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## National Employee Service and Recreation Association (NESRA)

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# NESRA

NATIONAL EMPLOYEE SERVICE AND RECREATION ASSOCIATION

Question 1: When did NIRA/NESRA start?

Answer: It was founded through the efforts of a professor at Purdue University. The primary purpose of the organization was sports programs within industry.

Question 2: Could you give some additional information about the historical development aspects of NIRA/NESRA.

Answer: NIRA/NESRA originally started in 1939-1940. Four industrial specialists attended the National Recreation Association conference and there was nothing on the conference agenda that would benefit them. They met with the organization members and decided to establish another association under the leadership of Professor Eastwood from Purdue University. The association started with these four companies and rapidly grew to 40 or 50. The growth has been steady throughout the years. There are approximately 500 companies.

Question 3: What is one of the major problems facing employee services?

Answer: It is that many individuals who hold positions of importance in employee services do not know the philosophical basis of the program or why their program exists and how it relates to bottom line profits.

Question 4: Could you expand upon your statement about purpose?

Answer: It is not knowing, or having a clear definition of program purpose and how it fits into a company's organization so that it can be effectively sold. Many of the programs make statements about outcomes such as "it makes our employees friendly," "it keeps our people busy, and therefore out of trouble," and "it is our civic purpose to provide recreational programs for employees, especially for the wider community." These types of statements are fine but they are secondary outcomes to the

organization's purpose of bottom line profits. Ultimately, the base link between such outcomes as friendship and public relations must be shown to benefit the company. It is this link that is not understood well.

Question 5: Will you give an example of employee services programs that has had problems because of a lack of understanding of their purpose.

Answer: There was one company that provided their employees with every type of facility and program in a very benevolent manner. From this give-away program, the company expected loyalty. When problems in negotiation occurred, the employees walked out. The company officials could not understand how their employees could turn on them. As a result, the company reversed its philosophy and took away many of the employee benefits. This brought about unionization and conflicts resulted. This is an example of where the company entered into a give-away program and did not understand its basic purpose and how it could be utilized in relation to individual and organizational goals. Any product, service or goods that is given away is not valued.

Question 6: What should be the primary goal of an employee services program?

Answer: The primary purpose is not a competitive athletic program. It is not the function of an employee services program to develop a collegial atmosphere and award company letters. The primary purpose should be service to achieve both the individual's as well as the company's goals. The question is always asked, why are we doing this? The answer most often given is, "you must play to be a good worker". This is not always true because there are some individuals who are workaholics who make a substantial contribution to the company and "they do not play". These types of assumptions must be tested to identify base relationships and outcomes between an employee services program and outcomes of the company.

Question 7: What should the specific goals of employee services be?

Answer: The purpose should be the training of employees and improvement of employee skills. Employee services programs should parallel that of the business and its structure should be similar. The same purchasing forms, budgeting procedure, etc., should be used so as to help train the employee in the procedures of the company as well as giving him/her the necessary skill for job advancement. With this type of an objective, it will be better integrated as a company function and not isolated.

Question 8: Has there been much written about the basic principles and philosophy on the employee services field?

Answer: No, there was one textbook that was developed in the early 1940's that was primarily sport oriented. There was a new text that was sponsored by NIRA/NESRA in the early 80's. The primary difference between this and the earlier text is that it focuses more upon the service concept.

Question 9: What is the most important component of an employee services program?

Answer: For the program to be effective, it must be based upon sound business principles and knowing how outcomes from an employee services program benefits a particular company. Another important dimension is understanding how the business processes apply to a particular company and integrating these business processes into programming so that they are consistent with a company's overall policy.

Question 10: Have there been thorough assessments of employee services to identify these base outcomes?

Answer: There have been a few studies but there still is a big need to scientifically evaluate outcomes and relate these outcomes to company types.

Question 11: What are some of the services that are under the auspices of an employee services organization?

Answer: There are over 150 services and probably many more. Here are some to give you an indication of the diversity that exists in programs: blood services, service award programs, flowers for a death, birth, sickness, etc., parking lot (with the oldest having the best spot), identification badges, banquets, physicals, reduced price on medicine, insurance that includes life, health, etc., emergency auto services, dressing rooms, food services, vending machines, recreational programs, educational assistance for continuing education, and counseling.

Question 12: How does an employee services office operate as compared to one that is more traditional?

Answer: Usually the only time an employee ever went into a personnel office was to be hired, fired, or complain. When the employee did go, the supervisor would always ask the employee what he/she was doing in that office and placed him/her on some type of blacklist. In an operation that provides the total range of services, employees are always going into the office and no one knows the reason. As the employees come in you get to know them and you build relationships. You get to know their problems and become very close. You are looked on not as a management representative but as a friend and co-worker who has the

potential to help them with their problems.

Question 13: What are some of the new concepts that will be used in the employee services field?

Answer: You will be hearing many new terms like "humanities," "employee relations", "motivation," "reduced turnover", and "intelligence level". The primary focus of these concepts is greater productivity through helping the individual achieve his/her goals.