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Association Management

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Associations

ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT

QUESTION 1: What is the role of the Association Manager?

ANSWER: The role of an executive officer is keeping peace in the family. Within a membership there is great diversity, that is, regionality, suppliers versus operators, large versus small operations, different philosophical outlooks, etc. These differences in the membership give rise to many perspectives that in many cases may result in conflict if some type of leadership is not provided to help members understand their commonalities and how these differences translate into diversity which is a key element in the development of new ideas. Individualization of techniques to satisfy the diverse interests within an organization is essential. If one segment is served over another, conflict is the obvious result.

QUESTION 2: What is the role of the Association in relation to its membership?

ANSWER: The primary objective is growth and helping any industry establish its own identity. Growth in this context can be seen as the number of members attending workshops, the number of individuals participating in the organization, etc. One of the important items to achieving such growth is rechanneling the attitudes of the membership. It is important in dealing with members that you visit the individuals at the site of their operation. They are on their own turf, feel more at ease and are willing to give you the understanding that is important and necessary for the functioning of the organization. One of the methods that I used as I was visiting members at the sites was that I would ask them questions about suppliers and I would write these suppliers' names down and when I got back to the office I would write these individuals a little invitation to participate as an exhibitor at our national convention. The perspective in the profession once was that it was patronage oriented but as these ideas from the suppliers began to infuse into the profession and there were greater interactions, individuals in the profession began to see the importance of merchandising, food, and arcades to develop a greater balanced operation. One such example of this type of change was when we as an organization took a trip to Barcelona, Spain, and visited a park called

"Mountain of the Jude." The man who operated this establishment said that he made more money per square foot on arcades than he did on rides. This stimulated much discussion among the group because they could not believe that he had made more money off his arcade than the rides and even more importantly, he had conceptualized his profits in terms of square foot. This concept of profits per square foot was readily adopted and was one of the prime motivators in helping to change the membership's attitudes toward this balanced entertainment perspective. Another important concept in the development of this balanced entertainment perspective was the high tech. Most of our members preferred to buy direct from the suppliers deleting the distributors. With the concept of the circuit and chip, those individuals could not have the technology to hire their own mechanics to service many of their products. It may have been that the distributors have become a little wise and not trained other individuals in their high tech chip technology. As a result, the distributor has become more important in the service-product link and thereby have fostered the concept of balanced entertainment through greater product diversity such as food, merchandising, etc. They indeed have shown the operators how to make greater profits. Members in the profession were slow to change because they did not want to accept the distributor concept and wanted to do their own merchandising. With the change in technology this was not possible and it helped to change attitudes. The other major dimension that helped bring about this change was the per square foot concept.

QUESTION 3: What advice would you have for someone entering the outdoor amusement industry?

ANSWER: I would provide advice in one or two ways: to those entering the outdoor amusement industry and to those interested in organizational management. Those interested in the outdoor amusement industry must work their way up through the organization from the bottom. It is important to gain experience through high school and college during the summers and then let those in the profession know that you are interested in a permanent position. It is also important that you have a wide liberal arts background, a good background in the social sciences, and a business orientation, especially accounting. This is a hard, demanding profession that has many opportunities but most of the executives currently in the positions in the outdoor amusement industry have worked their way up through operations to management.

QUESTION 4: What are the opportunities in Association Management?

ANSWER: Employment with a trade association or professional organization requires a college degree. The most important element is the right personality characteristics, that is, an ability to keep cool, an ability to stay out of the limelight and yet accomplish your work tasks, the ability to anticipate, the realization that a half-loaf is better than no loaf, an ability to be able to deal with frustration and anxiety, and an ability to keep more than one ball in the air at a time. Association management is a people-oriented profession. It is, therefore, essential that you have a positive personality that can accomplish many things through interpersonal communication. It is also important that you have a tremendous amount of stamina and like to travel and have a family situation that will allow you to travel. Most positions in association management cannot be accomplished except by

visiting membership and making yourself highly visible.