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Future

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Future

FUTURE

QUESTION 1: What is the likelihood of success in finding employment in the industry?

ANSWER: The two key essentials are experience and contacts. With both the probability is high, with the one the likelihood is good and with neither of these factors operating in your favor, the likelihood of finding employment is slim.

QUESTION 2: Are there any individuals, cycles or trends that have had an impact upon the profession?

ANSWER: The primary movers and shakers of the profession have been a small group of individuals who have been consistently involved since the association's inception. Usually in any association there is only a small group that are actively involved and shapes the future of an association. They are the ones who set the policy and act as the leader or help mandate these standards in association's development. They are the ones who have to basically sell the idea to the membership. An example of an individual who has made an impact upon the profession and how it works is William Mueller. He was, the operator of Roseland Park in Canandaigua, New York. After the Second World War, there was a conservatism in the industry. People were afraid to invest but William Mueller invested in a new roller coaster and people were flocking from every place to ride the coaster in Canandaigua, New York. The profession immediately followed. This is the type of individual who has set the pace in the industry for change. He is the individual who has been willing to take the risk and be successful and the remainder of the industry has followed upon this example. It is that individual who has had a major impact upon the profession. Another basic dimension which has had a significant impact on the profession, are the consumers themselves. For example, in the 1930's ballroom dancing became popular and the amusement parks began to build large ballrooms and had big bands as the primary entertainment attraction. As this interest in ballroom dancing declined, these facilities were converted to other uses. Another example of change in the society and impact has been the automobile. At one point, the trolley was a primary mode of transportation to urban parks. As the automobile became important, parks were able to develop further away from cities and parking lots had to be developed, entrance designs changed, etc. A current trend based upon this type of a change is group business. In fact, there are some parks that only open their doors to group business and have completely

divested themselves of individual clients. Another example of demographics and their effect is that during the baby boom years, there was a need for kiddie parks. After the baby boom the numbers declined, the need for the kiddie parks declined and most of the kiddie parks are currently out of business. In fact, there is only one and this is in Houston, Texas and the gentleman has converted this kiddie park into opening three days a week for specialized activities such as birthday parties. This is not to suggest that kiddie parks were only a result of the demography of the younger child because it has been incorporated into most parks as a separate area today. The other factors working, in addition to demographics, is the need to separate the younger child from the adults because of the basic fear of the younger children of the older child. An example of the facilities that have followed these trends is the development of the theme park and how the traditional park has changed based upon the various types of demographic shifts. There seems to be an innate need in consumers for amusement parks and attractions and this need is very closely related to fantasy and fantasizing.

QUESTION 3: One of the common threads is creativeness/innovation to develop or bring about change. Is this a correct assumption?

ANSWER: It is, and it will tend to be the primary ingredient in the future. It is like the kiddie park in Houston; when the needs of the audience changed the owner and operator created facilities to meet these new needs.

QUESTION 4: What are the competencies needed to be successful in the field now and in the future?

ANSWER: At the present, some of the more important skills are: a background in social science with an emphasis in accounting, an individual with a good personality and who has an ability to listen to problems, also an individual who is cool under stress and likes to be with people. The basic element through each of these competencies is a business and people orientation. In the future one of the more important components will be an ability to scientifically manage operations. One of the more important sciences will be marketing and promotion, especially in a highly competitive market. Another important characteristic will be an ability to motivate others through some type of leadership and build some type of organizational solidarity. Still another important component is an ability to be able to assemble various input in a highly computerized technical age. The basic emphasis of this type of competency is being able to handle and process information. An ability to deal with the psychology of the organization as well as the psychology of the visitor to better be able to design client programs and services will be an important component. The industry also will depend very heavily upon research and development to continue the isolation of new products and methods to attract the client. The most important of these elements probably is the ability to deal with the subject of trends and changes and to anticipate the future in some way to be able to determine the hot items so as to stay on the competitive edge.

QUESTION 5: What has been the role of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions in bringing change in the industry?

ANSWER: The IAAPA's primary purpose is the exchange of information among its members to improve the industry. This interchange of ideas is what keeps the profession current and revitalizes and stimulates growth.

QUESTION 6: What have been the primary methods of change used by IAAPA?

ANSWER: There are four primary methods that we have used: 1) workshops, 2) informal meetings, 3) summer meetings, and 4) the trade show. Each year at our annual conference we sponsor workshops by experts in 35 to 40 subject matter areas that are practically oriented. Such topics include: information on games, rides, arcades, maintenance, merchandising, food and operations, soft-play areas, media, computer use, accounting procedures, financial development, office procedures, etc. The primary focus of each of these sessions is to discuss common problems and share operational information to solve these problems. There are also informal meeting times during our conference so that individuals can get together in groups of 8 to 10 to exchange ideas and to talk about many of the sessions and information that has been obtained at the conference. These sessions are usually associated with breakfast, lunch, dinner or a social event. It has been a very successful method over the years to reinforce information presented at the conference. During the summer, the association also sponsors what is titled "summer meetings or backyard tours." The back door of a selected park is opened and individuals associated with each of the departments makes a presentation of approximately 30 minutes with questions and answers. Within a two day period an individual visiting this type of seminar can hear from all of the various departments and is able to share information using this particular operation as an example. Another major dimension for the free exchange of information from the suppliers side is to show their wares for next season. These suppliers are always interested in adding more ideas to operation and trying to sell their products and services.

