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# SERVICE FIRST



Above: Guidance by stewards at the stands.

Main picture, top: Amsterdam Arena during an Ajax match.

*Carel Breen, Manager  
of Crowd Services at  
Amsterdam Arena, and  
Gijs de Jong, Consultant  
for Amsterdam Arena  
Advisory, discuss the  
importance and the  
possibilities of Integrated  
Crowd Management for  
large-scale public events.*

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**A** stadium holding 50,000 visitors is comparable to a small city. All the facilities needed for a total service package have to be present. Since its inauguration the Amsterdam ArenA has provided this with the development of a new integrated Crowd Management Model. This concept has shown its worth during the last five years at some 300 events including Ajax Football Club matches, Michael Jackson and Rolling Stones concerts, the Champions League Final, Euro 2000 (European Soccer Championships) and the World Bowl 2001.

The Crowd Management model, including the knowledge and experience gained, has recently become available as a consultancy product from Amsterdam ArenA Advisory. In this article we will be looking at why a new concept was necessary, what it entails and how the concept can be applied to other locations or events.

### Cause and Effect

Towards the end of the 1980s it became clear that football vandalism was a structural problem. Repressive actions were unsuccessful and problems within the stadiums were often difficult to control. The stadiums were all too often old and dilapidated.

Around these old stadiums was a limited infrastructure, not particularly encouraging to visitors. Parking was limited and difficult to get to and public transport was utterly inadequate.

There were few facilities in the stadiums, and those that did exist were often of poor quality, the toilet facilities were dirty and there were only a few catering outlets, again mostly in a pitiful state. The technical provisions and facilities were hopeless, and there were outdated entrances, no electronic control systems and only limited camera control.

The organisation both in and outside the stadium functioned badly and on the whole inadequately. A large proportion of the work was carried out by the grace of volunteers. A clearly defined working practice was lacking, noticeably in the field of safety.

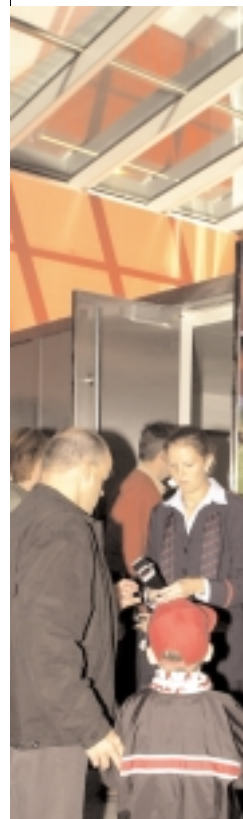
What all of the above added up to was that people tended to avoid stadiums and it became clear there was a vicious circle. Drastic measures were necessary to prevent the whole industry from going under.

As the word 'drastic' suggests, there were no simple one-answer solutions to these problems. Changes in the field of the building/infrastructure, as well as in the sphere of the organisation and technical facilities were indispensable. This led to a number of directions in which solutions were being sought, including:

- ◆ **Venue managers/owners began thinking differently about sports as experienced by visitors. Visitors were now seen as guests who had to be provided with proper facilities and welcomed with decent service.**
- ◆ **A different concept evolved for the development of stadiums. This came from the idea that the challenge lies in providing visitors with optimal service and comfort.**
- ◆ **Crowd Management as a concept needed to be recognised and named as such. Crowd Management is a distinct discipline within the whole, not a budgetary closure.**
- ◆ **Within Crowd Management three distinct pillars were defined; Safety, Security and Service. Each of these on their own needed attention but particularly in combination with each other as a whole.**
- ◆ **Crowd Management needed to become an integral part of the management of the stadium (or club).**
- ◆ **The organisation of the stadium needed to air professionalism. Not only fixed staff but also the temporary employees needed to be educated and trained to high-quality standards.**
- ◆ **Modern technical facilities needed to be applied and monitored.**
- ◆ **Research amongst the visitors showed that a sense of well being and feeling safe were by far the most important.** ▶

*“As far as facilities and security go, ideally we should hold the World Bowl final in the Amsterdam ArenA every year...”*

Mr. Ahlerich, Senior Director of Security of the NFL.



*Electronic access control at the main entrance.*



*Left: Ticket control at the Royal Box.*

*Below left: Business guests receiving their vouchers.*

## SERVICE FIRST

*“This is the concept for the future.  
Really the only correct way for the  
development of the business of  
professional soccer...”*

Mr. Timmer, Manager of Safety and Security  
for the Dutch Soccer Association.



- ◆ ***Unwelcome factors needed to be addressed thoroughly and decisive action subsequently taken to discard them. The resistance capability of the organisation needed to be all-encompassing.***

### Crowd Management Evolution

Crowd Management is the integrated care for safety, comfort, service and customer-care given the following three pillars; Safety, Security and Service. This needs to be assured through a clearly defined event-directed and professional methodology.

“From buying a ticket to returning home satisfied” – that is the crux of the integral concept, influencing all levels of the process. Starting with the moment at which an event goes on sale right until a visitor comes back home and closes the door behind him/herself. Everything happening in between contributes towards the experience of the event.

