The Young Professional Winter 2014 Edition
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Are you a young parks and recreation professional attending NRPA's Legislative Forum from March 25-26? We would like to hear about your experience! Email, Facebook, or Tweet us!
Greetings from the NRPA Young Professional Network,

On behalf of the Young Professional Network, I am proud to present this edition of “The YP.” This publication, like so much of what happens in the YPN, wouldn’t be possible without the hard work of many dedicated people. Some of these are members of the YPN, and some are our colleagues from other parts of NPRA. I hope that you will take the time to show your appreciation for their contributions of time and talent to this edition.

Speaking of “thank you’s” I want to thank all of the committee members and others who helped make the YPN activities at Congress in Houston a great success. From the leadership team members who attended the NRPA Board of Directors meeting on Monday morning, to those who came to the retreat Monday evening, participated in Take a Student/YP to Lunch, manned the Career Center, and attended the social on Thursday evening, you made sure that the YPN was well represented and added value to the Congress experience. A special thanks goes to Karen Lussier and Jennifer Jones, who co-chaired the Congress Week committee.

The next major events on our calendar are the submission of NRPA awards and the Legislative Forum. Please consider nominating someone for the Robert W. Crawford Outstanding Young Professional Award, the Young Professional Fellowships, Diversity Scholarships, and Student Scholarships. There are lots of deserving young professionals in NRPA, and we can only recognize them if you help nominate them! More information is available on www.nrpa.org/awards.

One of the benefits of the Young Professional Fellowships and the Diversity Scholarships is free registration and travel funds for the Legislative Forum, held each March. I look forward to seeing all the award recipients in D.C.!

I also encourage as many of you as possible to join us for this important event. This is a critical time for many Federal programs that help fund parks & recreation initiatives and opportunities. Your presence may just be what is needed to make a big difference! Please begin using the #Voice4ParksNRec hashtag on social media. Be sure to monitor it during the Legislative Forum to keep up with what’s happening if you can’t make it in person.

Thanks for all you do for NRPA and the communities you serve. If there is anything that I, or the YPN leadership team, can do for you, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank You,
Christian D. Moore
2013-2014 YPN Chair
The American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) educational organization created in 1980 by fifty founding members. The Academy was formed to:
- Advance knowledge related to the administration of parks, recreation and conservation,
- Encourage scholarly efforts by both practitioners and educators that would enhance the practice of park and recreation administration,
- Promote broader public understanding of the importance of parks, recreation and conservation to the public good,
- Conduct research, public scholarly papers, and sponsor seminars related to the advancement of park and recreation administration, and
- Provide services either directly, indirectly or in partnership, that advance the profession.

Membership in the Academy is made up of park and recreation practitioners and educators who have served for at least fifteen years, either in a high level of administration in parks, recreation, and conservation or as a recognized educator in the field. Members must have demonstrated leadership contributing to the advancement of these fields and be willing to participate in Academy projects. Membership is limited to 125 practicing professionals at any one time, of which not more than 25% may be educators.

One very important project of the Academy is the Young Professional Externship Program, which enables outstanding young professionals 35 years of age and younger in the parks and recreation field to interact with and learn from Academy members, and other individuals who attend the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Congress and its associated meetings. Currently, up to four (4) Externs are selected each year, two (2) of which are Ernest T. Atwell diversity externships.

Selected externs each receive 1) reimbursement for “early-bird” NRPA Congress registration; 2) up to a $750 scholarship to help cover conference expenses and travel, if the participant’s home department cannot cover costs or can only cover a portion of the costs; and 3) a ticket for the Academy’s annual dinner. Externs are paired with Academy members who serve as mentors during the NRPA Congress. They may attend selected NRPA Congress meetings, socials and educational sessions with their mentors or on their own. Mentors help introduce Externs to their contacts and widen the young professionals’ networks. After Congress, Externs must write a brief evaluation report. In 2013, the Young Professional Externship Program attracted 31 applicants.
Minimum Eligibility Criteria:
1. Age 35 years or younger, with a degree in parks and recreation or a related field.
2. At least three (3) years of full-time experience in the parks and recreation field, academia or in a related field.
3. Current position of at least the “specialist” or “coordinator” level with responsibility for program planning, administration, or supervision; or “doctoral student”.
4. Involvement with state, regional and/or national park and recreation associations/societies, and related field organizations.
5. Professional certification is preferred e.g. Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP) or CTRS or be a certified/registered professional under an approved certification/credentialing program.
6. Previous Academy Externs are not eligible.

This year’s Externs were another outstanding group of young professionals who had a rewarding experience at the NRPA Congress in Houston, Texas in October. The Academy’s Young Professional Externs for the 2013 NRPA Congress in Houston were:

Kathy Capps
Grants and Risk Manager, Raleigh Parks and Recreation Department, North Carolina

Kayode Lewis
Recreation Coordinator II, City of Greenbelt Recreation Department, Maryland

Stacy Schwelkhart
Division Manager, Programs & Special Projects, Kettering Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department, Ohio

James Worsley
Director, Columbus Parks and Recreation Department, Georgia

Information for the 2014 Young Professional Externship Program will out next spring. Check the AAPRA website at www.aapra.org. If you need additional information about the Academy’s Young Professional Externship program, please contact Robert Armistead, Externship Committee Chair, at robert.armistead@co.travis.tx.us or (512) 854-9831.
In a bad economy, college students and recent college graduates need to try everything they can to land a job or internship. One often-overlooked resource is the world of professional associations. For students and young professionals looking for employment in the competitive park and recreation industry, association membership should be a MUST. These organizations exist to support, educate and provide resources for students and professionals in a particular industry or profession.

Some are really small and others are as huge as corporations. Some are full of young members and others could use some fresh faces. Some are super active and some only meet occasionally.

**Do Your Homework**
This means you have to do your research (check out the American Society of Association Executives, the professional association for associations) and ask your professors or your supervisor which associations they think are worthwhile. Note that professional association memberships can be expensive, so always ask for student or young professional rates when you join.

Note, the National Recreation and Park Association provides very affordable student and professional membership rates. What can a professional association such as the National Recreation and Park Association do for you? Here are some suggestions:

"Professionalize" your resume. Membership in a professional association is a seal of approval in many fields. It shows that you understand the importance of professional networking and you’re an invested member of the career field you'd like to join.

Membership also allows you to "graduate" from looking like a student on your resume to looking like a professional (think of the different message it sends to list membership in the Recreation Management Club at your school versus membership in the National Recreation and Park Association, the leading association in that field).
Make networking easier. It can be weird and scary to reach out to strangers and ask for help with your job search. As a member of a professional association, that difficulty is eased through events where networking is actively encouraged.

Many associations also offer formal mentoring programs, social media groups, Facebook pages, listserv and job boards to facilitate member networking. The National Recreation and Park Association provide all of this, and MUCH, MUCH, more!

Will established professional association members want to network with students and recent grads? According to Certified Association Executive Matthew D’Uva, the answer is an emphatic yes.

"Fellow association members are usually happy to help students in their ranks," says D’Uva, who is president of SOCAP (Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals) International. "I encourage proactivity. If you know what you want to do, call the organization and say, 'I've just joined and I'd like to find a mentor or volunteer to serve on a committee.' Lots of organizations also have membership directories.

If you use the directory to reach out to someone, identify yourself as a fellow member and have clear questions, and although I would not directly job hunt that way, but if you legitimately want to learn more about the profession and do informational interviews, people will be happy to offer some advice. Use the organization name as a way to open a door.

Increase industry knowledge. One of my biggest recommendations to job seekers is to learn as much as you can about the industries and companies you want to join. Professional associations can help you do this. They provide access to exclusive industry publications, databases of company information, news about legislative issues affecting the field and salary studies that help you discover the compensation and benefits you might expect from certain jobs. When you join an association, be sure to subscribe to all of its online and offline publications and news alerts to be fully informed.

Steven J. Thompson, CPRP is the CEO of the Wisconsin Park & Recreation Association (WPRA). He may be reached at sthompson@wpraweb.org.
Using Humor in Marketing

By: Tatiana V. Chalkidou

Do you enjoy laughing? Guess what: so do your customers, clients, or whoever your organization serves. It is important that parks and recreation organizations, need to understand that people are bombarded with social media campaigns through posts on popular social networks, tweets, videos and more on a daily basis. That nearly guarantees that any marketing effort designed to evoke fun will become even harder especially towards capturing your audience’s attention which makes it seem as though humor has become less important as a marketing tool.

However, humor establishes rapport and most people love to laugh. It is well known that non-offensive jokes can easily establish likeability and trust. Likewise, relationships are often built on experiences of shared humor. People do business with organizations that are likeable. For example, if customers smile and laugh every time they think about your organization, they will associate that business with happiness. Combined with knowledge, humor enhances expertise, demonstrating confidence and strength. Secondly, humor triggers memorable moments. Often times humorous advertisements are remembered because they create a fond memory in the minds of various audience members. We frequently remember jokes that were shared during childhood, and we can still recall them in our memory due to simple humorous words.