QUESTION 7: What are the elements outside the organization that have brought major change?

ANSWER: One of the first factors that has had a significant influence is the designer or architects of the current theme parks. These are the individuals who have designed the modern play areas and have had a significant impact upon the participation of America in our amusement parks and attractions. Many times, they are based upon needs surveys of the clients but more often they come from the designer who has an idea that he or she thinks will work. Another of the important factors is the economic cycles. These cycles have had a profound influence upon the industry because it is a factor that stimulates or inhibits spending of discretionary dollars. For example, during the Depression from 1919-1932, I remember reading from some of the historical documents of the association that this particular period was one of limited resources, how the patterns of spending changed and how the industry reacted to the change in the consumer spending patterns. A third element that has had an important influence upon the industry is the supplier element and their leadership to bring change to the profession in terms of trying to add new or creative ideas to operations.

QUESTION 8: What makes the amusement parks and attractions industry different from other industries? What are its unique characteristics?

ANSWER: It is a wholesome entertainment that anyone can enjoy regardless of age, sex, etc. There is a basic human need for an entertainment form that is based upon fantasy and escape.

QUESTION 9: What will the future theme parks look like in relation to programming, services, and facilities.

ANSWER: There are two major trends. One is the expansion of theme parks into specialty areas such as water parks. This is a form of entertainment that did not exist seven years ago. The other major trend is the greater diversification of the traditional park into one of greater emphasis upon entertainment and more diversity in types of entertainment presented. This diversity will allow the park to reach different audiences. Another major trend will be more spontaneous entertainment. Clowns, minstrels, etc., will circulate to alleviate pressure on lines. It is difficult to predict what changes will occur because the industry is directly tied to the demographic and societal changes.

QUESTION 10: What will the basis of future business?

ANSWER: The basis of the future business may be group sales. Another major dimension will be repeat business. The primary dimension will still be accommodating the interests of the park visitor.

QUESTION 11: One of the threads through your response about competition is the consumer. Has the consumer become more sophisticated through the years in demanding greater audience specificity?

ANSWER: The consumers have become more sophisticated but they are the primary elements who have brought changes to the industry. It is the consumer's constant demand or appetite for new items that has brought about this change. The big problem is trying to find out what consumers want. The amusement parks and attractions industry is one that has been successful in assessing these consumer needs to diversify the industry.

QUESTION 12: As the consumer sophistication has increased, what changes have occurred in management?

ANSWER: Management has moved from an art to a science. This scientific mode of management has enabled owners and operators to provide for a better total experience that is needed to meet the greater diversity of the population. There are segments of the society that are currently being served that were not served and those parts or segments of the society that we were serving are having their needs filled in a more complete or total way. Scientific management is the key to future endeavors because it is the element that will provide the necessary skill to continue to stay current in the future.

QUESTION 13: What is the investment potential in amusement parks and attractions for the future?

ANSWER: The general outlook for the industry is that of slow and

steady growth. Obviously, the risks will be greater in the future because of the instability of conditions. The risks will be different for investors. Those operations that have applied scientific management are the ones that will have a greater return on their investment because it will help minimize the risk of loss. The key element to investment is not necessarily the risk but the scientific management to reduce the risk. Along with greater risk in the industry sometimes comes very lucrative profits. Another dimension to investment in addition to scientific management is an ability to change and being able to assess trends to know what the future needs are in terms of studying the demographics and trends, surveying the client, and talking to other professionals to have a very competitive product in the family entertainment industry. The investment decision will be costs and the ability to balance costs in relation to revenues especially the capital investment, new rides.

QUESTION 14: Could you please identify some of the long range factors that are going to influence the future of the industry, especially based upon psychological elements?

ANSWER: I think there will be more of a scientific approach to the psychology of the park. The two current trends that will be important in the future are the return to family values or togetherness and the conservative attitude of the young generation. The key to the future of the industry is understanding such cycles and knowing how to change operations directly for the future. One person that comes to mind and can serve as an example is Disney. He had a significant impact upon the amusement parks and attractions business. Generally there are two types of individuals. One who is successful because he/she is in the right cycle and emphasizing the right aspects of their operation and the other is someone who brings about or creates change in a trend as a result of his/her vision for the future. Disney, I think, is an example of this latter type of person.

QUESTION 15: What opportunities exist in the field for employment and how do you obtain them?

ANSWER: The best way is to work at amusement parks and attractions during the summer and work your way through the various ranks during college and let someone know that you want to stay in the business. It is also essential that you have a social science background and some business skills. Probably even more important than this particular academic preparation is that you have an extraverted personality, remain cool, listen well, smile quite a bit, and like old ladies. You must have a very warm and pleasing manner to be successful in this business.