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A MODEL FOR EMPLOYEE RECREATION PROGRAMMING

BY

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ABSTRACT

A review of programming techniques used in employee services is presented. A study utilizing an interest finder was conducted to illustrate the importance of needs assessment in program development. The results demonstrate the importance in identifying types of outcomes as a base process to greater understanding of activities, especially from a participant viewpoint.

A MODEL FOR EMPLOYEE RECREATION PROGRAMMING

A primary purpose for college courses in recreation programming is to educate students in strategies designed to eliminate the difference between the recreation programs offered and those actually desired by the participants. The void between this supply and demand is costly, confusing, upsetting and embarrassing. Many clients have signed up to take a recreation class in bicycling (or some other activity) only to find the activity is either not available, cancelled due to lack of interest, or too popular and closed to additional participants. It is a dreadful mistake, in most cases, to allow such errors to occur. Of greatest significance are the costs, both in dollars and the loss of positive public relations caused by the recreation programmer when such errors are committed. This is a problem recreation professionals must constantly evaluate and progress to eliminate.

PAST PROGRAMMING APPROACH OPTIONS

Until recently, the recreation programmer has been limited to essentially the following four programming strategies (1):

A. Programming by Perceived Needs of the Participant.

This strategy essentially involves a process by which the recreation programmer, in his office in the corner of the company gymnasium, decides what is best for his clients. This less than objective decision making session is often done with little or no input from the clients served.

B. Developing Programs by External Standards.

This method dictates that the program offerings be determined by someone or a group of persons outside the organization.

C. The Smorgasbord Approach.

This strategy indicates that many programs are to be provided and the participants can select from those offered.

D. Programming to Meet an Objective

This plan utilizes the educational model of developing instructional type goals for the participants in each activity. This contemporary model usually goes one step further by the measurement of the participants in accomplishment of the pre-set goals. This model is a spin-off from education and the current accountability cause. The design of these four models does not adequately address the key relationship of recreational program supply and participant demand and the void between them.

THE EMPLOYEE SUPPLY-DEMAND

The most modern programming model (1,2) and the one that the author contends is best suited for use by the employee recreation program professional is programming based on the actual needs of the participants. This precise model simply states that the recreation programmer must assess the leisure needs and interest of his/her clients; and based upon these findings plan or modify the recreation program offerings. This can be accomplished by using one of the available leisure interest assessment instruments; or one specifically designed to meet company and employee needs. This procedure is relatively simple for employee recreation because of the high degree of control the company and its recreation program has over employees and the ease of the access in administering a paper and pencil leisure interest assessment instrument to all employees. In the future, it may even be possible that this evaluation will be completed by each employee responding on his/her computer terminal.

THE PILOT TEST

In 1982, the author administered the Leisure Activities Blank developed by Dr. George McKechnie to 131 nurses at St. Lukes Hospital in Fargo, North Dakota and 164 secretaries at North Dakota State University also in Fargo. The following results were obtained.

The week of March 26, 1982, 131 St. Lukes Hospital nurses voluntarily completed the 120 question Leisure Activities Blank. A preliminary review of the results revealed the following information about past leisure behavior for the nurses surveyed.

The top leisure activities that nurses currently engage in included:

	No.	Percent
Driving/Motoring	108	82
Listening to Radio	104	79
Reading Newspapers/Magazines	104	79
Talking on Telephone	100	76
Cooking/Baking	96	73
Watching TV Shows	93	70
Listening to Records	91	69
Dining Out	84	64
Taking Snapshots	69	52
Bicycling	68	51
Reading Books	67	51
Window Shopping	63	48

The following were the scores for the current participation in the typically active endeavors:

	No.	Percent
Golf	17	12
Jogging	12	9
Swimming	34	25
Tennis	9	6
Volleyball	16	12
Weight Lifting	8	6
Exercising	60	45

Nurses identified the following activities in which they plan participation in the future.