Last but not least, humor creates alignment, mostly based upon shared experience. Humor works well when there is communal understanding of the issues at hand. By identifying a common problem and creating a punch-line around it, insiders will adopt the punch-line as a trigger representing the issue. However, all humorous marketing campaigns face risks as well, mostly the risk of failing flat. In avoiding this risk, here are some things to remember:

#1 – Do your homework.
People do not like the same jokes. In fact, different kinds of humor are appealing to different demographics, such as age, gender, and other. For example, it is found that male individuals prefer more edgy humor while their female counterparts prefer off-beat jokes, especially those that do not resort to mean-spiritedness. With that in mind, and knowing that no organization ever aims in offending or annoying their potential customers, you should consider doing your homework. That means, conduct your own research to determine the target group you want to reach and the best ways to tickle their funny bones.
#2 – Connect funny message to organization.
We have all seen ads that have made us laugh, and the next moment we have already forgotten about the ad. So, keep in mind that despite making people laugh via a funny ad, the ad is in fact ineffective if the audience forgets who it was that made them laugh. Therefore, remember to keep your jokes related to your organization by making sure that the part that is most memorable also reinforces your message.

#3- Don't Try Too Hard.
Have you ever seen ads that gave you the impression of hard efforts to make you laugh? Truth to be told, some marketers try too hard to make funny ads. Word of wisdom: if it’s too hard to be funny, maybe you should consider a different approach to your marketing campaign, or just find a new marketer.

#4- Hire a Professional.
If humor does not come natural among your organization’s staff who are responsible for the marketing campaign, make sure you hire a professional to take care of that. Professionals have experience with what works and what does not, and also are able to conduct tests to ensure timing is right and the overall message is conveyed properly. When done properly, it can also challenge the perception that users have for the service you provide. When done properly, it will create a buzz. Remember the little Darth Vader of the VW ad, during Super Ball? The Force was a TV ad which was created to promote the Volkswagen's Passat. It’s been two and a half years since its release date and I still remember the ad and laugh about it.

Humor can make your organization look desperate or mean if it is poorly done. Very few will give you some credits for even trying to become “humorous”. However, when done properly humorous campaigns may be marketing gold.

**Tatiana V. Chalkidou, Ph.D.** is adjunct faculty in the School of Business at the American College of Greece. She may be reached at tchalkidou@acg.edu
Are there certain brands you buy just because of their name or how they are portrayed? Have you bought an Apple product within the past 5 years? What makes Google and Disney some of the best places to work?

Continuity is defined as an uninterrupted connection. So how do you achieve that within an agency and how does this relate to branding? Continuity begins with your employees. The second you walk in the door, on your first day, you are an employee agreeing to adhere to and display that agency's brand and culture.

So let's start off with branding. Who is [insert your agency's name]? What do they stand for? How are they perceived by the public? Who are their competitors? What is your product's personality?

Your brand is more than just your logo. It's a name, the perception is displays, and it identifies your goods or services. Creating this brand identity should be done before you spend any money on advertising or marketing. It's the number one focus in any marketing department. It not only helps spread the word and repetition of who you are as an agency, but it ties everything the agency does together. In order to achieve brand continuity, you have to ensure the public knows who you are.

Your brand should be on everything you do. From the attire your staff wears (are they in uniform with a logo?) to the marketing collateral you send to the public. Staff uniform standards help the public know who is an employee and who isn't. They know who they need to go to should they have a question or need assistance. It's an easy visual of who you are.

When is the last time you reviewed your marketing collateral? This includes the brochure, flyers, et cetera that you send out, and also the letters, surveys, receipts - anything you send to your customers or hits the public. Is your logo on everything in a similar position? Do you use the same color scheme throughout? Without uniform branding, your marketing collateral may be undoing all of your good marketing and pr. Yearly goals should be made to improve upon branding inconsistencies, as this will support everything else you do.
Tying directly into an agency's brand is their culture. Culture is a department-wide commitment, as it affects and reflects on every aspect of an organization. It starts with YOU and ends with US. Defining values display who you are, how you treat each other and your customers, how you communicate, et cetera. It includes everyone's role and how they are critical to the success of an agency. Within culture, clear expectations are communicated to the employees and an atmosphere of stability, productivity, and efficiency is created. When someone believes in a brand, when they feel a sense of ownership, that is when employee loyalty is established and a brand has an advantage over its competitor.

Continuity extends beyond just the internal workings and the employees. Customers and their loyalty to your brand is another major focus. It is your responsibility at an agency to attract the right customers, get them in to buy, buy often, buy value added, and spread positive word of mouth to their friends and family. It's important to build your customer's loyalty by keeping in contact with them frequently, treating them well, showing them that you care and listen, and creating rewarding and memorable experiences for them to share in years to come. A few ways to help increase this loyalty is by sending a branded, monthly eNewsletter, speaking to customers directly through social media, responding to their comment cards, and stopping them and asking how they are doing today.

Continuity occurs across multiple departments within an agency. By keeping the focus on TEAM and not self, you are on your way to creating a memorable brand and respected culture with integrity that will help in leading to continuity throughout your agency.

Lindsay Labas is the Marketing Manager for Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation and may be reached at llabas@carmelclayparks.com

Follow the Young Professional Network on Twitter! @YoungProf_NRPA
Most of us in the field of park and recreation management started somewhere on the front line. For me, it was cleaning shower houses and bathrooms at a local state park. For you, it may have been working as a lifeguard, interpreter, sales clerk, or adventure guide. My guess is that most people who get into this great profession do so to serve as that link between people and their leisure time activity of choice.

At some point in our career we strive for or are pushed into the role of overseeing multiple programs, at which time we relinquish direct involvement with an individual operation, along with its staff and customers. This new challenge requires a completely different skill set than the one used in the old job. I have a few tips for a successful conversion based on my own experience.

The Worker Knows How the Work is Done
Now that you are responsible for the supervision of multiple operation managers, there is temptation to direct them to do things the way you would because that’s what you know works. Instead, you need to trust your managers while holding them accountable for their performance. You may be supervising an area that you have no direct experience with. In this case it is critical to maintain your level of self-confidence, which can be difficult when you supervise someone who knows far more about the resource being managed than you do. Getting in there and working on the ground with your managers can go a long way in building relationships.

You want to show that you are willing to work with them and learn what they do, but guard against becoming an obstacle for them or being perceived as a “know-it-all”. It is your responsibility to continually communicate your organization’s values and goals and ensure that your subordinates understand them while leveraging their expertise in directly managing resources.

If you are lucky you will oversee seasoned professionals who need little guidance. Some employees, regardless of time in service, will need corrective action to some degree. When these cases arise, it is up to you to engage your agency’s system of personnel improvement. You should never feel intimidated into ignoring the inadequate performance of a subordinate.
Take Care of Yourself
Your new role may find you in the office a lot. With an increase in pay and responsibility comes a decrease in the amount of time spent in direct contact with your resources. The loss of the calorie burning activity of a front line job requires you to make up for it by finding time to exercise. People are more effective in their jobs when they maintain reasonable levels of physical fitness. One of the best side effects of staying fit is a decrease in moodiness and temper flares, which makes you more likely to stay on an even keel in the eyes of your team members.

Practicing healthy habits also rubs off on those around you, laying the way for a happier, more effective work force. Even if you buy into the importance of daily exercise, the hardest part is finding time to do it. It is important enough to your success as a leader for you to dedicate a section of your day for it. Along with physical fitness go healthy eating, positive social activity, spiritual fitness, family unity, and other elements that are important in maintaining a complete and happy individual. A balanced person is more effective in all aspects of life. Recognizing this is one thing, but acting upon it takes effort and separates good professionals from great ones.

Who are you trying to impress?
What is hard work? There are reasons why your chain of command selected you for this new role and the work ethic you are perceived to possess likely played a significant part in that decision. However, now you will be judged far more on your results than the sweat it took you to produce them.

There are different forms of work required to be an effective leader, manager and supervisor. For example, building the trust of your team members is critical and can only be accomplished over periods of time and experiences shared together. Stepping away from your desk to visit staff in the field is important. To some it may seem that the simple act of visiting equates to idleness, but it is actually an effective strategy in building rapport with those who you rely on to make your job easier. With the acceptance of your new job title it becomes important think of “work” as having multiple dimensions, with physical effort exerted or a daily output that’s tangible being only part of it.

