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Margaret E. M. Pavlich
Northern Arizona University

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RELEVANCE GUIDES RESEARCH AND SERVICES

BY

DR. MARGARET E. M. PAVLICH, RESEARCH COORDINATOR

SCHOOL OF HOTEL AND RESTAURANT MANAGEMENT
NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY
BOX 6024
FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA 86011

ABSTRACT

The Arizona Hospitality Research and Resource Center of the School of Hotel and Restaurant Management at Northern Arizona University was established to support the state's hospitality industry and students of the school. Primary services available to industry through the center include applied research (with specialization in predictive methods), educational seminars and on-site consulting. The AHRRC is able to take advantage of existing university infrastructure (expertise, facilities, field operations, communication vehicles and technology) to achieve its purpose and effectively serve its constituencies throughout the state.

RELEVANCE GUIDES RESEARCH AND SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

Customized service, advanced research methods and access to a diverse network of experts are key advantages of research services offered to the hospitality industry by the Arizona Hospitality Research and Resource Center of the School of Hotel and Restaurant Management at Northern Arizona University.

"As a partner in the development of Arizona's hospitality industry, we have made a commitment to providing an effective combination of applied research, professional seminars and troubleshooting," said Tom Parker, AHRRC associate director.

The Arizona Board of Regents established the AHRRC in 1987 with a mission to support Arizona's hospitality industry and to function as a resource center for students in NAU's School of Hotel and Restaurant Management. The school's current enrollment is 606, with a projection of 1,000 majors by 1990.

"Our overriding goal is to establish and maintain a productive working relationship with the industry. We want to be supportive,

accessible and relevant," Parker added.

Parker joined the center in August following seven years as owner and president of Parker Research Consultants, a Salt Lake City-based tourism and hospitality consulting firm.

APPLIED RESEARCH

"In response to industry demand for meaningful planning and decision information, we offer innovative research techniques which produce practical recommendations for the future," Parker said.

Sample projects and services include: market potential analysis, market segmentation, pricing decisions based on customer value perceptions, product design and repositioning, communication planning and forecasting and strategic planning.

While specializing in predictive methods, the center conducts applied research addressing traditional needs of the industry including studies of economic impact, advertising effectiveness, visitor perceptions, lodging inventory, occupancy rates, customer satisfaction, market identification, quality of service, recreational needs, and feasibility.

"The center can also help with the implementation of research-based recommendations," Parker continued.

He noted that "post-research" assistance can determine whether or not a research project has a positive return on investment.

"Unfortunately, a common weak link in research is at the implementation stage. Simply producing information that sits on a shelf doesn't positively impact the bottom line. The center is concerned with helping clients apply information to their advantage. We'd prefer not to hand over the results of a survey and just walk away," Parker said.

PROFESSIONAL SEMINARS

In addition to performing research projects, the AHRRRC conducts professional seminars for public and private entities. Seminars feature state-of-the-art information and can be delivered on-site or at the university. Client needs determine length and subject matter.

"Seminar facilitators are experienced educators who reflect NAU's reputation for excellence in teaching and education," Parker emphasized. "An advantage of being university-based is that we can call on experts from all disciplines to teach seminars and assist in problem solving."

ON-SITE TROUBLESHOOTING

"When the situation requires hands-on problem solving or troubleshooting, we can arrange for one or more consultants to visit operations of all sizes--from individual properties to corporate headquarters" Parker said.

If necessary, the center will recruit experts from other fields to complement collective knowledge of the troubleshooting team. The size and nature of the problem will determine the number and background of experts assigned to identify and reconcile problems.

CUSTOMIZED SERVICE

"The center will work closely with clients to assess their particular needs. We can combine services to meet their objectives. We won't automatically advise them to perform a major survey if it's not relevant to their problem," Parker said.

"Much the way doctors diagnose, prescribe and administer treatment to individual patients, the center can improve the health of hospitality businesses," Parker suggested.

"Some problems are quickly identified by 'doctors'--in this case, by our consultants. For instance, symptoms could indicate a need for more training, technological improvements, operational changes, or adjustments in management style.

"However, if the problem is more extensive, research might be required to determine an appropriate 'prescription' or action plan to correct the situation," he elaborated.

ARIZONA HOSPITALITY TRENDS

Supporting the center's mission to provide Arizona's hospitality industry with up-to-date information on current trends, the AHRRRC produces a quarterly newsletter featuring guest articles by distinguished faculty members and industry representatives. Arizona Hospitality Trends is circulated to an in-state audience of approximately 2,000, plus another 1,500 national and international readers.

SERVING STUDENTS

Housed in one of three buildings comprising NAU's School of Hotel and Restaurant Management, the AHRRRC provides students with access to a variety of resource materials. Among the center's holdings are: an extensive collection of trade journals and magazines; sales kits and brochures representing hotel operations and facilities in some 200 U.S.

cities and states and nearly 600 foreign cities and countries; convention and visitor bureau packets from 49 U.S. states and 70 cities; information from 66 foreign consulates; annual and quarterly reports from industry corporations; 127 national, international and worldwide directories; and 85 reference books and directories of miscellaneous hospitality-related subjects.

Adjacent to the study area, large enough to accommodate 20 students, is the viewing room, complete with a microfiche reader and videotape players. The center is in the process of establishing an inventory of industry-supplied, promotional and training videotapes.

Students utilize the center to complete homework assignments and class projects, perform independent study, prepare for job interviews and explore career opportunities.

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

NAU is a mid-sized university of some 13,000 students--about 2,500 enrolled in off-campus classes and degree programs offered by 10 field sites throughout the state. With an emphasis on undergraduate education, the fully accredited university is comprised of 11 colleges and schools and offers more than 160 bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees. Students enjoy a mild, four-season climate in the mountain setting of Flagstaff, Arizona, just 89 miles south of the Grand Canyon. NAU prides itself on small classes, personal advisement and attention to students, and an outstanding, accessible faculty.

For more information about services offered by the Arizona Hospitality Research and Resource Center, call (602) 523-1918.