	No.	Percent
Reading Newspapers	126	96
Dining Out	126	96
Listening to the Radio	125	95
Visiting Friends	125	95
Bicycling	124	94
Talking on Telephone	121	92
Exercising	119	90
Watching TV Programs	117	89
Taking Snapshots	115	88

During the period of February 12-May 7, 1982, 164 North Dakota State University secretaries completed the same questionnaire with these identified results:

The top leisure activities that secretaries currently engage in included:

	No.	Percent
Listening to Radio	143	87

Reading Newspapers/Magazines	133	81
Driving/Motoring	132	80
Cooking/Baking	125	76
Talking on Telephone	116	70
Watching TV Program	116	70
Listening to Records	102	62
Visiting Friends	100	60
Reading Books	96	59
Dining Out	95	58

The following were the scores for the current participation in the typically active endeavors:

	No.	Percent
Golf	10	6
Jogging	8	4
Swimming	32	19
Tennis	8	4
Volleyball	9	5
Weight Lifting	10	6
Exercising	76	46

Secretaries also identified the following activities in which they plan participation in the future.

	No.	Percent
Dining Out	160	98
Reading Newspapers/Magazines	159	97
Visiting Friends	157	96
Cooking/Baking	156	95
Listening to Radio	153	93
Listening to Records	151	92
Exercising	149	91
Watching TV Shows	147	90
Driving/Motoring	148	90

In addition to these individual activity results, the McKechnie instrument revealed composite scale scores in six past leisure interest areas. These scales and representative activities are:

PAST ACTIVITIES

Mechanics—Auto repair, billiards, boxing, carpentry, hunting, marksmanship, mechanics, woodworking.

Crafts—Ceramics, cooking, designing clothes, flower arranging, jewelry-making, knitting, needlework, weaving.

Intellectual-Attending concerts or plays, political activities, reading, visiting museums, writing poetry or stories, civic or conservation organizations.

Slow Living-Gardening, going to movies, social drinking, sunbathing, talking on telephone, visiting friends, window shopping, writing letters.

Sports-Badminton, baseball, basketball, football, jogging, squash, ping pong, volleyball.

Glamour Sports-Archery, canoeing, horseback riding, motorboating, motorcycling, mountain climbing, sailing, skiing, tennis.

FUTURE ACTIVITY AREAS

Adventure-Bicycling, camping, canoeing, horseback riding, sailing, skiing, skin diving, waterskiing.

Mechanics-Auto repair, carpentry, electronics, marksmanship, mechanics, metalwork, modelbuilding, woodworking.

Crafts-Designing clothes, flower arranging, jewelry-making, knitting leatherwork, needlework, sewing, weaving.

Easy Living-Social dancing, casino gambling, horse races, nightclubs, motorboating, poker, social drinking, watching team sports.

Intellectual-Attending concerts, bird watching, civic or conservation organizations, going to plays, bridge, political activities, travel abroad.

Ego Recognition-Acting, modern dance, football, judo, squash, weightlifting, wrestling, writing poetry.

Slow Living-Dining out, gardening, going to movies, reading magazines, visiting friends, visiting museums, window shopping, writing letters.

Clean Living-Baseball, basketball, bowling, checkers, child-related activities, jigsaw puzzles, rollerskating, ping pong.

Histogram A displays the results for the nurses and secretaries surveyed and 151 females included in a test group in 1975 when Dr. McKechnie developed the instrument. This chart indicates relative interest of the three groups in past leisure activities listed above. Histogram B reveals future activity areas for the same groups.

IMPLICATIONS

The results of this pilot test have indicated a common need for continued development of recreation programs for both nurses and secretaries. In light of the results from the survey, the recreation department at the university has planned a noon exercise program for

women: and the hospital has made arrangements for employee use at a reduced rate of a local court and fitness center. The YMCA has also sponsored a program of dance exercise in an unused portion of the hospital. These successful program additions were accomplished by the accurate assessment of leisure interests and action based upon this assessment. This is a practical example of the simple and fundamental principle of programming using the employee supply and demand model.

In every business, efficiency, performance, and results are the bottom line. In recreation, professionals have often looked upon their mission as a service, often neglecting the areas of efficiency, performance and results. This employee programming model: 1) allows each employee to make his/her recreational interest known to the recreation professional; 2) gives the employee recreation programmer the necessary information to make efficient and effective decisions on programs based on those scientifically assessed leisure interests; and 3) gives the employee recreation programmer the best opportunity possible, to perform his duties with success because of efficient use of time and energy to gain positive and accurate leisure information. Accurate information is the key to much that we do as leisure professionals and this method, when used in the relatively closed business environment will produce dynamic results for the recreation program professional and the employees he/she serves.

