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Water, Sunshine and Safety: Community Service at Its Best

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Abstract

To complete this capstone project, I engaged my personally owned and operated water sports recreation business in a community service event geared towards water safety education. In this project, community members were offered to sign up and/or participate in a day-long event that included a professional fitting for a personal floatation device (PFD), a water recreation safety seminar and a guided kayaking shoreline tour of Lake Walcott State Park and National Wildlife Preserve. The event, sponsored by Adrift Kayak Adventures LLC, was completely free to the public and centered around the ideals of community service, safety, and outdoor recreation.
Introduction to your Capstone Project

A project that might serve the community in the present as well as in the future. During this semester, the project completed was a community service event geared towards water safety education. In this project, community members were offered to sign up and/or participate in a day-long event that included a professional fitting for a personal floatation device (PFD), a water recreation safety seminar and a guided kayaking shoreline tour of Lake Walcott State Park and National Wildlife Preserve. The event was assisted by professional planning of local community chamber members, business owners and with the health insight and guidance of local doctors. The event served local members of the Mini-Cassia area community, was completed with the help of local volunteers, law enforcement officials, and the business: Adrift Kayak Adventures LLC.

Section 1: Innovative Approach

Bringing Together Perspectives

Idaho is a state filled with opportunities for adventure. Recreation abounds, but with its beauty in rugged nature, there also comes an element of danger and surprise. Born and raised in Idaho, I have learned respect and knowledge of the outdoor and weather conditions that occur within the state from family members as they have passed down in our recreational outings. With the pandemic of 2020, and an ever growing push toward outdoor enthusiasm, immigrants to the state as well as homegrown locals are exploring their local wilderness more and more and have a desire to learn about their respective areas. Safety knowledge is in dire need. As reiterated from a law enforcement officer interviewed during the development process of this project, “a need for
recreational safety education has been apparent for years.” (Dudley, 2022). Additionally, local business owner of Idaho Watersports LLC, Gordy recognizes the availability for growth specifically in the area of water recreation, but highlights the need for water safety courses and knowledge of personal floatation devices and proper fit of equipment.

**Creating Innovative Approaches: Beyond How Might I?**

A project that might serve the community in the present as well as in the future, well beyond the how might I perspective of things. A deeper dive into this question led me to wondering how I could take feedback and information provided by my interviewees, past customers and family members, and pair them with the requirements of this project? A project was born in which I could stay true to my foundational values of community service, complete a beneficial capstone project and provide opportunity for growth and continued collaboration for my small water sports recreation business.

**Section 2: Emotional Intelligence**

**Awareness of Self and Others**

The capstone project focused on the needs of stakeholders as it not only highlighted a problem, but it offered viable solutions and tools for solving a problem for myself and others within the community: water safety and concerns over levels of water education within our youth community. In the recreational services my business provides, a simple but effective water safety course and recreational event could be completed. With this however, this event could also open the door for a complete catastrophe to happen. With water related businesses, it is a very real possibility that someone could drown, become lost out in the waters, or could get stuck in a storm, strong current, etc.
Consideration of the Audience: Emotional Intelligence

Though I have awareness fliers that go with every customer, and we talk through a short safety speech, in working on this project, feelings have changed and with the discussions between myself and stakeholders, I know those safety measures just aren’t enough. During the research and interview portion of this project, I have been able to search out the feelings of community members and other business owners, as well as have heard thoughts from local first responders and law enforcement authorities. Based on these interactions and research conducted, I have been able to utilize existing emotional intelligence and gain new ground in expanding my platform for the future.

Value to Others: Emotional Intelligence

Though it was not materialized in this year’s project, the research for and request for collaboration with a non-profit organization to take part in future year’s events will provide immense value to the community, increase all stakeholders emotional intelligence and allow for additional opportunities for healthy outlets for stress reduction. By utilizing the recommendations of my stakeholders and of the professionals I interviewed about using the naturescapes available at the project site, the project will better appeal to the audience and the different areas of their emotional intelligence and IQ.

With the help of interviewees in 492, the information gained will be of a huge benefit to the participants and future customers. During 492, among others, a doctor who provided me with additional information on the health benefits of kayaking and paddling, as well as useful information on early warning signs and symptoms of some of the commonly seen ailments associated with water activities: hypothermia and sun stroke was interviewed. Though I have
written mostly about the positives received from this interview, learning more about the negative possibilities associated with water activity will better help me in the future and will be invaluable to participants.