Thinking is doing
“What is more important, efficiency or creativity?” This is a question that I’ve been asked in multiple job interviews. My answer is always that creativity is more important because creative thinking brings about the most efficient solutions. Direct focus on efficiency for efficiency’s sake often leads to inferior results, in my opinion.
Creativity comes about by thinking, and everyone thinks differently. This is where it becomes very important to know yourself and how and when you do your best thinking. You must be confident enough to put yourself in an environment that allows you to do your best thinking when it’s time to be creative. Whether it’s playing basketball, sitting in a dark room with music on or leaning against a tree in a nearby park, you must get your creative juices flowing. Once the ideas start pouring in, it’s important to capture them using a voice recorder, computer, or good old fashioned pen and paper.

In summary, it’s critical for anyone moving from front line service to oversight of multiple operations to recognize the new role being played and the adjustments required for successful performance. It’s a matter of thinking differently about yourself and others as you take the reins to new responsibilities.

Matt Enoch, MPA, CPRP, is a young professional and graduate of Kansas State University with a B.S. in Park Resource Management and a M.P.A. Matt serves with the Fort Riley, Kansas Community Recreation Division. He is currently the Armed Forces Recreation Network Vice Chair, Department of Defense representative to the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies, and military representative to the NRPA Congress Program Committee. Matt may be reached at matthew.m.enoch.naf@mail.mil.

Call For Articles
The Young Professional

The Young Professional is currently accepting submissions for publication. “The YP” as it has become known, publishes current, original, and stimulating articles related to parks, recreation, leisure, sports, and associated professional areas. Articles range from opinion pieces, research briefs, case studies, best practices, creative pieces, and general necessary information (among others) for young professionals and students. For more information or to submit an article for consideration, please contact the editor at michael.bradley@eku.edu.
The City of Fairfax is in the heart of Northern Virginia, just 20 minutes from our nation’s capital. It is surrounded by Fairfax County, but it is a six square mile, completely independent jurisdiction. The city has a unique small town feel within a hugely growing populated area. The City of Fairfax Parks and Recreation Department strives to enhance the quality of life in the community by planning, administering and operating a variety of leisure time activities for the enjoyment of citizens of all ages. Their goal is to continue to strengthen their residential base and sense of community through programs such as outreach meetings, celebrations, and commemorations of significant events. Forbes Magazine has ranked the City of Fairfax number 3 on its list of top 25 places to live in the United States.

The City of Fairfax has a population of about 22,000 people and consists of 24 parks that offer a place to connect with nature, to play sports, to gather with friends and families and to just have fun. The Parks Division of the City of Fairfax maintains all the City parks, trails, athletic fields, and open spaces. They have four synthetic turf fields, 16 playgrounds, 12 baseball fields, 14 tennis courts, three recreational buildings, community garden, a skate park and an outdoor amphitheater and a total operating budget of almost four million dollars. City of Fairfax boosts 21.8 miles of trail systems, which create the arteries that connect the neighborhoods and parks forming the heart of our community. There is a park within a half mile, no matter where you are in the city. With a thriving population that now has 190 different dialects surrounding the region and prominent Asian and Hispanic communities, the parks are as diverse as our people.

In 2011, the City built a new recreation facility with a five million dollar donation from a family from the city, named the Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center. This beautiful new facility hosts hundreds of cultural arts programs, events and camps. It also operates as a rental venue with a five thousand square foot ballroom hosting weddings, parties, workshops and more. The city has another recreation facility, Green Acres Center, which is home to the “Young at Heart” senior center with over 2,000 members in addition to programming for youth and adults. The senior center is growing and thriving with 14% of the City’s population being senior citizens. The City of Fairfax rents out two additional facilities which are historic sites, Old Town Hall and Blenheim Interpretive Center.
Unique programming includes Jedi Engineering with Lego Camp, Xbox Programming Camp, Chess and Robotics Camp, Tales to Learn Spanish, Chemistry Camp, Hula Hoop Fitness, Clock Repair Class, Skateboard Camp, Nomad Camp with trips each day to locations such as Hershey Park, Baltimore Aquarium and more. More than a 1,000 campers enroll in the City of Fairfax Programs each summer.

The City of Fairfax prides itself on a small-town feel, but the festivals and events are indeed world-class. The 45 year old Independence Day Celebration is the largest in the region and 60,000 people flock to the City of Fairfax for the parade and evening show, accentuated with one of the largest and most spectacular firework displays in the area. Other events include the Fall Festival, Holiday Craft Show, Festival of Lights and Carols, Trails Day, Chocolate Lovers Festival, Father/Daughter Dance, Mother/Son Campout, Egg Hunt and more. Like the people and amenities, these events are full of diversity and create amazing experiences for all of the residents.

‘Legacy for Fairfax’ Fund was developed in 2011 and is a unique way to contribute to the development and enhancement of the City of Fairfax. The Legacy Fund is a special revenue fund account broken into two donation categories; Sherwood Legacy Fund for the Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center and Parks Legacy Fund for general parks donations. Goals of the Legacy program are community involvement, participation in the community, and helping the City of Fairfax provide much needed parks and amenities for all, while keeping a reasonable tax base. Contributions ensure healthy facilities and park system with a focus on beautifying the community and maintaining sound environmental practices. A Legacy Golf Tournament is held each year at the Army/Navy Golf Club to help support the fund.
The City of Fairfax is in Class V (population 25,000 and under) for the NRPA Gold Medal and was selected as the winner for this prestigious award in 2011. The Gold Medal Award honors communities throughout the United States that demonstrate excellence in long-range planning, resource management, volunteerism, environmental stewardship, program development, professional development and agency recognition.

Each agency is judged on its ability to address the needs of those it serves, through the collective energies of citizens, staff and elected officials. A panel of five parks and recreation professionals reviews and judges all application materials. The City of Fairfax Parks and Recreation is very honored and proud to have received this very honorable award.

In October of 2012, City Council approved funding and directed the Park and Recreation Advisory Board and City Staff to develop a Phase One of a Strategic Master Plan for Parks, Recreation, Trails, Open Space, Events and Cultural Activities. The goal is to start the process of providing a more balanced and sustainable parks system. The first phase of the Strategic Master Plan was a great success thanks to the help of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, the Steering Committee, City Staff, and the tremendous citizen’s involvement in both the Public Workshops and with the online portion at www.ourparksourfuture.com. There have been four Public Workshops and twenty one Stakeholder Meetings. Phase Two of the Strategic Master Plan is the immediate follow up to Phase One and the completion of the Strategic Plan. Phase two deliverables would be, funding and budget analysis, capital project review, ordinance and policy review, user fee and program analysis, levels of service guidelines, action plan and more.

Ultimately, the City of Fairfax always strives to become an even better place to live, work and provide the community with “Amazing Experiences.”

For more information about City of Fairfax Parks and Recreation, you may contact Karen Lussier at karen.lussier@fairfaxva.gov
The Parks and Recreation Profession has faced significant adversity in the form of substantial budget cuts due to the economic downturn over the course of the past two years. What is happening on Wall Street, in Detroit and Silicon Valley has a substantial impact on the provision of parks and recreation services. Around the country agencies are facing or have undergone budget cuts that range from five to 30 percent.

Just a few years ago many departments were launching new projects such as community centers, sports field complexes and family aquatic centers, but the tide has changed. The economic outlook for the next few years is not promising; however there are methods in which to manage this Ruthian challenge and still provide the much needed services to our residents and community members.

Many professionals are viewing this downturn as a burden to effectively perform at optimal levels; however it affords an opportunity to refocus our efforts into revising our operations and allowing the profession to emerge from the downturn stronger than ever. Five key management techniques can be used as methods to manage this challenge which include: identifying your core services, managing leakage, auditing expenditures, establishing a cost recovery system, and establishing various operational and business planning documents. While there are a myriad of other techniques that can be used these best practices will assist your operation in providing a logical and rational direction for optimum performance.

Over the course of time, a department’s service delivery system naturally expands. While a department may have a mission statement that includes the following verbiage “to provide diverse year-round leisure opportunities through the preservation of open space, park settings, recreational facilities and programs for the citizens”, many have realized mission creep. Creep is where a department has a broader scope than originally intended or planned. While a Council or Board may have created this creep, often times it is created by staff seizing opportunities on the fringes of their mission. With this creep, financial, human and natural resources are extracted away from the core services. Working with your Board or Council and community is paramount to realign services. This will allow Department to be focused on providing core services at the highest level with the remaining dollars.
Senator Everett Dirkson stated “A billion here, a billion there, and pretty soon you're talking real money”. While Parks and Recreation Departments does not deal with billions, they are managing hundreds and thousands which still equates to real money. In times of severe belt tightening, reflecting on a term used in other fields is appropriate. Leakage is described as an unwanted loss or leak of something (i.e. money, time, other valuable resource) which escapes from its proper location. As a leader in your agency, an assessment of how resources are used and where they are not used wisely or to the fullest must be audited.

For example, agencies found phone lines with no phones attached, contracted services that they were being billed for and no longer receiving, and a failure to collect certain fees (i.e., late, transfer, additional services). Fixing the leaking faucet of lost revenue and expenditures will assist your ability to remain competitive, focused and will add up to real money!