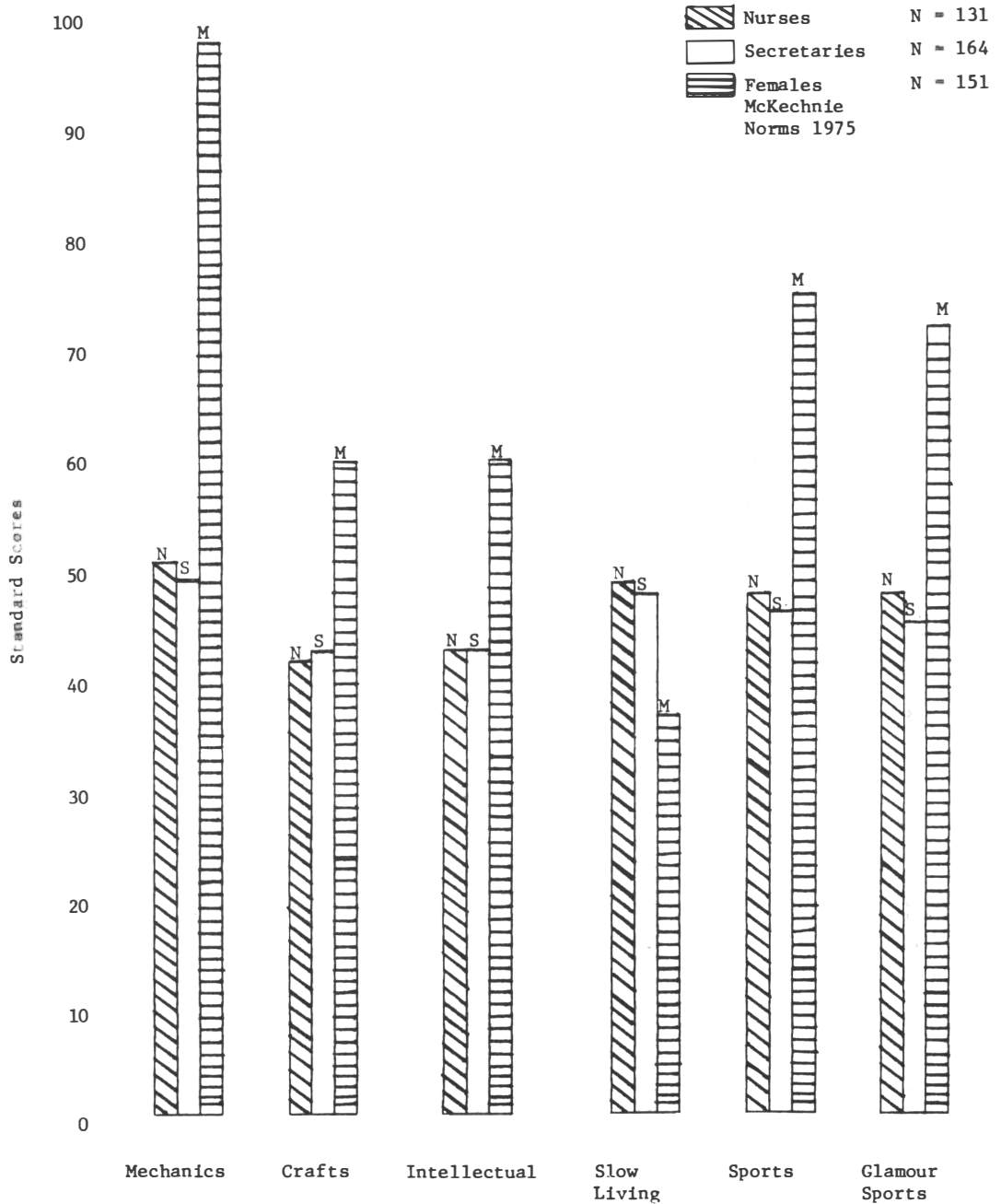
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PAST LEISURE INTERESTS PROFILE - HISTOGRAM A



FUTURE LEISURE INTERESTS PROFILES - HISTOGRAM B

