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GOING PROFESSIONAL IN RESORT RECREATION

BY

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ABSTRACT

Amelia Island Plantation is a relatively large resort with full scale Recreational amenities including golf, tennis and a structured Recreation department. In order to achieve effective communication it is necessary to record all events and thoughts in a daily journal to be submitted for review. The following article contains candid excerpts from the 1981-1983 Recreation department journal as entered by Karyl Stewart, Recreation Director and Ann Barker, Assistant Recreation Director. The excerpts are representative of the views of the director and the assistant on resort recreation professionals and the qualities needed to pursue this field.

GOING PROFESSIONAL IN RESORT RECREATION

In order to preface this article it is essential for the reader to note the "therapeutic" value of a daily journal. The journal is actually an outlet for expression of my most professional thoughts, insight, and ideas coupled with my most unprofessional...opinions (of course). The heart of the journal would be incomplete without the entries from the most trying of days...days when I seem to entertain a more philosophical approach...

"April 14, 1981 It's very true...every day is an adventure in our lovely paradise called Amelia Island Plantation (all in all I think I would rather be in Philadelphia). Tune in tomorrow for AS AMELIA TURNS."

Going professional in resort recreation offers a smorgasboard of new challenges and adventures each and every day. The vacationer coupled with the conventioner arriving from every corner of the nation are essential ingredients in the never ending supply of entertaining encounters that resort work entails. A true professional learns to retain a healthy sense of humor, accepts the bad with the good, and looks upon each day as a new learning experience...

"April 15, 1981 Ann and I learned some very valuable lessons

today (for the 700th time)...

(1) If you want something done, do it yourself.

(2) You have got to be extremely flexible in this business.

(3) If nothing goes right, smile anyway and resort to heavy drinking."

The lessons to be learned are numerous and the challenges presented are welcomed. But when we refer to the essential qualities needed in the make up of a resort recreation professional, to meet these experiences, it is a matter of getting back to basics in personnel selection that makes the difference.

"April 16, 1981 There are a few good things that came out of the day...

(1) I realized that I have an extremely efficient and conscientious person as an assistant who knows how to roll with the punches.

(2) I also realized that even if we are understaffed at this time, I would rather be understaffed with qualified help than over staffed with half-baked individuals. It pays to be selective when choosing a staff."

In retrospect, that period of time in 1981 was synonymous with excedrin headache number 73. Nevertheless, when the statement is stripped of its humor the basic attributes that are sought after in the resort professional are revealed. To secure quality employees in the field is an ongoing process that requires sorting through those individuals that are willing to put forth their best and use those skills that we are all capable of possessing: initiative, flexibility, enthusiasm, and self-motivation. In addition to these basic qualities, it is imperative that these individuals can grasp and understand the industry's only reason for existence...the guest.

"January 19, 1983 Being late or missing a program is something that I don't believe in and never let happen. My staff is aware of my feelings on this and act accordingly. I truly dislike having to hire part time or temporary help because they aren't career oriented enough to comprehend the quests first philosophy."

Guests are our only source of bread and butter in the resort industry. In order to ensure success (and butter) it is necessary to educate yourself so that you arrive at a complete understanding of our responsibility to the quest. There are no excuses that will satisfy a guest when a program is poorly planned or one that begins late. We are in a highly competitive market and to accept less than excellence will immediately reduce our chances for survival. Our competitor is only just a few doors down the road.

Business skills are emerging as another of the most sought after skills of the professional. The non-revenue producing department represents an era of the past...

"June 26, 1982 The final bill for their group recreation was \$961.50. Not bad, huh?"

(Positive reinforcement never hurts even if it is self induced). Well rounded business skills are essential...

"January 10, 1983 ...as far as getting some statistics and justification I will be able to get some good ideas at the conference as just about every Recreation department that I am familiar with has had a difficult time justifying its existence at one time or another."

Involvement in the overall Resort recreation field as a whole has numerous advantages over those that concentrate solely on their particular company. Through ideas and program exchanges a professional contacts valuable resources of information for learning.

Again, learning is a key word in the profession. However, emphasis needs to be placed on the primary source of learning...the internship experience of the professional. The internship period is an opportunity for the entry professional to use those special qualities that only they possess and offer them to the profession to accept, nurture and...evaluate. Above all else, the internship should be used as an experience of learning. It is imperative that the intern becomes saturated with the industry as a whole. It is the time for them to grit their teeth and open their ears to a term that only an employer would use..." constructive criticism" (employees generally refer to it in other terms).

"June 24, 1982 I had a meeting with one of the staff members and had to explain that he had to learn not to be so sensitive and defensive and learn how to take criticism in a professional manner."

I am not quite sure at this point but I think I might have forgotten to mention in that meeting the effects the Florida sun has had on my lower lip after exposure to "constructive criticism" from my boss.

Welcoming evaluation is yet another basic attribute that when combined with flexibility, initiative, self-motivation, business skills, and understanding the guest, completes the qualities sought after in the resort recreation professional. The rewards are many for those who possess those necessary skills. Everyday, is an adventure. I will be tuning in tomorrow for the continuation of AS AMELIA TURNS...will you?