While fixing the faucet is important it is imperative agencies control cost to a greater degree. In these times, raising fees and generating new revenue will be difficult at best as Boards and Councils will not want to deal with the negative publicity. In addition, community members have had to reduce their discretionary funds and apply these funds to basic necessities. While it might be the best practice to adjust fees to market rates or create new fees for services that never existed, the public will have a hard time swallowing these increases without an agency auditing all expense line items to examine for efficiencies.

A thorough audit would include, at minimum, the investigation of: supply cost, utilities, repair and maintenance, efficiency of staff, the need for staff, and the detailed analysis of the cost to produce a service. This exercise cannot be limited to recreation or parks, aquatics, or community centers. It needs to be done agency wide to reduce turf wars and to realize maximize benefits.

Every department has “dead weight” in some of the services offered to the public such as underperforming programs, programs that are not used, but need support or services that are mandated by a Council without a defined need. These programs extract valuable resources from other services. One method to manage this situation is to establish, through your Board or Council, a cost recovery system. A cost recovery system is a detailed examination of what programs should recover the cost to produce the service. Cost recovery, in this instance, is defined as the revenues divided by the overall operational cost. Some agencies will vary on the need for including direct (instructor cost, t-shirt cost) and in-direct costs (overhead, copies, utilities, etc); however it is best to include all cost attributed to the program to have a thorough understanding of the financial impact (revenue and expenses) a program has on the agency.
Goals for programs meeting various needs (community, individual, community/individual) will have different cost recovery goals. If a program is not meeting the specific cost recovery goals then it should be omitted. This level of examination will reveal an abundance of “dead weight” holding an agency down from being as responsible as it can with its allocated resources.

Three questions from the foundation of a business and operational plan: Where are we now? Where do we want to be? How are we going to get there? Unfortunately many parks and recreation agencies fail to utilize this tool to its fullest potential. “Fail to plan, plan to fail” is a famous old military saying, and it is still true today. A business plan should be seen as an important management tool by all levels of department staff.

The plan should contain an inventory of programs/services, a marketplace demographics study and a competitive analysis. From this audit various fiscal, operational and marketing objectives can be developed. Parks and Recreation agencies offer many services that are businesses such as summer camps, tennis programs, swim lessons, adult sports, and environmental education. Each can use its own plan to chart its growth and development. Failure to have these documents in place demonstrates a lack of forethought providing a Council or Board the opportunity to cut. Finally, after the creation of these plans, they must be operationalized and be regularly updated to ensure that the planning process is continuous.

The National Bureau of Economic Research reported that the United States has been in a recession since December 2007 based on a number of measures including job losses, and declines in personal income. The economy directly impacts our community members as they face difficulties at home and at work. Using the tips and techniques described will allow an agency to be focused on balancing their budget in these hard times and providing the services that our community members need more than ever.

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Join the Young Professional Network on Facebook!
www.facebook.com/groups/nrpastudentyoungprofessionals
Okay, congratulations are in order. You’ve been elected to the Thompson Park & Recreation Board & Commission. You now have a tremendous responsibility to serve, and to serve well. You’ll be working regularly with a group of professionals at the peak of their careers, making decisions that will have a direct impact on the park and recreation department’s future direction, its staff, and the community residents it serves. There are many advantages to board work, but the focus of this article will be on four reasons why you should approach your new duties with enthusiasm.

First—it will change how you think about leadership. At their day jobs, board and commission members aren’t typically having to be strategic thinkers…to think down the road about the internal and external factors that will affect their organization as a whole. But as you grow into your role on the board and commission, you’ll gather insights from other members, as well as from board training that will assist you in how you think about the future in both concrete and abstract ways. Your knowledge will benefit both the park and recreation agency you serve and the one you work for. Soon enough, you’ll contribute to the board, rather than simply just voting on issues.

You need to make that experience happen. If board meetings do not set aside time for strategic discussion, request that time. Without it, a disservice is being done to board members and the park and recreation agency. You will not hone your skills and the agency will not be using their board and commission members’ knowledge effectively.

Second—it will change how you think about diversity. Diversity should be a key component of any board. Diversity of thought allows you to share your perspective and to face challenges that may affect community resident participation. If you feel passionate about something, take advantage of the opportunity to share it with the other board members and agency staff.

Other types of diversity are important as well, but diversity of thought is a great equalizer. The best board and commissions make the time for all kinds of ideas, and you have a responsibility to voice them. No one can take your thoughts away from you, but you have to learn to express them in order to be heard and to gain respect from fellow board members. Don’t lose your voice just to fit in…that is not the reason you were elected.
Third—it will change the way you think about park and recreation agencies. A park and recreation agency’s past in many ways is just as important as its future. Be just as enthusiastic about learning why decisions were made as you are about the decision you make today. You will not always be in agreement with those previous decisions, but don’t confuse enthusiasm with wanting to make changes, just for the sake of making change.

You should never leave a board meeting without learning something new about the agency, yourself, or one of your fellow board members. This will build your confidence and connection to your fellow board members, not to mention the agency you serve. You will be amazed at what you have in common with the other board members.

Fourth—it will change how you think about service. Chances are you have risen up the ladder of volunteer leadership. Perhaps you were a committee member or committee chair before someone convinced you to run for a board and commission seat. Maybe you participated in leadership training and were identified as a future organization leader. However you got here and wherever it takes you, don’t lose your perspective on the needs of the community residents and the agency staff.

Don’t become the person you talked about at the annual meeting when you said, “The board and commission is their own club, and they don’t really understand the needs of the residents.” If you are successful in keeping your perspective you’ll look back on your board and commission service with a special appreciation for the agency and work you accomplished.

Be sure to share your perspective with individuals outside of the board. Many traditional members don’t understand, or care much about what goes on behind the scenes until it affects them directly. When it does, they will want to know the who, what, when, where, and why of it. If you and other board members are spreading the good word about the work of the board, it will benefit the community and let you be seen as open and welcoming.

Of course, there will be some challenging days and meetings, but you can sustain your passion if you realize that service on your park and recreation board and commission is about the work of the agency, not your personal ideology. You are now a leader who leads with enthusiasm!

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Active programming is vital to improving quality-of-life among seniors 65 years or older experiencing normative age-associated physical and psychological changes. Creating the proper active program and prescription is important for the older adult population due to individual differences such as functional independence and general well-being (Christmas & Andersen, 2000). Therefore, in determining an active program that is appropriate for seniors, one should be aware of the functional independence and abilities of the seniors involved.

Once a recreation based activity program is designed, an individualized plan should be created for each older adult. Typically, I have participants meet with a programmer two to four times weekly for a session ranging between thirty to sixty minutes because it is not too exhausting and keeps participant focus. Ferrini and Ferrini (2000) identified active participation in the form of exercise as having a positive association with a variety of psychological variables. The specific psychological effects of exercise vary, but often include reduced stress levels, enhanced self-concept, and protection of cognitive performance (Evans, 1999).

**Potential Psychological Benefits**

One potential psychological effect of exercise is the reduction of reported stress levels by seniors (Cox, 2002). Active participation in recreation programs has often been associated with the reduction of stress in all age groups which has been shown to enhance one’s quality of life (Evans, 1999; Ferrini & Ferrini, 2000; Administration on Aging, 2005). Exercise, performed at low intensity for short periods of time, has been found to be as effective for lowering participant’s stress levels as meditation and relaxation (Ferrini & Ferrini, 2000).

Another psychological area that can benefit from exercise participation is self-concept or how a person feels about themselves (Krawczynski & Olszeweskit, 2000). Self-concept has widely been utilized as an indicator of quality of life. I and other researchers have discovered that seniors who exercise can create a positive self-concept by creating a positive influence on their sense of personal control. Although many seniors feel a loss of control over their independence and functional ability as they age, seniors who exercise on a regular basis facility report a greater sense of autonomy regarding their individual physical abilities.
The use of exercise with individuals over the age of 65 has been linked to delaying cognitive declines associated with aging. My research has identified areas of psychological benefits that can be affected by exercise to include memory, recognition, logical reasoning and independent thought.

**Health Benefits of Active Participation Study**
Participants selected among a long-term care population were asked to participate in a 12-week active recreation program. A loop tied elastic band and chair of normal height was utilized to facilitate active programming in the form of exercise routines that targeted key muscle groups in the primary use of the biceps, triceps and deltoid muscles through a full range of motion. Upper extremity exercises were utilized with elastic exercise bands with a loop tied at one end to facilitate better grip for proper exercise performance. A demonstration of the prescribed exercise is vital prior to all exercises by a trained exercise expert to ensure safety. Participants performed one set of 8 to 12 repetitions for seven exercises.

