Repositioning the Field of Parks and Recreation
SUMA Convention
Regina, SK

John L. Crompton
University Distinguished Professor and Regents Professor
Presidential Professor for Teaching Excellence
Texas A&M University
Marketing Myopia

- Narrow, short-term thinking

TN Levitt
HBR July-August 1960
The essence of a customer oriented approach as opposed to a city centered approach

What business are we in?

Volunteerism as recreation

Maximizing use of existing facilities

Benefits to the wider community
The view that an industry is a customer-satisfying process, not a goods-producing process, is vital for all businessmen to understand...Given the customers’ needs, the industry develops backward...creating the things by which customer satisfactions are achieved.
What business are we in?
What Business Are We In?

Charles Revson:

“In the factory we make cosmetics. In the store we sell hope.”
SELLING CONCEPT starts with program or service developed by agency personnel; promotional effort seeks to convince client groups to participate; client groups fail to participate because it does not meet their wants.
MARKETING CONCEPT
starts with identifying client group wants;
develops program or service in response to those wants; promotional effort to communicate the program is rewarded by client groups participating in the program.
Promotion/selling focuses on the needs of the seller.

Marketing focuses on the needs of the buyer.
To sell Jack Jones what Jack Jones buys, you have to see Jack Jones through Jack Jones’s eyes.
“If a man can write a better book, preach a better sermon, or make a better mousetrap than his neighbor, though he builds his house in the woods the world will make a beaten path to his door.”
3 Key Questions

1. How much market research do we do?
3 Key Questions

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2. Why do we do what we do today?
3 Key Questions

1. How much market research do we do?
2. Why do we do what we do today?
3. What are we doing different from 5 years ago?
Marketing

Enhancing User Satisfaction
Marketing is two things:
• A set of activities
Iceberg

Promotion

Pricing Services
Locating & Scheduling Services
Developing Services
Selecting Market Targets
Finding Out Client Wants
The Set of Marketing Activities

Marketing Intelligence

Selection of Target Markets and Allocation of Resources

Marketing Objectives

Marketing Mix
Product
Distribution
location
scheduling
Price
Promotion

Marketing Environment
Social
Demographic
Technological
Financial
Resources
Political
Legal

Evaluation
The Marketing Activities are not as important as establishing a Marketing Mindset throughout the organization.
“Professional perspectives of parks and recreation are activity centered. Definition in terms of activities is unsatisfactory.”

“We should have discovered long ago the nature of the business we are in, but we have not...The critical questions are not, How many were there? Or Who won? The critical question is, What happened to Jose, Mary, Sam and Joan in this experience.”
Marketing is two things:
• A set of activities
• A facilitator of benefits
- Social interaction with friends and family kin.
- Social interaction with previously unknown others.
- Ethnic and cultural identity
- A gain in prestige; social recognition; status. The mastery of particular skills may be regarded as a form of “conspicuous consumption,” which brings forth peer group recognition.
- Excitement; an adrenaline rush; exhilaration.
- Ego-satisfaction of achievement and accomplishment; a desire to be successful.
- Security; to be part of a group that gives a sense of belonging, connectedness to others, and sense of affection.
- The feeling of being important and having responsibility; growth of self-worth and self-confidence.
- Fantasy; illusion; offering temporary escape from the realities and routines of everyday life.
- Relaxation and alleviation of stress and tension, which may be obtained from hard or no physical effort.
- Catharsis from “flow” to alleviate negative tensions, anxiety, anger and unwanted adrenaline.
- Acquisition of knowledge; satisfaction of curiosity.
- Feeling of well-being and vitality that derive both from exercise and physical fitness, and from mental alertness.
- Regression; the desire to “let your hair down” and act in a puerile, adolescent way.
- Aesthetic enhancement derived from being in an attractive natural environment.
- Challenge and risk, which lead to self-exploration, self-discovery, and self-development and may be obtained from sailing or skydiving, or from acting, dancing, or fly fishing.
Why am I doing this?
Why Do People Go Fishing?

