

Innovation in Campus Recreation

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to introduce the concept of innovation in regards to intramural sports in a university environment. There are several key points to discuss, such as marketing and promotion, personnel, financing and budget, feedback, equipment, and facilities. Offering the same programs year after year leads to stagnation, predictability, and boredom. In order to stay competitive in the industry, innovation is crucial. It is the way of the future.

Marketing and Promotion

Intramural directors must have a clear understanding of effective promotion. It is important to first examine our target population. We are marketing to university students: a young and intellectual demographic. It is important for the intramural department to strategically network with this population in order to provide sophisticated, forward-thinking, inclusive, and fitness-focused programs.

Reaching out in a sense is the proper way to go about engaging with this group. There are a variety of ways to promote intramurals. There is “live” or personal promotion (Byl, John, 2002). For example, we could fill a few minutes of lecture time throughout the school to present certain programs we are offering. The computer is another great resource, presenting websites and email as promotional tools. The always popular print publications are effective: including posters, flyers, and newspapers. A different marketing approach would be to utilize intramural calendars - a great way for people to keep track of our programs and schedule.

The purpose to these marketing and promotional strategies is to create awareness about the new and exciting programs the intramural department has to offer, and to show how we promote and support healthy, active living.

Personnel

In order to implement and operate successful intramural programs, a wide range of well-prepared part-time and full-time employees, as well as talented volunteers are needed.

Specifically when adding new innovative programs to our intramural repertoire, intramural staff is needed at every step of the planning process (Russell et al., 2008).

Planning the program: Staff members are involved in assessing the needs and interests of clients and in developing recommendations for programming (Bynum, 2006).

Implementing and monitoring the program: Staff should assist in gathering program resources, promoting and publicizing programs, making sure all needed supplies are available. Staff members must act as model participants, because they are typically needed to lead participants through program experiences. It is very important they practice what they preach. It is their responsibility to ensure that participants receive the physical and social benefits of each program. (Russell, et al., 2008).

Evaluating the program: Once programs have been set into motion, staff members are responsible for carrying out systematic evaluations and program reports. Intramural staff is able to tell firsthand the success rate of a program.

Financing and Budget

Recreation directors need to understand and manage three types of budgets: the operational, equipment, and capital outlay budgets. The operational budget includes things such as costs of salaries, office supplies, travel, phone, and advertising. Examples of items purchased from the equipment budget are balls, rackets, nets, sticks, and helmets. The capital outlay budget is usually intended to enhance existing facilities, either through new construction or renovation (Railey, et al., 1993).

There are a few key things to note when preparing a budget. First and foremost, it needs to be realistic. Sound reason is basic to action. The budget must also be flexible. It is important to remember that the budget is a guide and plan, and plans are subject to change. One final point is that the budget should be prepared early. A more effective budget will materialize if those who are responsible for preparation allow adequate time. (Railey, et al., 1993).

Feedback

It is extremely important for recreation professionals to document the impact of their programs. It is a frontier that promises great rewards in spite of the effort required to conduct valid studies. The results can help justify the resources devoted to recreational sports, improve the education of students, and minimize the conflict between academics and student affair units (NIRSA, 1997).

Satisfaction is related to involvement and involvement is related to retention. It is not only a matter of appealing to students and creating successful intramural programs, it is about holding their interest and developing programs that have longevity. That is precisely why assessment is so important. It helps to justify present and additional programs, staff, facilities, and funding, and provides data that clearly supports the recommendations (NIRSA, 1997).

Equipment

Equipment issues are clearly at the forefront of importance for sport and recreation supervisors. It is critical that supervisors provide the right equipment, as well as the right amount of it. Safety is another issue of importance. It is not enough to dole out the equipment; supervisors must also show participants how to properly use and care for the equipment, as well as perform frequent safety inspections (Spengler, 2006).

Having a facility available to store the equipment is a necessity. Large-sized equipment such as volleyball nets, heavy mats, bikes, and smaller equipment such as balls, and rackets, can be housed in a centralized location where instructors and other staff members can check out the equipment they need for a given class or event. Although this option requires the use of a full-time equipment manager, there are many benefits associated with knowing where the equipment is, who checks it out, and what kind of condition it is in (Whaley, 2004).