All participants chose from the three lowest resistance band levels and started with the one they were most comfortable with. Participants were encouraged to progress to the next level band once they are able to complete the one set of 8 to 12 repetitions for the previous band on a consistent basis. The exercise plan involved slow repetitions to emphasize safety during the concentric (muscle shortens) and eccentric (muscle lengthens) phases of movement. For example, participants were allowed 3 to 5 minutes of rest between sets before starting the next exercise. It was recommended that the bands be distributed in a 24-inch increment in length since it is the equivalent to different pounds of pull (see Best-Martini & Botenhagen- DiGenova, 2003) for specific measurements.

Seniors who began exercising improved their cardiovascular functioning, increased maximum consumption of oxygen, decreased blood pressure, lowered resting heart rates, decreased body weight, improved lean body mass, and increased bone density, which also lead to the lowering of perceived depressive symptoms (Tapps, Passmore, Lindenmeier, & Bishop, 2013).

**Future Recommendations/Issues**
Awareness of health benefits of active programming seems to be an issue when related to seniors because of the two leading causes of inactivity being arthritis and hypertension(Ferrini & Ferrini, 2000). We plan to increase awareness of the importance of regular participation in active participation programs to families and residents.
I suggest promoting awareness through regular columns in the monthly newsletters and inclusion of the potential benefits in information and marketing brochures provided by the facilities providing active programs. At the conclusion of each program, the results are presented to the directors, board members, and all staff members to keep them informed on the needs of seniors Practitioners need to be made aware of the changing trends in potential active programs that are appropriate for seniors. Seniors should receive programs with the primary focus of improving quality of life.

References

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Are you at that “mid-life crisis point” in your career? If you are, here are offer some strategies to put a spark in your step as you climb the career ladder to where you would like your career to go.

1. Can you see what you really want.
Do you want more money, or the opportunity to work in a larger park and recreation agency? You need to focus on exactly what you want. Then, motivate yourself to get it by vividly imagining what can be -- if you make the necessary changes. To aid with this visualization, try creating a personal motivation statement -- a powerful phrase that is meaningful to you and helps you to stay on track -- and reciting it whenever you feel like slacking off or are tempted to avoid the behaviors that will lead to greater success.

The first step to changing behavior is to make the future more salient, plausible and compelling. For example, someone who has the goal to get a raise may have a personal motivation statement similar to the following: I would like to see myself as a talented contributor. I'd like to increase my income so I can purchase a new vehicle. I'd like to have the respect and admiration of the people at our park and recreation agency.

It also can be worthwhile to visualize a default future, a scenario of what is likely to be if you don't change your work habits. Imagining another average performance review or the feeling you get in the pit of your stomach when a co-worker gets the job you were eyeing can provide the incentive you need to act.

2. Take needed time for a professional development tune-up.
Wishing is one thing; action is another. Identify the skills you need to progress in your career. Take webinars, classes and seminars accordingly, and read books to expand your expertise. Making yourself more knowledgeable and relevant can open up new opportunities and renew your passion and give others a more favorable impression of your abilities and commitment.
Remember your mother worrying about who you hung out with in high school? The company you keep in the workplace can likewise have a negative influence. Distance yourself from the agency slackers. The bad attitudes and habits that are keeping you back are likely being enabled, tolerated or encouraged by others. Instead, evoke positive peer pressure by surrounding yourself with hard-working colleagues who share your career goals.

4. Find a knowledgeable and trusted mentor.
A good mentor is encouraging, but also honest enough to tell you where you need to improve. He/she can help you navigate career development opportunities within the organization and point out things you may not see. *Contact the WPRA Office if you want to find out who the respected mentors are in our industry.*

5. Put some money in “harms-way”.
Sure, everyone has been motivated by a carrot on a stick at one time or another. But here’s a spin that adds some punch: Set aside a bit of money each week. If you reach a short-term goal, such as turning in a report on time, you can purchase a reward. If you fall short, however, the cash gets donated to a political party you oppose. Ouch.

6. Control your work environment.
In all honesty, won’t you be more likely to proofread the report you brought home if you don't try to do it in the same room as your big-screen television? Make productive habits easier by enlisting the power of your surroundings. If you set your schedule back 15 minutes each time you walk past the employee kitchen area, reroute your trips. If you’re positioned near a gathering place such as the mailboxes, request a transfer to a less social location. And whether you're at home or at work, turn off electronic interruptions whenever possible.

Likewise, use your environment to prompt and inspire. An up-to-date calendar, a prioritized to-do list and organized files can greatly increase efficiency and feelings of competency. And don't forget subtle reminders that can keep you on task. A motivational message as a screensaver or a picture of the vacation spot you want to visit when you get a raise can be just what you need to choose productivity over surfing the Internet.

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There are so many tools that parks and recreation professionals can use to get the public engaged. The challenge is finding the right tool that works for your organization. Staying on top of the latest trends and finding the right technology or social media tool for your agency is an ongoing challenge. However, choosing the right medium for your message to reach an optimum audience and then keep them engaged isn’t always easy.

Has your organization ever jumped in on a trend and tried to implement a new technology or app just because everyone else was? Was implementation successful or was it a failure?

Depending on how you use it, QR codes may be one of the technologies that “gets the best” of your organization. We are going to take a look at the QR code so you can decide for yourself whether or not your organization should be utilizing them within your parks and recreation programs and facilities.

But first, let's take a step back and discuss: What is a QR code? For those that do not have a Smartphone or have any idea what a QR code is, "QR" is short for Quick Response and is basically a printed barcode/hyperlink, that when scanned with your Smartphone takes you to a webpage for more information.

You will need a QR-reader downloaded to your Smartphone (Apple and Android have yet to have these pre-installed) in order to read the code. Visit your app store and download an app such as QR Scanner. Once installed, you are ready to scan your first QR code.

People tend to ignore QR Codes for three reasons: (1) they either don't know what the weird black and white image is; (2) they don't care to find out any more information about what is being promoted, or; (3) while it stands for quick response, the amount of time it takes people to get out their phones, scan the code, and get to the targeted information, they have already lost interest.

Now that you at least know what a QR code is, let’s discuss what you should and shouldn't do with them. Below is a list of helpful things to consider before using a QR code within your marketing pieces.
Tips For QR Codes: Do This..

Use them to help build a connection between the physical world and the virtual world. Place a QR code on your business card. When scanned, your contact information will go directly into the other person's contact list.

Use them effectively depending on the goal you are trying to achieve. Is it meant to drive traffic to your website for more information, is it meant to go straight to your program registration link, or link to video content?

In print, space is limited for your design, content, and call-to-action. Providing a QR code allows you to bring your audience to a mobile optimized landing page on your website to gather additional information or to take an action. We place QR codes on our print employment advertisements. The QR code, when scanned, takes our customers to the online application form so they can apply directly.

Use them to cut back on the amount of paper you utilize. We utilize QR codes on fitness class schedules so we don't have to print 100 copies every week. The QR code is utilized to cut back on these printing costs and encourage our customers to scan the laminated copy at the facility desk. This allows our customers to have the schedule readily available on their phone when they need it.

Create an incentive for when people scan them. Give them a reason to put the time and effort into scanning the code. Provide discounts/coupons to your programs. Link to an online forum where customers can share their experiences.

Tips For QR Codes: Do Not Do This..

Assume that everyone has a QR code scanner app or that they know how to use it. Half of the U.S. population owns a Smartphone. 42.8 percent of Smartphone users are between 18 to 34 years of age, while 6.3 percent are 13-17-year-olds. But, only 19 percent of Smartphone users have ever scanned a QR code.

Have a QR Code that targets a broken link. Be sure to double check that the QR code you generated is targeting an actual link/page on your website, and the correct page at that. Remember the schedule I talked about above? Our first attempt didn't go so well. We had the QR code; however, when scanned, it was targeting a broken link. We distributed the laminated copy of the schedule, but didn't double-check to make sure that the QR link was actually operational and correct.

Place the QR code in an inconspicuous location. For instance, don't have it too high that your customer can't scan it, don't place it on a moving vehicle or spinning advertisement, or in a place where your customers won't have cell reception. Forget to train your staff and the public on what a QR code is and how it is utilized; otherwise, your efforts may be a missed opportunity.

With the ever-changing technologies and tools available, it's up to you to utilize the best mechanism to engage your public. In this case, just be sure that the effort required by your customers is worth the value of what they are finding after scanning the QR code.

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Adventure can be defined with using activities (specific activities, high adventure, and wilderness) and the philosophical use of adventure (Itin, 2001). Adventure therapy may be described as using outdoor education and recreational activities in a therapeutic way, usually with adolescents and in a wilderness setting (Williams, 2000). Adventure therapy uses adventure activities as a means for change in a person’s (usually clinical) life. There is usually the use of metaphors, narratives, and isomorphic to help clients generalize their adventure experience to their “real-world” experiences.