- To:
  - Experience the outdoors
  - Develop skills
  - Pit wits with the fish
  - Be with friends
  - Share skills with others – especially children
  - Mental change and relaxation
  - Escape from pressures of everyday life
  - Take a trophy
  - Get food
Why am I doing this?
Physiological Benefits of Regular Physical Activity

- Improved circulation in the cardiac muscle
- Lower arterial blood pressure
- Increased number of capillaries in the skeletal muscle
- Increased levels of enzymes, important in metabolism
Why Do People Exercise

- To become more attractive and self-assured
- To have more energy throughout the day
- Better mood and disposition
- More creativity at work
- Better social life
- To make new friends
- Feel more relaxed, less tension
- To lose weight
- To live longer
What is this?
The Transformational Lens

It is

• Social recognition
• Excitement
• Ego-satisfaction of achievement
• Security of belonging to a group
• Social interaction
User Benefits Are Important

- Meet basic human needs
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Job Category</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Quartile Rank by in 2008</th>
<th>Median Wages¹</th>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Registered nurses</td>
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<td>Customer Service Reps</td>
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<td>Personal and home care aides</td>
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<td>Retail salespersons</td>
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<td>Office clerks, general</td>
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<td>3383.1</td>
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<td>Accountants and auditors</td>
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<td>1570.0</td>
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<td>Nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants</td>
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<td>1745.8</td>
<td>276.0</td>
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<td>Postsecondary teachers</td>
<td>1699.2</td>
<td>1956.1</td>
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<td>Construction laborers</td>
<td>1248.7</td>
<td>1504.6</td>
<td>255.9</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

¹ VH = very high ($51,540 or more), H = high ($32,930 to $51,530), L = low ($21,590 to $32,830, and VL – very low (under $21,590).
People don’t know what they want –

They only want what they know
Volunteering as a Recreation Activity

- Not merely a means to an end
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- Many people work for money, and they volunteer for a sense of worth and value
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- What is in it for me?
What Benefits Do People Seek Beyond Altruism?

- Social interaction, affiliation, belonging
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- Status, prestige, responsibility, leadership
- Personal growth, achievement, accomplishment
- Enhance self-image
Using Target Marketing To Fill Downtime

Stage 1. Identify a downtime
Using Target Marketing To Fill Downtime

**Stage 1.** Identify a downtime

2. Who is uniquely available at the time?
Using Target Marketing To Fill Downtime

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2. Who is uniquely available at the time?
3. What benefits do they seek?
Using Target Marketing To Fill Downtime

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5. How can we effectively communicate with the target market?
Using Target Marketing To Fill Downtime

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1. Identify a downtime
2. Who is uniquely available at the time?
3. What benefits do they seek?
4. Which activities can offer those benefits? (They must be doable in the facility)
5. How can we effectively communicate with the target market?
6. What price should be charged?
Implications of the Range of Benefits Continuum

**WIDESPREAD COMMUNITY BENEFITS**
- A large proportion of people in the community
- **Who benefits?**
  - The community through the tax system - no user charges
- **Who pays?**

**PARTIAL COMMUNITY BENEFITS**
- Individuals who participate benefit most, but all members of the community benefit somewhat
- **Who benefits?**
  - Individual who participates
- **Who pays?**
  - Individual users pay fees that cover the incremental costs associated with their use. Other costs are paid by the tax system.

**USER BENEFITS**
- **Who benefits?**
  - Individual who participates
- **Who pays?**
  - Individual users pay the costs
Incongruency Associated with the User Benefits Paradigm
User satisfaction is an inadequate measure of the success of park and recreation agencies. Most taxpayers are not users of most of our services, so why should they support them? Need wider base of support.
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It is “off-site” benefits that count highest, not “on-site” benefits.
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But more importantly it is:

• Reduced health care costs
• Alleviate juvenile crime
• Community cohesion
• Economic development
Present Position

- Recreation and park provision is perceived to be a relatively discretionary, non-essential government service. It is nice to have if it can be afforded.
Reposition

- Position recreation and park services so that they are perceived to be a central contribution to alleviating the major problems in a community identified by tax payers and decision makers.
In the communities where there are playgrounds, where healthful sports are encouraged, the morality of boys is high. Not a boy was taken into the juvenile court this year from the neighborhood where there is a playground.

Finds Investment in Youth Pays the Community Well, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, *Daily Herald*, February 6, 1925
Benefits Related to Alleviating Social Problems

- Reducing environmental stress
- Community regeneration
- Cultural and historical preservation
- Facilitating healthy lifestyles
- Alleviating deviant behavior among youth
- Raising levels of educational attainment
- Alleviating unemployment distress
The “big idea” associated with repositioning is that funds are invested in solutions to a community’s most pressing problems. The term “investing” suggests a positive, forward-looking agenda with a return on the investments. Elected officials usually have no mandate to fund programs; their mandate is to invest resources into solutions.
Positioning Implications

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- Legislators’ political platforms represent residents’ concerns.
- The challenge is not financial, it is political.
- Some services will be discretionary – “Strategic importance.”