

MARKETING TRAINING FOR STUDENT LEADERS

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ABSTRACT

A set of workshops was devised to use the talents of campus staff and faculty to provide leadership training for student organization officers. The scope, objectives, and structure of the marketing workshop address the problem of "getting the word out" about the organization and its events.

INTRODUCTION

Every year on thousands of campuses tens of thousands of students become the new officers of student organizations. These new student leaders bring with them a high level of expectation and enthusiasm. They aspire to lofty accomplishments for their organizations whether they be intellectual pursuits, socio-political positions, or mutual fellowship activities. Unfortunately, all too often, they have little or no training or experience in managing an organization. Goal setting, measurement of objectives, motivation, and program evaluation have rarely been considered. Skills have not been developed in such areas as understanding how to attract future members, promoting events, attracting funds and support, coordinating energies, and many others. Each new student officer faces alone the challenge of this new position. Some organizations have retained more experienced officers to turn to for support, training, and advice. More often, former office holders have left little information to draw on; and other incoming officers are facing their own unfamiliar situations. By the time new officers learn enough to be successful, if ever, the school year comes to an end and the process begins anew.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP WORKSHOPS

A program was designed in 1985 to utilize the resources of the university to give leadership education to new officers and officers elect. First, a needs assessment survey was sent to all campus organization officers to identify areas in which they felt a need for assistance. From that survey, major areas of concern were found to be in goal setting, marketing, and management. Based on the needs assessment, a series of topics were identified (Table 1) which could be developed into a workshop training program.

The workshop model used for this leadership training program was based on the claim that people learn best when their "whole person" is involved in the learning process. This involves the intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual parts of each workshop participant. Involvement of the intellectual self is appealing to that part of the person that thinks, solves problems, and is able to reason. The

emotional self demands attention and responsiveness to the feelings of the participants. The physical self in a workshop needs stimulation to avoid low energy levels, fatigue, and bodily tension. The spiritual self deals with man's ability to see beyond oneself and find meaning in life and the world around (Cooper and Heenan 1980, Myers 1981). The program was designed to address each part by attracting workshop facilitators who would convey enthusiasm in the subject and be recognized as being knowledgeable in the topic presented. An assessment of campus resource people identified faculty and staff who had expertise in these areas as well as an ability and willingness to work with the students.

TABLE 1
MAJOR WORKSHOP UNITS

- I. What does your organization want to do and how can it be done?
- II. How to get the word out about events!
- III. How to get members, keep them and ensure that they are happy and productive.
- IV. How can an organization raise money through fundraising events and through the student administration?
- V. What is an officer's role in an organization?
- VI. How are decisions made?

Each topic was divided into several subtopics of specific interest. The sets of related sessions formed a teaching unit exploring the main topic. This paper will expand on the second unit, "How to get the word out about events." Each of the other units was developed in a similar manner.

MARKETING WORKSHOPS

"How to get the word out about events" is generally oriented toward identifying target audiences for events then assessing the best methods to reach the target audience through promotion and advertising. The subtopics identified in the needs assessment were 1) promotion and marketing strategies, 2) publicity--use of graphics, and 3) media relations. The facilitators invited for these subtopics were a marketing professor, a public relations specialist from the university information office, and the manager of the university printing and graphics services.

Facilitators jointly developed a specific program with clearly defined subject areas, learning

objectives, and experiential exercises for each topic: 1) Marketing Strategy, 2) Publicity and Advertising, and 3) Graphics and Layout.

The team then developed a set of learning objectives for each workshop (Table 2) that would allow the student to know specifically what they would learn from each session. The workshops would then be evaluated by the student to see if the learning objectives were met. These learning objectives were designed with consideration that few, if any, of the students had any business, marketing, advertising, newswriting, public relations, or graphics courses or experience in their background. Each member of the group reviewed all objectives to achieve a consensus regarding the appropriateness and ability to accomplish the objectives in the available time frame. They also were able to plan for continuity among sessions.

TABLE 2

UNIT II: HOW TO GET THE WORD OUT ABOUT EVENTS

Market Strategy - Marketing Professor

1. To identify who is most likely to be interested in your offerings.
2. To determine what characteristics distinguish these people from the population at large.
3. To determine how these people may be contacted, informed, and persuaded.

Publicity and Advertising -
Public Relations Specialist

1. To write effective copy for news articles and announcements.
2. To know how to distribute news releases, community services announcements, and plan for advertising.
3. To develop contracts with media representatives.