After adventure experiences, there is a time of debriefing and the clients discuss the process of generalizing the effects into the real world. Debriefing involves the goals and objectives of the therapy related to the activity, the client keeping the abstinent behaviors, and if the client is an abuser, helping to increase the clients’ resistance (Itin, 2001). Gillis and Gass (2003) define adventure therapy as “an active and experiential approach to group psychotherapy, utilizing and activity base and employing real and/or perceived risk as clinically significant agents to bring about desired change (p.42).”

Locations of adventure therapy can be a challenge course, wilderness, and/or residential setting (Itin, 2001). The therapy is usually conducted in a wilderness setting (Magle-Haberek et al.). The wilderness location helps increase awareness of the environment, use all senses, and reflect on experiences (Shanahan et al, 2009). Adventure therapy programs can be educational and enriching in nature, part of a treatment group, or primary therapy (Itin, 2001). Adventure therapy uses specific activities (games, initiative, trust), high adventure (rock climbing, white water), and wilderness (backpacking, canoeing, etc.) (Itin, 2001). The activities are useful to bring about change in group work (Gillis & Gass, 2003).

Gillis and Gass (2003) comment that the “meaning through insights that are expressed verbally, nonverbally, or unconsciously lead to behavioral change. This is experienced by introductions prior to the experience (p.42).” This means that the way the activity is introduced is important in adventure therapy. Throughout the therapy there is usually the use of narratives and metaphors to help generalize the activities used in adventure therapy.
Gillis (1998) talks about the importance of using narratives as symbolism for the purpose of generalization, meaning clients can use skills they learn in adventure therapy to actual life. The use of metaphors in adventure therapy is an important aspect to help the adventure experience to carry over to the clients’ home/reality.

Debriefing is after the adventure/activity and it is making connections between adventure and clients’ lives. The facilitator takes a more active role which makes them more approachable then typical therapist (Gillis & Gass, 2003). The participation in a group is an important aspect with adventure therapy was another finding with the study.

One of the main aspects of adventure therapy is to help change an existing situation in the participant’s life. When referencing effectiveness of a program, level of change in an individual is the measurable outcome. The domains of change can refer to physical (weight loss), behavior, emotional, mental (increase intellectual), etc. The level of change is directed at change of behavior, affect, and/or cognition. In regards to behavior, adventure therapy wants to decrease negative behaviors and increase the positive behaviors (Itin, 2001).

Change can occur on both concrete and meta-levels (unconscious) (Itin, 2001). Gillis and Gass (2003) said that adventure therapy can help participants have meaning through the insights gather through adventure therapy and help lead to behavior change. The introduction, metaphors, narratives, and debriefing are important in helping change a client (Gillis & Gass, 2003).

Adventure therapy is a new type of intervention and has limited research. This research will be focused looking at different programs, various participants in adventure therapy, and the impacts in different domains. Researchers should investigate current trends in adventure therapy and help give direction to the future of adventure therapy through findings.

Future research should look into the leader training and style, the activities utilized, type of facilitation, order of activities, and time spent processing (Carson & Gillis, 1994). There is also a need to specifically define adventure therapy (Gillis & Thomsen, 1995). Niell (2003) recommends to breakdown specific outcomes in categories and benchmark them for particular programs. Larrivéeiere et al. (2012) suggest a research studies with larger sample sizes and longer adventure therapy experiences.

Future research should be given to understanding specific information about participant. The reason is to be able to match a particular participant with a particular program (Carson & Gillis, 1994). It would be helpful to have a large population and include race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Magle-Haberek et al, 2012).
References


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In the past 20 years, leadership has been a topic of much debate and inquiry due to social and economic conditions that have faced the provision of leisure services. Leisure service organizations have seen their workforce reduced, are having to do "more with less", and have an increased role in non-mission related activities (23). In response to this situation an abundance of information has been disseminated through professional and popular literature, conference presentations, and in-service seminars about the concept of leadership. Although, there is a wealth of information on the topic, the concept is still often misunderstood by leaders of the leisure service delivery system. The general difficulty with the term and concepts behind leadership is not new to the profession.

Rodney and Toalson (46, p. 86.) wrote that leadership "is a popular word that is surrounded by myths and misconceptions". The purpose of this article is to provide the leader techniques in which they can improve their individual and organizations leadership. "Redesigning leadership structures, processes and capabilities is not easy, but can result in significant benefits through greater organizational alignment and focus on key strategic goals" (47, p. 19).

The information presented is significant because there is a general shortage of leaders, and it is forecasted that when those individuals who are currently being trained and developed, will not be prepared to lead when called upon (57). By utilizing techniques, which are supported through research and practice, current and future leaders will be more prepared to affect personal and organizational improvement.

The leisure service delivery system are recreation and related organizations that share the broad responsibility for the provision of recreation, park, leisure, and sport programs, services and facilities for the public at large (33). Within this system there are three classifications in the delivery system: public- governmental operated, non-profit, and commercial (60). Recreation and leisure services are delivered through ten sponsoring organizations: governmental (federal, state, municipal, tribal), non profit community organizations, commercial recreation businesses, employee service and recreation programs, armed forces moral welfare and recreation, private membership organizations, campus recreation program, therapeutic recreations services, sports management organizations, tourism and hospitality industry (33). Within the leisure delivery system, leaders have a variety of key leadership responsibilities.
The responsibilities include: maintaining positive relations with other community recreation providers, establishing a consistent set of rules for the staff and community, spokesperson for recreation, high level of commitment to the profession, facilitating communication about management philosophy, training staff, developing performance objectives, and responding to changing social conditions (34). Although these responsibilities are essential in carrying out the vital mission and goals of the leisure organizations, individual and organizational improvement is not highlighted as a key responsibility. Therefore, it is necessary that leadership and how it relates to overall improvement in the leisure service organization be examined.

**SELF-IMPROVEMENT** Individuals who choose to develop through a variety of self-improvement exercises and activities can be called a leader. Those who do not strive or realize the importance of self-improvement have not taken the first step towards individual and organization effectiveness, nor leadership. A leader who does not consistently update their knowledge and skills will realize their skills depreciate (32). Self improvement cannot be viewed as a once a year occurrence; it has to be committed to on a daily basis. The real test of a leader is to maintain the level of performance when an individual is bored or frustrated (1) by the work situation and environment. Even during these times it is critical that the leader focus on self-improvement. Wellins and Byham (57), report that support for successful organizational practices, such as self-improvement, must come from the top. Leaders need to "champion leadership development" (57). Regardless of the type of organization, the leader is a role model for the behavior of those in their charge (10).

The leisure service leader must continually develop themselves and not rest on past achievements. When past successes are relied on as a method of leadership, the individual may fall into disrespect with their staff, organization, and patrons. Effective leaders love to learn and are driven to make a difference (24). When the leader is focused on continual development of their skills and abilities, the seed for personal and organizational improvement is planted. Self-improvement cannot be a one-time investment, but is a continuous act (25). One method in which a leader can make a commitment to self-improvement and development is to construct an individual professional development plan. An individual professional development plan is a system that allows employees to set development goals in conjunction with an organization's needs.
One of the more recent movements that has spread across many Fortune 500 companies is to improve leadership abilities through personal coaching. Personal coaching involves building a one-on-one relationship with a coach or psychotherapist. The coach allows the leader to identify elements in the organizational environment that are being neglecting. Due to the hectic nature of business, often times this coaching can be facilitated over the internet through electronic mail (8). One final self-improvement method is called self-quieting. Self-quieting involves spending 15 to 20 minutes relaxing and directing energies inward. This allows the leader to cut away from the stressful work realm and focus on relaxation (58). If the leader relaxes, new energy is created which will allows the leader to more effectively guide the organization towards its goals and objectives. Through the use of these techniques and the leader demonstrates a commitment to improvement to their followers.

MODELING AND BENCHMARKING
As part of the reflective nature of self-improvement, a leader can look to the concepts of modeling and benchmarking as methods of improving their individual and organization leadership. Benchmarking is defined by Kraus and Curtis (34, p. 44) as "the continuous process of measuring products, services, and practices, against an organizations strongest competitor to those recognized as industry leaders." Benchmarking can also be accomplished through replicating practices that have been already successful within the company (7). By either definition, the emphasis is to analyze the best practices in business and industry and to incorporate them into daily practice. When the best practices are incorporated, the leisure service organization will realize improved programs and services.

When conducting a benchmark assessment for a leisure service organization there are several areas in which to research. "A quality evaluation of a service should begin by identifying the targets of quality evaluations- breaking down the service into smaller discrete and distinct elements and assessing the targets in terms of consumer and human service components" (13, p. 1). Included in the development plan are educational and training needs required to meeting goals that are set up in the plan (30). These educational and training needs may be partially meet be attending annual state, regional and national conferences, conducting presentations, reading professional literature, and/or staying on top of current trends (5).