Facilities

As competition increases among recreation centers and intramural programs, the quality

of the facility, and utilization of resources must improve. A quality facility, like a quality program begins with thorough planning. Meeting the needs of the clientele who use the facility must be a top priority for intramural directors (Railey, et al., 1993).

Multipurpose facilities are designed to accommodate a variety of activities, and are a necessity for any recreational service. Intramural directors must be very resourceful with what they have. As an intramural department they must consider alternate uses for equipment and also think about other accessible resources and facilities within the community they could make use of (Patton, 2009). It is always a director's dream to have a large well-stocked equipment room and limitless facilities. Some live with that dream, but most have considerably less and can accommodate only so much.

Review of Literature

Introduction

This paper will readdress the concept of innovation in regards to intramural sports in a university environment with a specific focus on developing and highlighting recommendations for improvements in the areas of marketing and promotion, personnel, financing, budget, feedback, equipment, and facilities. In order to stay competitive, universities need to be on the cutting edge of innovation, and we will offer unique ideas and strategies they can use to do just that.

Marketing and Promotion

One of the best marketing strategies we have discovered during our research is in the Department of Recreation at the University of Manitoba. They have been able to market their services and receive sponsorship from Pepsi which has allowed the intramural department to recognize and reward their athletes for their athletic achievements. Thanks to the Pepsi Bottling Group for their sponsorship, each week the intramural department rewards an individual who displays fair play and sportsmanship in the Bison Recreation Services Intramural Leagues. Players of the Week receive a \$30 gift certificate to the University of Manitoba Bookstore and a Bison Recreation Services sling bag.

This model is a small but effective way of promoting intramural participation. It markets both the rewards and benefits of athletic engagement within the University of Manitoba. We are networking with a young, intellectual, and competitive demographic. Rewards such as these are

great resources the department can use to reduce aggression and brutality and promote a safe and fun atmosphere for their programs.

Personnel

As recreation professionals, we are in the life satisfaction business, and as such it is our responsibility to spread knowledge and awareness of leisure wellness and quality of life. Leisure awareness is directed toward raising people's appreciation for the many positive attributes and effects of leisure-time-activity. Free time is growing increasingly limited and people don't always know how to make the best and most positive use of this valuable commodity. In order to implement and operate successful intramural programs, a wide range of well-prepared part-time and full-time employees, as well as talented volunteers are needed. "Red Eye" recreation is a unique program provided by the University of Alberta which begins in the evening and ends in the morning the next day. This innovative program requires stamina and endurance, not only from participants but by staff and personnel also. The more innovative the programs become, sometimes the demands on staff increase. It is important for managers to recognize this and to train, prepare, and compensate workers sufficiently.

Financing and Budget

With regard to budget and program running costs, we shift our focus to the University of Saskatchewan. Their 'Rec Pack' program is free to all students. It is an individually-directed active living program designed to reward individual participants for their accomplishments in their everyday recreational activities. Each participant is responsible for inputting their personal data into the online system, and they are awarded points every week for doing so. The points add

up and can be redeemed for an assortment of sport-related prizes. This program is an excellent example of thinking outside the box. Because it is an individually-directed program, it reduces the need for facilitators and personnel needed to run the program. In addition, this kind of program can function without the use of a gymnasium or recreation facility which leaves room for recreation directors to use that 'bonus time' for other programs or athletic events. If directors can be creative and implement activities such as this into their programs, it will hugely reduce their costs and leave room for adding more activities to their recreation schedule.

Feedback

Not only is it important for recreation professionals to document the impact of their programs and the satisfaction of their participants, it is also essential for them to reciprocate in some fashion - more specifically, to return and reward the feedback in a tangible way. Recognizing students for their dedication and participation in intramural programs is a great place to start.

At the University of Toronto, there is emphasis not only on team recognition, but individual recognition as well. The Zerada Slack Trophy is awarded annually to the female intramural athlete in her graduating year adjudged worthiest in the qualities of leadership, sportsmanship, and performance. The Sidney Earle Smith Trophy is the male equivalent. In addition, Trophies are awarded to each winning team in every intramural sporting activity and event. These trophies are of significant value to the students. They are not simply t-shirts to wear for a day and forget about the next. They bring more realism to the atmosphere of intramural activities. There is always a trophy of some kind on the line in any athletic contest; therefore, using trophies in an intramural setting in some way validates the activities. Putting a little more

funding behind something like this is a way to appreciate the students, which will in turn boost participation and improve the feedback that each program receives.

