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SPORT AND LEISURE: A PRECARIOUS
RELATIONSHIP IN BUSINESS

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ABSTRACT

Sport and leisure are highly interrelated. The presence of planning, organizational purpose and goals, and leadership are key elements to success.

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INTRODUCTION

An examination of the relationship between sport and leisure is complicated by the fact that these two concepts are very similar while simultaneously being different. Their relationship resembles the relationship between the rectangle and the square in that all squares are rectangles, yet all rectangles are not squares. Leisure activities are often sports activities, but sports activities are very seldom classed entirely as leisure ventures.

"Leisure is regarded as non-work or non-labor time" (7, p. 167). It is otherwise referred to as any activity done for pleasure rather than from any economic necessity. Leisure can be experienced through participatory ventures or through non-participatory means (spectatorship). Leisure is often referred to as recreation and time invested in this way is considered to be therapeutic.

Sport can be defined as "an activity involving the elements of competition, physical activity, and the application of rules" (3, p. 17). According to Etizen and Sage, there are three levels of Sport: (1) Informal Sport which is primarily for the enjoyment of participants; (2) Organized Sport which consists of teams, leagues, schedules, rules; and (3) Corporate Sport which is organized as a spectacle, a business, and most of all as entertainment. Bureaucratic organizations offer controlling mechanisms for this type of sport.

Although Leisure and Sport are similar and yet dissimilar in

definition and purpose, they can possess their own unique characteristics when viewed as a business or formal organization and how these organizations are governed.

In both Leisure and Sport management we find a field of human endeavor that requires a degree of practicality to accomplish organizational goals, and a body of theory to guide the organization for goal achievement. In other words, for success these two ingredients, practical accomplishments and theoretical analysis, must blend in a palatable or harmonious relationship.

Over the past several decades several business management theories or approaches have been developed which apply certain principles that describe how organizations function most effectively. It is in the discussion of management theory that the greatest differences exist in the precarious relationship between Sport and Leisure.

LEISURE MANAGEMENT THEORY

Leisure services, historically, have demonstrated a concern for the interactions and relationships of people and other living organisms with each other and with their natural environment. It is, therefore, appropriate then to view leisure business organizations as functioning best under the Ecological Theory or approach to management. According to Gordon (5, p. 17) the Ecological Approach is one in which "the task of administration is to build and strengthen organizations that will have the capacity to respond to changing environment and to create opportunities for growth." The Ecological Theory implies that: (1) growth and change are inevitable in leisure business organizations, and (2) if the organization is to be successful in accomplishing its goals and objectives it must adapt to an ever-changing environment.

To elaborate further, the local, state and national governments work very hard to provide opportunities for leisure time pursuits but it is the private sector that is adapting to change and enjoying a vast expansion in the business of leisure planning and development.

The opportunity for growth is here with the realization that the presence of leisure time is a tremendous economic benefit to our world. Research shows that "leisure accounts for about one in every eight dollars spent by North Americans (an estimated \$250 billion was spent in the United States in 1985 in leisure pursuits)" (3, p. 321). The existence and development of resorts, theme parks, and equipment manufacturing companies are a strong indicator of the importance of leisure time on our overall economy.

Travel agents, resort managers, and equipment manufacturers engage in the leisure business and bombard us daily, weekly, monthly, and annually with enticing adventures to ski, scuba dive, and sight see, to mention a few.

The value placed on leisure time by people today is based on quality use of one's free time. Such concern for quality is also a key factor in the successful business marketing of leisure time services to the public. However, what society seeks in leisure time pursuits may not be the same

tomorrow; and ultimately the success of the leisure business organization lies with the creative manager. His/her ability to adapt to factors of the internal environment such as the board of directors' influence, personnel conflicts, etc. And to factors of the external environment such as the economy and what the people desire is critical. The Ecological Theory is centered on increasing productivity with an emphasis on survival in a quickly changing society. Through the use of the Ecological Approach the manager will hone his/her marketing, promotions and public relations skills as he/she seeks to develop and influence others to achieve planned organizational goals.

SPORT MANAGEMENT THEORY

It is a foregone conclusion that in today's society sport is big business. From the professional ranks to the little league, sports organizations are operated for the purpose of winning and entertaining. The emphasis on entertaining has fostered rules changes such as the three-point goal in basketball, the adjustment of the hash-marks in professional football, and the designated hitter in baseball. Even on the collegiate level, rules changes have increased scoring in basketball (3 point and 45 second clock), use of hands in offensive blocking have opened up the passing game in football, and aluminum bats have enhanced scoring in baseball. More and more, entertaining the fans is the key to filling the stands.

The goals then of the sport business organizations are both general (i.e., win and entertain) but yet specific (i.e., market the product to fill the stands and in turn produce a financial profit) in nature. The practical tasks for achievement, therefore, are rather mechanical and unchanging. In turn, considering the nature of the beast, the Scientific Management Approach, the Grandfather of administrative theory, possesses the ingredients for being the most effective means of guiding a sport organization.

The approach stresses orderliness and efficiency. The people within the organization are important but only to the degree that they are only a part of the larger, more complex and more important system. Sport managers, coaches and players are expendable if the goals of the organization are not achieved. In addition, the Scientific Management Approach involves three important principles of management that strengthen its guiding force on the sport organization: (1) Task specialization--Departments are formed and then subdivided into separate office groups (i.e., the marketing department is subdivided into the public relations and/or the sports information office(s); (2) Centralized decision-making--Authority and decision-making power is restricted to the C.E.O. of the organization. The hierarchy of power moves from top to bottom in the vertical division of personnel or chain of command; and, (3) Span of control--A narrow structure, the sport manager exerts tight control over a small or limited number of subordinates within the organization.

CONCLUSION

In both areas of business, Sport and Leisure, the presences of planning, organization of purpose and goals, and leadership are key

elements in successful programs. Leisure being less structured in organization and theory to allow for the adaptation and survival of the business in the face of an ever-changing internal and external environment. Sport more structured and narrow in organization and theory so that the business can remain viable in a competitive entertainment market.

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