Some common program and administration elements that span across the leisure service delivery system can include: marketing techniques, facility operation, aquatic program management, recruitment and retention practices of clients, employees or volunteers, and quality assurance methods.
Once the processes have been identified and improved through using benchmarking, the leader has given the organization a new operational paradigm. The leader must expect that this paradigm be adhered to, and give the tools necessary to carry out the new operational structure (47).

When looking internally to benchmark the leader should first examine their human relation skills. These skills can include understanding group dynamics, facilitating cooperation, trust building, communication practices, motivation techniques, and conflict resolution (28). These skills are important to benchmark due to the fact that they are critical in establishing relationships between the leader and follower. Other skills to benchmark are the leaders technical skills (programming and management techniques) and conceptual skills (critical thinking and problem solving) (28).

In order to incorporate the attributes that have made others successful, the leader should examine top performers in their segment of the leisure service delivery system, as well as those across the system and in non-related fields. Public parks and recreation leaders should not only examine fellow public recreation professionals, but also examine models of success in the fields of armed forces, tourism, sports management and commercial recreation. Although benchmarking is a very popular method of improvement for both the leader and organization, the fast pace of the current marketplace makes copying an example a high-risk strategy (39).

What is being currently being done at one organization is a result of months and years of research. By the time, the benchmarking organization implements the adapted system; the marketplace will most likely have changed. It is therefore imperative that benchmarking be used as a component of individual and organizational improvement.

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND POWER  Power is defined at the "latent ability to influence others actions, thoughts or emotions. It is the potential to get people to do things they way you want them done" (40, p. 379). Leaders in leisure service organizations need to recognize that there are many different types of leader power that are used in leader-follower relationships.

French and Raven (22) were among the first to identify the types and constructs of power and their relationship to organizational behavior. They identified five bases of power that include: reward, coercive, legitimate, referent and expert. There are other types of power that include: ideas, rational disclosure, leader reputation, prestige, personality, purpose, status, content of message, interpersonal and group skills, gender, race, religion among others (17, p. 13).
In order to maximize leadership, interpersonal power must be comprehended. A hallmark of a good leader is that they ascertain a relationship with all members of the leisure service organization. To develop a relationship with members, a leader needs to know information that goes beyond the personnel file. This information can include knowing an individual’s hobbies, personal and professional goals and any special interests. People do not care how much you know, until they know how much you care (39, p. 103).

There are many methods in which a leader of a leisure service organization can accomplish developing relationships. A leader can develop relationship with followers though having an open door policy, managing by walking around, and empathetic listening. A recreation leader who allows for individual consideration makes each person genuinely feel special (28, p. 56). When a leader knows the individual on both a personal and professional basis, they will be more inclined to go beyond expectations for the leader.

While connecting to organizational members, a leader needs to effectively balance personal and professional relationships. An unprofessional relationship, "can detract from the authority of superiors or result in, or reasonably create the appearance of favoritism, misuse of office or position, or the abandonment of organizational goals for personal interests" (29, p. 1). Activities that can be deemed to personal can include dating, frequent socializing, borrowing money, and sharing living accommodations.

One person may not see any wrong doing with the relationship, while others see it to be unprofessional. (29). When a relationship goes beyond profession, the leader may not be able to effectively evaluate the individual. By blending these the roles of friend and leader, serious questions concerning professional judgment ethics exists (21).

COMMUNICATION It is estimated that leaders spend roughly three-quarters of their time communicating (35). With that considerable amount of time being spent on communication, the leader must have a detailed understanding of the concept and practices of effective communication. Although the leader may know how to effectively communicate, they often revert to their background experiences of how they were communicated to (35). Johnson (27) urges leaders to reflect deeply and deliberately on the content and their style of their communication. Only though an explicit analysis of a leaders communication practice can communication practices as related to leadership be improved. After all, communication only happens when the message's point is delivered (21).
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To establish an effective communication style and practice the components of communication must be identified. Anshel (2) identified several components of an effective communication process that included transmitting clear and appropriate messages, reducing extraneous distractions, responding to feedback, selecting the correct channel, and actively listening. This process is perpetual, and an individual can be communicating even when the leader is not cognizant about the message being delivered. It is estimated that between 60% and 75% of what is communicated is through non-verbal channels (10). This can take place through your personal appearance, actions, body language, pitch, tone, rate, inflection, emotion, volume, silences and pauses (28). The final component of the communication process is the people, environment and circumstances. The most effective messages are those that are simple and direct and can serve as a battle cry of sorts for people across all organizational levels (11, p. 89).

In order for a leader to change their approach to communication, the first step is to set up clear and defined objectives for the message (29). Once goals and objectives for the message are set, Laud, (35) suggests changing a leader's style of communication involves four phases: awareness the role of communication, discovering how unconscious communication interfered, reflectively formulating new approaches to communication, and honing and entrenching these new approaches until they become reflective and natural. Leaders of leisure service organizations must continually reflect on the approach to ensure that they are effective communicators' (27). When a leader is committed to continually developing their communication process, they are making communication a habit (44). By making the evaluation of a leader's communication process a habit it is hoped that a reduction of problems related to communication will be realized, such as mis-understandings of roles and responsibilities, uncertainty of goals, and unknown expectations.

CHANGE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION Leisure service organizations are not unlike other organizations from across disciplines when operational change is warranted. When change is deemed necessary, the leader often faces the human tendency to want to conserve the existing culture, which is referred to as "cultural persistence" or inertia (53, p.66). The normal modus operandi for an individual is difficult to forgo due to personal and professional investment. The greatest difficulty in the world is not for people to accept new ideas, but to make them forget about old ideas (43, p. 78). Culture has an addictive quality, perhaps because cultural members are aware that cultural components cannot be altered without affecting other cherished values and institutions. This culture is a way of describing an organizations internal world, a way in which organizations are differentiated (53).
The current attitude towards the change of culture is a direct consequence the social changes taking place in society. Leisure services are being affected by change from multiple sources such as increased legislation and policies, advocacy by the consumer and the reduction of resources by governmental agencies (26). Other changes include the increasing role of women in the workplace, followers having multiple roles (mother, head of household, volunteer), and the consumer as vigilante (45).

When organization change is warranted there is often resentment to the change by the organizations members. Many times this resentment turns into cynicism against the organization and those in charge. Wanous, Reichers, and Austin (56, p. 135) define cynicism "as a construct that has two elements: a pessimistic outlook for successful change, and blame placed on "those responsible" for lacking the motivation and or the ability to effect successful change". In order to address cynicism and organization change, the leader should focus on the components of pessimism and dispositional attributions (53). To address pessimism, all operational change that is deemed necessary should be communicated. In regards to dispositional attributions, the members of the organization need to be more involved with the change process, so that the change is not viewed as unexpected (53).

A leisure service organization will ultimately have to face change whether it is from social changes or faulty internal organization elements. This change can result in conflict between the leader and organization. The leader must show some consideration to those affected by the change, yet be clear for the need of the change (47). The need for the change could be a result of inconsistencies in communication, leadership, motivation, decision-making, group dynamics, task interdependence, scarce resources, goal incompatibility, and poorly designed reward system (48).

The most effective leaders can used the perceived negative circumstance of conflict to produce positive outcomes. When a minimal amount of operational and organization change is warranted, opening up the lines of communication can be and effective manner to see that both the leader and followers needs are being met. When the conflict reaches an intensified level more structured techniques such as mediation or conflict management can be utilized. This conflict may appear to be detrimental but it can allow the leisure service organization to self-concepts, produce evidence to support varying positions, enhance morale and cohesion, stimulate creativity and innovation, and devise resolutions that promote group identity and harmony (28, 48). To successfully identify strategies for conflict resolution is an important step in meeting organizational goals (37).
Dealing with conflict in a mature, respectful and open manner can improve communication within the organization (55), and improve rather than reduce group effectiveness (36).

**COLLABORATION** As a result of the many social changes that have affected leisure service organizations, collaboration has become more an important tactic for leaders to embrace. Although individuals are an essential component to the success of a leisure agency, they cannot achieve the same results as a collaborative effort. Collaboration is defined as the process in which individuals or organizations work together to meet goals (28). Other definitions include pooling resources, by two individuals to solve a problem that neither can do individually (54).

No matter the definition, collaboration relies on two organizations working together to find a solution. Within leisure service organizations collaboration is needed due to the increasingly tighter budgets, downsized organizations, and increased competition for the leisure dollar (41). Over the past two to three decades... there has been a continuous increase in partnerships between organizations to better meet the needs of the participants (15, p. 4). Collaborations allow both individuals and organizations to draw on each other’s creative energy and financial resources to benefit one another (54).

The benefits of collaboration for a leisure service organization include streamlining of services, increasing quality, flexibility, increasing credibility and visibility of all involved organizations, and developing networking opportunities, which far outweigh the time and energy that is consumed organizing the partnership (41, 59).

