

1982

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Recommended Citation

Satterlee, William (1982) "The Cultural Arts: A Participant's Perspective," *Visions in Leisure and Business*: Vol. 1 : No. 2 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/visions/vol1/iss2/8>

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THE CULTURAL ARTS: A PARTICIPANT'S PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Cultural experiences continue to be a growing area of leisure interest. A participant describes the value of these activities and suggests ways of enhancing the experience.

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The lights dim as the curtain begins to rise. It could be an orchestra, or a group of actors, or a dance troupe. Regardless of the particular discipline of the performers, there is an air of anticipation pervading the auditorium. The audience and the performers are preparing themselves for a creative experience--a taste of the cultural arts. After the curtain rises, both the artists and the audiences will express mankind's highest levels of achievement. These individuals are taking advantage of an opportunity which stimulates their senses, instilling within them a cultural and artistic awareness and appreciation.

Either as an active participant on stage or as a passive participant in the audience; whether with a first-rate touring show or with a local community arts presentation, an encounter with the cultural arts can be a rewarding experience. The obstacle for a professional working with the performing arts to overcome then centers around making this encounter valuable to those who participate. While the road to achieving this potential is not an easy one, most participants would agree that there are several factors which are important in attaining this result.

The first of these factors is quality. The cultural arts are an expression of the finest achievements of a society. It follows then that the performances and exhibitions of these finest achievements should be of the highest possible quality. While the question of quality is subjective, one can rely on national reputations, the advice of fellow professionals, and of course, on the expertise and judgment of the professional planning the cultural events.

Secondly, it is important to provide social involvement for the participants. Sharing cultural experiences can only add to enhance them. Dinners, master classes, or any activity that can bring together people with similar interests in the cultural arts and give them opportunities to interact, can fulfill this need.

Thirdly, a mixture of activities will add to the cultural experience. Music, theater, dance, paintings, and sculpture, to name a few, are all part of the cultural arts. Exposure to this spectrum broadens the individual's awareness and appreciation for the cultural arts as a whole.

Finally, every participant expects a professional presentation. Professionalism relies on a constant search for ways of improving the quality of the presentation. It is knowing the participants and their needs. Professionalism is also developing an enthusiasm and excitement for this aspect of one's life.

The cultural arts can play an important role in an individual's leisure life style. The arts can relax as well as stimulate the participant. They can act to please or to provoke. Because they can stir up such a milieu of emotion, the cultural arts can become as rewarding to the presenter as they are to the participant.

COMMENTS

Attitudes of customers and employees are the result of past experiences. They can be cooperative or competitive, harmonious or disruptive, productive or non-productive. These attitudes resist change and take much effort to reverse this resistance. Crisis is one way to achieve change. The other is the building of common objectives through services and recreational programming.

Those in service positions are in direct contact with customers and employees on a day-to-day basis. They are often approached first for guidance and assistance. Therefore, management would profit if they recognized the importance of this informal contact and trained staff in guidance and counseling techniques to help improve the quality of the experience and, in turn, their satisfaction level.