, 2005; Karkoulian *et al*, 2008) with an ongoing debate about the difference in returns from formal and informal mentoring such as that exhibited at the festivals. When there is little focus on succession planning and when time is of the essence in the start up of a project, the criticism levied at the master-apprentice model is that the process of demonstrating a process can be a slow one. Even so, the results confirm the idea that the use of technology for on-line forums and virtual training brings the possibility of mentoring being not simply a process lasting for the duration of a project but ongoing and drawing from experience across a range of projects. (Johnson, 2001; von Krogh, 2002). This leads into a consideration of the storage of such experiences.

While the empirical work illustrated that three of Reich's (2007) principles were followed through in each festival, it was clear that his work was not overtly followed through in relation to the storage of knowledge. Reich (2007) suggests that there should be a collective team memory where lessons learned, ongoing experiences are shared, and where knowledge based risks, notably where the project is vulnerable to the loss of knowledge through the loss of individual team members, are recognised and managed. The need to develop a collective team memory and a strong "team identification" (that Vegt and Bunderson (2005) argue will prompt more knowledge sharing) reaffirms the need to continue to nurture a trusting environment.

Traditionally the literature on the sharing of knowledge between work colleagues has emphasised the need for a degree of mutual trust to aid its free and ready exchange (Nahapiet and Ghosal, 1998; Levin and Cross, 2004;). Voluntary organisations appear not to experience the same sorts of barriers to the sharing of knowledge, since the motivations for sharing knowledge have more to do with making sure that the job is well done, rather than gaining personal financial or competitive advantage. Factors that enable knowledge sharing within project environments are mainly, although not exclusively, related to an organisation's cultural values (e.g. Reich 2007; Taylor and Wright, 2004). From this point of view it

could seem that no barriers to knowledge sharing would exist according to the values of volunteers. However, the outcomes of this research suggest that, in practice, there were two inhibitors to knowledge sharing: one is the lack of awareness of the risks associated with not sharing knowledge; the other is the trust in the management process of the event. The former finding is an indication of the differing perception that volunteers might have about their self-efficacy (Thoits and Hewitt, 2001) compared to employees in for-profit organisations. The latter finding adds weight to the argument to put more attention on the precept of 'unjustified trust' as an inhibitor of knowledge sharing practices, and enhance the scarce body of studies that have identified this barrier (Sondergaard et al, (2007).

Putting aside the barriers to knowledge sharing, the intrinsic motivations of the volunteers to do "the job well" seems to be an enabler to share knowledge. In this respect, there is conflict in the literature regarding rewards for knowledge sharing in profit making organisations (for example, as evidenced by Bartol and Srivastava, 2002; Bock and Kim, 2002; Liebowitz, 2003; Bock *et al,* 2005). Questions arise as to the effectiveness of reward schemes for individuals and for groups and what form any rewards should take. Questions as to whether paid employees should receive any reward for a process that is often perceived as integral to their role, create dilemmas for management. In the case of the voluntary sector, it would be unrealistic to offer rewards that would fully compensate for the time commitment and additional expenditure incurred by volunteers. As the commercial world struggles with issues of motivation and rewards for knowledge sharing, it is not yet (and may never be) on the agenda of the voluntary sector. Nonetheless, this study has triggered questions about the relationship between the intrinsic motivations of volunteers to share knowledge and their motivations and values as a volunteer.

The notion of self-imposed boundaries for sources and recipients of knowledge was another finding from the study. Positioning of these boundaries was a reflection of each festival's need and willingness to engage with external parties in knowledge sharing activities. Lettieri *et al.,* (2004) suggest that, within the non-profit sector, knowledge is generated and shared through four different cycles – this includes sharing from the individual to the organisation, and finally to the broader community. Loosely, this process can be observed in the organisation and running of festivals. Here individuals with particular responsibilities gain knowledge and insight into how to organise their festival, this knowledge is then shared with their fellow Festival Officers and, through filtering processes, is shared with those that volunteer to work at the festival, and potentially to the broader festival community. However, to what extent each festival recognises internal and external sources and receivers of knowledge, and the frequency with which knowledge is refreshed, varies. Each festival imposes different boundaries in Lettieri et *al'*s (2004) cycles – whether this is done consciously or sub-consciously, conceptually or physically, there is some merit in managing the positioning of boundaries and their level of permeability for the benefit of the event.

Finally, the level of detail of discussion changes and an overview perspective is adopted as attention turns to the matter of strategy. It is apparent that there is a

host of knowledge management strategies that an organisation might adopt and guidance may be needed in selecting an appropriate one (Earl, 2001); with such a range available it would seem that the dominant *laissez faire* approach that each festival takes to codifying knowledge (and thus aid its sharing) could easily be improved upon. However, the voluntary status of the festival workers needs to be recalled and while Festival Officers may resemble senior project managers, their attitude to knowledge sharing may not have the same effect as in large enterprises (Lin and Lee (2004). The distribution of power in a voluntary sector organisation differs from private and public sector organisations and Festival Officers do not have the position power (Kakabadse *et al*, 1988, p217) that senior managers do.

Furthermore, in the absence of a typical business infrastructure, with no job descriptions, incentive schemes or formal missions and visions for a festival, it is difficult to introduce a documented knowledge sharing strategy (Soliman and Spooner, 2000; Spencer, 2003; Mei *et al*, 2004) that aligns with 'business objectives' and 'project goals'. This does not mean, however, that a knowledge sharing strategy could not be tailored for events management in the voluntary sector for, after all, the ethos of a volunteer-led project would seem to align with that of a knowledge culture (Oliver and Kandadi, 2006).

**Conclusions**

Examination of the three CAMRA festivals showed that there were differences in the way that they were organised and how they acquired, shared and stored their knowledge. This was partly reflected in the age and size of the festival, and, it is argued, the risks of success or failure associated with organising a festival. It is recognised that these events are planned, managed, and run by willing and enthusiastic volunteers who give their time and energies freely for little more than the satisfaction they have done something well and contributed to something that is enjoyable and worthwhile. Perhaps it is these factors that have brought forth some interesting insights that have not drawn attention in the profit making sector. For example, the use of the master-apprentice model was emphasised as a way of sharing knowledge and best practice in all festivals and, as yet, this has not been so obvious in the business project knowledge management literature so far. Additionally, the new forms of trust that were evident in the case study organisation – there was an acknowledgement of 'trust in the process' and 'trust in the quality of knowledge' - are very important issues that require more investigation, since they act as important inhibitors and enablers of knowledge sharing, especially in a sector where there is a transient 'workforce'. The former firmly influenced the knowledge sharing behaviour of the volunteers with levels of knowledge sharing reducing as confidence in the overall progress of the festival increased; there was a reciprocal relationship. The latter form of trust impacted on behaviour too, in a way that might suppress enquiry and creative thinking. Finally, in addition to CAMRA contributing to the ongoing discussion about incentives and rewards for knowledge sharing by confirming the complexity and challenges of developing such a strategy, it has drawn attention to the notion of self-imposed boundaries for knowledge sharing and the need to manage their position and permeability.

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