Although the benefits of collaboration are known, it is a very delicate process to gain the full impact of collaboration for both individuals and organizations. The leisure service organization must realize that an increased effort in the area of collaboration will result in the leader and organization receiving new and innovative ideas from partnering organizations in the areas of programming and service delivery. To obtain the benefits, members of the collaborative mix must not identify themselves as individuals but as team members. These team members must have individual skills (technical expertise, problem solving and interpersonal skills) and operate within the context of a single mission (36).

When members of the team act as individuals the singular mission is then jeopardized. Many times the literature refers to collaboration on an external organizational basis, (15, 36, 41, 54) but neglects to focus on the positive benefits of collaboration made by individuals on an internal organizational basis.
To form collaborative agreements internally, the leisure service leader must work within the organization and other departments within the overall leisure organization. They must encourage team building, foster open and honest communication, and clarify roles and responsibilities. When collaborative efforts require working with external agencies, the organization can organize cooperative programs, partnerships, coalitions, and alliances with organizations that have complementary missions such as community and non-profit recreation agencies, commercial recreation enterprises, tourism providers, and armed forces recreation services. These alliances can be facilitated by federal government providers of recreation.

**PERFECTION VERSUS EXCELLENCE** Perfection in the leisure service organization is often viewed as the ultimate goal for an individual or organization. Babbio (4) identified perfection as one of the six keys for success to operate in the new global marketplace. In the manufacturing community, the concept of Six Sigma has been bantered around for the past two decades. Six Sigma is an organizational paradigm that focuses on perfection in the product and process (42). In leisure service organizations, the leader often demands perfection in facility management, resource allocation, strategic planning, and other areas of leisure service administration and programming. By exerting the highly aloof goal of perfection, leaders have a tendency to stifle creativity.

Creativity is stifled because the focus is on perfection. "When we try to be perfect, we over focus on one thing and do not allow room into our mind for new thoughts or concepts" (52, p. 8). There is a monumental difference between the manufacturing and business community and leisure service organizations. While the manufacturing and business community produces goods that are then consumed, the leisure service is produced and consumed at the same time. To focus on perfection in leisure service organizations would divorce the human element in leisure and recreation.

While perfection can be achieved from time to time, the leader of a leisure service organization should strive to focus on the pursuit of excellence. In order for the pursuit of excellence to become an organizational norm, the leader must live this ethic (14). This ethic can be manifested through six leadership behaviors: continuous improvement, commitment to creativity, customer focus, commitment to continuous learning, empowerment, and a focus on the facts (16).

Crulmey (14) added that if excellence is to become the new paradigm, then excellence begins with the way people are treated. When people are developed through additional training and education, their skills and self-confidence are developed. This quest for personal excellence will result in excellence being delivered to the organization.
A leader, who demands excellence from their employees or followers, normally receives this high level of performance. To strive for perfection is potentially caustic, but all employees or followers can reach the process of excellence. If the operational norm is perfection, the knowledge, skill and ability level of the followers is not expanded. Those individuals who are motivated by perfection operate in an environment of control, and the lack of it can cause low levels of productivity, and the individual has the tendency to have tunnel vision (20, 51). The modern day leader cannot work in an environment of control and tunnel vision. Today’s leader must focus on a team attitude, long and short term planning, and conceptual thought processes.

For the leader and their followers to reach a consistent level of excellence, a mutual agreement of reaching beyond expectations and venturing beyond the safety nets and tradition should be realized. Our most beloved products were developed by hunch guesswork and fanaticism by creators who were eccentric or even stark raving mad (43, p. 358). If the operational norm is perfection, the leisure service leader does not allow any time for speculation. Without speculation programs and services offered by leisure organizations would become stagnant, outdated, and lifeless.

**MOTIVATION** The final technique for individual and organizational improvement is a thorough study of motivation and how it relates to leadership. Zahra and Calvasina (61) cite motivation as the "singular important determinant of individual performance as is a major ingredient of job satisfaction" (p. 23). Billions of dollars are lost annually due to unmotivated employees and followers. To combat this lost, business and industry spends millions of dollars hiring individuals to motivate their employees through presentations and workshops.

This is a short-term solution as the presentations are often filled with buzzwords, quick fixes and the speaker often does not do more than entertain (62). To effectively motivate followers, a leader must examine the individual needs of the followers and how they related to the overall organization.

A first step in this process is to identify each individual’s needs. There have been many different studies and papers on which needs are the most important for the leader to focus their energy. Followers may have needs is such areas as achievement, power, affiliation, autonomy, esteem, safety and security, and equity can serve as motivation for individuals (9). Antonioni (3) suggests that followers have needs in the areas of trust, respect, and participation in decision-making, fairness, and feedback. Throughout the research and literature three of the most effective motivators are trust, respect and caring (3).
In order to focus on trust, respect and caring, the leader should develop a quality relationship, which includes understanding the variety of needs an individual has, with each and every person of staff. All leaders in the organization should commit to this relationship building, due to the fact that within a hierarchal system an employee can receive leadership influences from a number of different sources (31). If all individuals in the upper echelons of the chain of command exude trust, respect and caring, these motivators will transfer to the front lines of the organization.

Trust, respect and caring are needs that generally demanded by all members of an organization. Each individual has certain needs that the leader must identify and develop a plan that is congruent with the organization and operational goals. The leisure service leader can help the individual establish long and short-term goals and clarify the individual’s roles within the organization.

On a larger organizational scale, motivation can be improved through a number of methods. The Personal Motivation Index was developed to determine if work satisfies personal needs.

The index has 17 statements in which, the follower or employee indicates the level of agreement for each needs being met through the work. If an individual scores higher than 100, their needs are being meet by the work and work environment (6). A second method in which to improve organizational motivation is to create workplace commandments. By creating a list of workplace commandments, the responsibility of motivation is placed on all individuals and not just the leader. The commandments can include statements on self-respect, respect, fairness, value ideas, integrity, feedback, and service (19). Although these commandments might seem to be buzzwords, if all members of an organization believe and uphold the commandments, the groundwork for the motivation of all employees and followers has been established.

**CONCLUSION** The leader of a leisure service organization faces many challenges during daily operation. From planning programs and facilities to maintaining positive customer relations, a common thread among successful operation of an organization is positive leadership. The above outlined leadership techniques may serve as a catalyst for individual and organization improvement. When these and other techniques are implemented and committed to organizational and operational goals can be achieved.
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On 14 October 2012, an Austrian skydiver named Felix Baumgartner flew approximately 24 miles into the stratosphere over New Mexico in a helium balloon before free falling in a pressure suit and then parachuting to Earth. The total jump, from leaving the capsule to landing on the ground, lasted approximately ten minutes, whereas it was initially expected to last between five and six minutes. Apart from breaking two records, Baumgartner also became the first human to do so without any form of engine power.

What I remember from that day was how attached to internet screen I was, watching in awe his accomplishment second after second. It was something that I could not afford to miss. I was hooked to the event. In some way, I felt so connected to Red Bull, although I rarely drink energy drinks of any brand whatsoever. It was Red Bull that demonstrated what the brand stands for and gained awareness more brilliantly than any other campaigns and even across industries.
Red Bull accomplished that by masterfully leveraging connections it had made with the audience, all of us who were watching and counting down the time till the big jump. And of course, it had the most audacious idea to go with it: Having balls of steel can definitely give you the edge you are looking for.

Nevertheless, being connected also means something beyond the surface. Take for example another brand name, like Nike+ Kinect. It gives you the power to choose the comfort of your house over a common gym. In this notion you can literally turn your living room, hotel room (if you are a common traveler) into a gym. As products and services evolve, they become perpetually connected, as brands find meaningful ways to connect the dots and deliver superior services to their users.

Truth be known, it’s about how well connected any for-profit or not-for-profit organization is with their audience and how well that particular organization manages to connect the audience themselves. Despite the fact that the previous examples of Red Bull and Nike+Kinect are about for-profit enterprises, non-profit organizations can also create their own brand and find more meaningful ways to deliver unforgettable services to their users.

Talking about connections, it is very important to pinpoint that what makes brands superior are the experiences people share through stories. When people have a great or awful experience after using a product or service, most of the times they feel compelled to share it with others either through word-of-mouth or through social media outlets. In fact, people love sharing their stories. Judging from the vast amount of information that is out there, people love reading other stories as it makes them feel connected to fellow users.

Non-profit organizations that manage to capitalize on people’s willingness to share their stories know that it’s not about their service, or product; it’s about the “people stories.” So, if you choose to tell stories as a brand, don’t make it about you. Make it about the real people. Use the power of your brand and reach to reflect the truth. Services and products, if they are not worthy of people’s time, will end up being obsolete. Technology moves in a fast pace, into the post-digital, all-mobile era, where brands aim to solve real problems by providing connected services 24/7, 365 days/year and by inventing new businesses that benefit people, not just the brand.

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