Equipment

While most recreation programs require an extensive amount of equipment, it is also true that for some, equipment is completely unnecessary. The 'Rec Pack' program at the University of Saskatchewan is a perfect example of this. On the other hand, the 'Storm the Wall' Intramural event at the University of British Columbia requires a great deal of equipment and organization. It is a one-day five-person relay or individual event including a 225 yard swim, 450 metre sprint, 2.8 kilometre cycle, and 1 kilometre run, after which the whole team "storms" the 12 foot wall. This event is not only popular among university students, but the entire community as well. Individuals outside of the university are allowed to compete in this event, such as high school students, and community members, which in turns helps to garner support.

It is critical to the success of the program that the UBC campus recreation department takes care of all equipment related to this event, performing regular safety checks, and general repairs. Bikes are available to be rented out to participants, but many use their own bikes for the race. Another key ingredient in the success of the program is the access UBC students and the surrounding community have to such amenities as an Olympic-sized pool, outdoor running tracks, a giant climbing wall, and of course, the natural environment. Providing unique equal-opportunistic events like this is a wonderful way to maintain good relations and establish a connection between students and the community.

Facilities

Trent University and universities all over North America are investing in green buildings: that is, the design and construction of buildings and physical infrastructure that achieve a high level of energy efficiency and environmental sustainability. A green building is built and operated to use energy, water, materials, and land more efficiently than the typical buildings our universities build today. The foundation of this proposed strategy is initiated by the LEEDS certification program (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). A number of studies indicate that green buildings improve student and employee performance and reduce absence. According to a 2005 survey, executives at organizations involved with green campus facilities reported improved ability to attract students and faculty and an increase student performance. A chief reason for this is improved indoor air quality.

A green building is the most innovative change that can be brought to campus recreation in terms of facilities. Not only does it improve a school's energy efficiency and sustainability, it improves the quality of life of those people in and around the building, and as recreation professionals, it is our goal is to provide a quality experience.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there are obviously many considerations and factors involved in running successful, innovative intramural programs within the university environment. The first step is for a school to recognize each of these factors as being important and designate the appropriate time and thinking into building a program that addresses every step. Innovation is not simply an idea or a concept. It involves the proper utilization of all resources – both new and old – and combining everything together to create a program that is fun, active, inventive, and has longevity.

References

1. Byl, John, 2002. *Intramural Recreation: A Step by step Guide to Creating an Effective Program.*
2. Bynum (2006, August). Jump Start. *Athletic Business.*
3. NIRSA, 1997. *Quality and Importance of Recreational Services: Technical Manual and Survey.*
4. Patton (2009, November). Healthy Relationships. *Athletic Business.*
5. Railey, Jim H., Tschauner, Railey, P. 1993. *Managing Physical Education, Fitness, and Sports Programs, 2nd Edition.*
6. Russell, Ruth V., Jamieson, Lynn M., 2008. *Leisure Program Planning and Delivery.*
7. Spengler, John O., Connaughton, Daniel P., Pittman, Andrew T., 2006. *Risk Management in Sport and Recreation.*
8. Whaley (2004, March). Space Invaders. *Athletic Business.*

Appendix

1. <http://www.uoftintramurals.ca/> - A list of awards granted to individual intramural athletes and teams at the University of Toronto for their accomplishments and successes. Page 30-34 of the 'handbook.' To access the handbook, click on the link that is located at the top of the left hand column on the page.
2. <http://www.campusrec.ualberta.ca/intramurals/content.cfm?act=938> – The University of Alberta's innovative 'Red-Eye Recreation' program.
3. <http://www.trentu.ca/athleticscampaign/highlights.php> - Trent University's environmentally-driven 'green facility.'
4. <http://www.rec.ubc.ca/events/page.cfm?filename=info&ActID=73&path=storm&term=0> – The University of British Columbia's 'Storm the Wall' program.
5. <http://kinesiology.usask.ca/campus-recreation/2/rec-pack/> - The University of Saskatchewan's 'Rec Pack' program.
6. <http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/kinrec/bsal/programs/fortgarry/intramurals/awards.php> - Marketing strategies at the University of Manitoba and sponsorship from Pepsi.