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STARTING AN INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYEE
SERVICES PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

This manuscript outlines a number of ways to begin an industrial employee services program. The author describes plans for a program depending upon the company commitment; budget dollars; facility availability; and other pertinent factors.

STARTING AN INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYEE
SERVICES PROGRAM

There must be the basic assumption of employee interest and company support before starting any type of employee services organization. Company support can range from just a few budgeted dollars to large, extensive company owned facilities. The next essential step in beginning a comprehensive program is to hire a professional, trained in recreation and parks administration; leisure sciences; employee services administration; physical education, or a related field.

There are many factors to consider before actually programming for a given company. Among those areas are employee population; plant/office location (urban/suburban); proximity to community facilities; working hours of employees (1/2 or 3 shifts); climate of area, etc. Regardless of the activities to be offered, there are several levels of programs that might be started within a given company. Keeping in mind our three basic assumptions, employee interest, company support, and a professional to administer the program; the levels of company involvement are as follows:

Awareness Program

The administrator would research the community, as well as company resources to determine what leisure time activities are available to the employees. This is the very basic level involvement wherein information would be made available to employees and families and they would avail themselves of whatever services that interested them. This type of program generally entails many educational type offerings; mini-clinics on various activities; seminars; lectures and films. Some of these could be conducted on site for employees. However, at this level of service, your program is primarily an information resource with little or no follow-up or active programming.

Community Resource Program

The next level of program involvement calls for the extensive use of community resources. The administrator at this level would communicate directly with various leaders in the community from Y.M.C.A.'s; town, city, and county agencies; private clubs; high schools and universities. The professional would actively pursue these organizations to make their services available to his employees. Many times the services will be limited, but often many privileges may be gained in the form of corporate memberships. Other services being administered by the above agencies that employees could participate in are: athletic leagues and tournaments; special interest club groups; discounted group travel programs; physical fitness and weight training activities; and, a number of varied instructional programs from tennis to tax and retirement counseling.

Company Owned Facilities

This last level of involvement is by far the most costly to a company, but also gives the greatest opportunity for the company to gain the benefits inherent in a quality employee services program. Having their own facilities enables the company and administrator to offer the kinds of activities that their employees request; when they want them and most importantly to have the control of activity content, enrollment, fees and charges, and leadership. Company owned facilities are not defined as solely gymnasiums; tennis and racquetball courts; swimming pools; weight rooms; or field houses. Many companies already have facilities easily adaptable for leisure time activities. The activity offerings are limitless for a company with a cafeteria; different sized conference rooms; an auditorium; parking lots; or open acreage of any kind. Having a gymnasium, pool or major sports facility would be icing on the cake, but there are very few companies that are that fortunate. With company support at this level, space is often found in warehouses; unused storage areas and the like for many limited space type activities. Here it becomes even more important to have an intuitive, creative, resourceful professional to develop a program and justify the need for additional facilities based upon employee demand.

No matter to what level program your company commits, do not limit your thinking to the obvious leisure services (i.e. sports, travel, instruction). Think about service to your employees and their needs, desires, and abilities. Consider discount offerings in the areas of safety, family living, vacation planning. If your company is looking at a physical fitness program, do not think only weights, treadmills, exercise bikes, etc. Do your company and your employees the service of providing activities or information in the areas of nutrition and diet, smoking cessation, lower back pain, drug and alcohol abuse, etc. Many times these programs fall under the title of Employee Assistance and Counseling. Professionals in our field in the '80's and into the '90's are going to be asked to contribute more and more in areas never seen in a recreation or physical education curriculum.

Somewhere in this wide range of services mentioned, your company will show a spark of interest; at one of the program levels mentioned, they'll want to get involved. It's up to you to be sure they take that critical first step.