Graphic and Layout - Printing and Graphics Manager

1. To create a visually appealing layout.
2. To be familiar with sources available to make attractive camera ready material (typesetting, copying, pasteup, clip art, etc.)
3. To prepare materials of camera-ready quality.

The facilitator for each workshop developed a learning exercise to give student leaders hands-on experience in applying the knowledge and management tools they were being taught. The team agreed, in advance, that the exercises should have a common foundation that could be used as building blocks through the three related workshops. The unifying task selected for the exercise was the development of the marketing mix of an event sponsored by the organization with emphasis on the promotion mix.

Each leader was also asked to link events to the common theme, The Ernest Hemmingway Year, already set by the University President for 1986. This would allow the leaders to coordinate or relate their activities with publicity efforts of a number of other high visibility activities sponsored by the university. Such an event would actually be part of most student organization programs for the year, so in addition to participating in a feasible and evaluable exercise, the leaders should be able to apply this experience to their own organizational needs. Relating the exercise to the organization's goals was hoped to provide for the intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual needs of the participants through a higher level of involvement.

The first workshop on marketing strategy requires the students to develop a strategic plan by developing a worksheet that focuses attention on each of the learning objectives covered in the discussion. Each leader then describes the event and the target audience. They then analyze and divide the audience into segments which have identifiable and reachable distinguishing characteristics. Options for communicating to each specific segment must be listed and evaluated for effectiveness and cost efficiency.

The second workshop on publicity and advertising requires students to prepare written copy for news releases, public service announcements, and advertisements. The facilitator takes the facts and objectives of an event (or more than one) developed in the first workshop and provides students all the relevant information about that event in a haphazard format. Each student then uses the principles taught in the session to compose interesting and informative copy in correct news style for dissemination to the media.

The third workshop follows the same event and, using the strategy and copy already developed in the first two workshops, teaches students to design their own layout and graphics to prepare a camera-ready mockup of a poster announcing the event. Principles of graphic design and use of space are covered. Materials available for graphics such as clip art and typestyles are demonstrated. Each student uses the materials and instruction to make a poster announcing the event.

The entire leadership training program consists of a total of thirteen leadership training workshops with eighteen contact hours of instruction.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

It is too early to quantitatively evaluate the impact of the program on the quality of student leadership and management skills. One measure of the reaction of students to the program is the growth of the sessions. Early sessions were very small, under five on occasions. As the program progressed the average session size increased each week. The "word-of-mouth" promotion was attracting other student leaders who were hearing positive things about the workshops. Feedback from participants in the sessions indicates that student leaders are able to design their

activities better and feel more confident in their ability to organize efficiently. Some have said they had been afraid to initiate anything new because they were overwhelmed with fear of unknown obstacles. The sessions provided a system to manage the obstacles and overcome these fears.

In the later stages of the first round, some faculty members and some department heads inquired about the possibility of attending sessions when the sessions are repeated. Student attendance declined in the final session of the program. Investigation revealed organizations' leaders had assigned officers to attend but had failed to follow through on notifications and reminders.

A limitation revealed was that students only attended a few sessions as their schedule allowed or their interest was attracted. They indicated regret that they could not find time to take them all. Some of the value of the sessions was lost by missing some of the concepts.

DISCUSSION

At this stage, the program is still too new and has instructed too few students to be called a success or failure. Preliminary indications are that students do believe they are better able to conduct the activities of their organizations, that they give positive referral information to fellow student leaders, and that the program is attracting faculty who perceive similar leadership training needs. It is a program designed to take advantage of campus resources and talents to deal with campus needs. Its main requirement--time and commitment from faculty and staff--can also provide a sense of satisfaction and involvement for both. The long-term success of the program will require attention to providing positive reinforcements to the facilitators as well as to the students involved.

The time commitment from students requires a motivation level that is hard to stimulate and maintain. Full participation in the entire set of leadership workshops could be facilitated by awarding academic credit as an elective course in the curriculum. Several academic departments could accommodate such a program in their individual missions or as an interdisciplinary program. As an elective it can satisfy credit load limitations for students and contribute to their lifetime leadership potential as well.

REFERENCES

- Cooper, Susan and Cathy Heenan (1980), Preparing, Designing, and Leading Workshops, CBI Publishing Co.
- Myers, Ray C. (1980), "How to Conduct a Workshop," Association of College Unions, International Conference, April 12-16, San Francisco.