Although there are a few hazy areas in between said pillars, the following are the main points of concentration for each aspect:

**SAFETY:** Fire prevention, control of public flows, compartmentalising.

**SERVICE:** Service provision, hospitality, mobility, catering, providing directions.

**SECURITY:** Shielding vital areas, dealing with hooligans, risk management.

The responsibility of all these aspects within the walls of the stadium lies with the stadium (or club) management. Externally the responsibility and stakes are immensely complex and lie with various governmental or federal agencies. So that this wouldn't influence the effectiveness or the quality of the organisation, a pragmatic approach towards any given chain of events was decided upon. The methodology is as mentioned above and any potential hurdles are dealt with and solved as they arise in well-structured dialogue and interchange of ideas. As far as

*Right and below right: Technical equipment used in the implementation of Health and Safety controls.*



these matters are concerned the stadium (or club) consistently functions as the central participant within the whole.

The approach is very much event-driven. A Backstreet Boys' concert for instance differs quite substantially from a Bon Jovi concert, a soccer game or a dance party. However, although each event is unique, the project-based approach is universal. Each step is specifically run through and completed, from the initiation phase to after-care. So as to be able to optimally manage the whole process, the following control-factors are utilised; time, money, quality, information and organisation.

The elements which contribute towards this whole process (in addition to the management) are; the building, the technical facilities and the infrastructure. Furthermore, it is vitally important to keep up with technological advances and apply them where ever possible.

### Reality and Results

As mentioned, Management presupposes a pragmatic approach to a given chain of events. Arrangements are made on a weekly basis with all the relevant parties; the police, medical and emergency services, the fire department, the council, the parking authorities, local transport authorities and public (national) transport authorities.

Some of these organisations are represented in the command centre during events. Responsibility lies with the stadium and event-organiser although the support services can provide the necessary help as and when required.

The concept of control is as follows. The stewards function as hosts – they control at entrances, they do checks, they provide directions and information and they stand on the lookout and are led by the head-stewards who are in direct contact with the command centre. If they are initially unable to solve the problem, or if it is of a physical nature, they are able to call up private security guards.

Should they be unable to deal with the problem, only then will the police be called up for assistance. An unambiguous

chain of command, clear segregation of tasks and procedures, which everyone is familiar with, are all of vital importance. Through well-targeted recruitment strategies, tuition programs of the highest-quality and regular training sessions, a flexible and decisive organisation can be created. The approach, as dealt with in phases, comes to light through the preparation of a number of procedures for each and every event. These can be summarised as follows:

**TICKETING SCENARIO:** Dealing with the sale of tickets.

**EVENT SCRIPT:** Short summary addressing arrangements for all the following areas; commercial, stadium facilities, productions, and safety.

**EMPLOYEE ROSTERING:** Validated schedules based on each specific sector describing employee requirements of stewards, medical stewards and private security guards.

**APPROACH TOWARDS PUBLIC:** Description of the way in which you want to be perceived and approach the public of a specific event.

**EVACUATION STRATEGY:** Specific for each event and based on visitor numbers and stadium sectors.

**DISASTER STRATEGY:** Mostly standard and based on the risks associated with each specific event.

**MOBILITY STRATEGY:** Based on visitor profiles and expected choices of transportation.

**EVALUATION REPORT:** Account of the inflow, details of incidents and corresponding action undertaken as well as a description of the evaluation of weekly meetings.

The two singularly most important technical instruments used in the field of Crowd Management are the electronic entrance-system and the camera systems.

Electronic entrance-control now utilises (unique) barcode control – GSM, cellular-based and smart-card technology will play increasingly important roles herein. Besides being an airtight control system it also presents service applications; easier access to tickets, combining purchases from catering and merchandising and the like. The system provides detailed management information in the areas of visitor numbers per sector, where and when the purchase takes place, being able to analyse no-shows. All this can be incorporated in order to be able to make the best use of limited resources such as catering and security personnel.

Camera observation is essential for the Crowd Management model. Not just in the sense of maintaining order but particularly as regards to service and safety. Continuous monitoring of crowd-flow and possible 'hot-spots', especially so during concerts, is vital in maintaining safety and preventing hitches. Furthermore, it adds to the general sense of safety and well being amongst both employees and visitors. The use of digital recording equipment ensures that a wealth of footage is available and thus a great deal more options for post-incident analysis.

The integrated Crowd Management concept is a model, which can provide comprehensive answers, based on a methodology of eminent quality, to all the questions concerning safety within stadiums. In this article the concept has been illustrated and the real-life experience and knowledge gained thereof, confirms its success. By identifying all the potential success and failure arguments it is possible to apply this model to other stadiums or other large-scale events.

The bottom-line will always be that of guaranteeing safety and comfort so that the stadium will continue to appeal to visitors and businesses. ■

*Should you be interested in any additional information regarding the Integrated Crowd Management Model or Amsterdam ArenA Advisory, then please contact them by email at: [advisory@amsterdamarena.nl](mailto:advisory@amsterdamarena.nl)*