Finally, the president of our local chamber of commerce was interviewed for research. Mrs. Main educated me on some of the special needs of our community in relation to the capstone project. With this interview and the subsequent internet and text research completed; I now better understand that with the influx of residents in our local area, community members increasingly need an outlet and opportunity to take part in healthy activity with their families.

**Section 3: Creative Thinking**

**The Creative Framework**

Studies have shown that we retain information better if the learning activity is fun. For the Capstone project, fun is what was relied on in hopes of participants remembering the safety information provided prior to their guided paddle on the reservoir at Lake Walcott State Park. While attempting to develop a project that would be service oriented and beneficial for my community, the project needed to be something that was relatively easy and wasn’t going to take a huge drain on other priorities. In order to get the creativity rolling, quite a bit of time was spent brainstorming possible projects. What turned out to be the selling point of this idea was when a Milanote board was created based around the idea of a free kayaking event and educational safety talk. Milanote is an interactive platform that can house videos, blog links, photos, etc and put them all in one place. The user can connect the ideas, roping them together or eleven place virtual sticky notes for reminders or options. This program afforded the building blocks of the project.
Unique Approach/es to Project

This approach to a service project was unique simply because a lot of other students may not have the equipment needed for an undertaking like this at their disposal. What made this approach unique was that I am also a small business owner who donated the time and resources needed to provide a free service and event for a rural community. Also unique was the concessionaire’s agreement currently in place between my business and the State of Idaho & Federal Wildlife Protection Agency that made this Capstone project in a federal wilderness setting and wildlife preserve possible. This element adds value to the project and to the experience for the participants. By having the event at a preserve, some of the participants will be able to have a natural excursion that they may not have otherwise been able to experience.

Section 4: Your Innovative Solution

Accomplishment of Capstone

This project was an action / service learning event implemented for the benefit of my community, its stakeholders and the spirit of small business. This project hosted a group of participants for a personal floatation device (PFD) fitting, a water safety talk and a shoreline paddle at a local reservoir, completely free of charge to the attendants. Incorporating an actual experience into the safety event, the outcome was not only more intriguing to the audience but offered an active event and pleasing environment for the community. With the diverse group of participants in attendance, the business potential and new interactions was also a huge accomplishment for small business. Another outcome, that is innovative and will most likely remain unknown is if a person from the community is experiencing a hard time or certain personal life struggle. This event provided an outlet or relief for struggles unknown.
Innovative Approach to the Problem/Project

The project and problem solution is more innovative than other approaches because it goes above and beyond the intended outcome of the project. This approach is more innovative because of the incorporation of the activity into the action. Rather than just sticking with the delivery of a PFD fitting and water safety talk for the community, participants get into the outdoors. By creating a free event for the community, where participants get to have their own personal experience on the water, but first must take part in a hands on PFD fitting and safety session, I am solving the problem by new innovative means.

Section 5: Results

Benefits to Stakeholders

For this project, the benefits to the stakeholders were mostly intrinsic. Since the project was centered around a free safety course and water recreation event for the community, involved stakeholders were able to experience the benefits of helping the community and the value of doing nice things for others. Also, as part of the event, families of my volunteer employees were welcomed so that after the community portion of the event was finished they could spend the remainder of the day playing on the water. Participants were able to capitalize on the benefits of having a professional fitting for a personal floatation device (PFD), a water recreation safety course; both completely free of charge and invaluable to a positive water experience. Additionally, stakeholders cashed in on the benefit of a guided kayaking shoreline tour of a wilderness area and wildlife preserve. As the owner of the business and a stakeholder myself, I benefited greatly from this project by being able to spend the day serving the community, making new business and social connections.
Impact on Stakeholders

Some of the negative impacts on my stakeholders experienced were: the weather and the number of people in attendance to the event. The project was executed on Saturday, July 23, 2022. On this day, it was extremely hot and humid, to the point where a “Red Flag Warning” was issued from the National Weather Service to notify the public of a heat warning. This extreme heat had a negative impact on the community participants, my volunteers and on my infant daughter.

Positive results of the event, in addition to those listed as the benefits to the stakeholders were: having an excellent turnout and increasing the area of social wellness for all persons in attendance. During this event, people were collaborating with each other, building new personal and professional relationships and making a great memory all while learning and recreating.

Section 6: Conclusion

Overall, the Capstone Project executed well. All of my volunteer employees showed up as promised. Unfortunately, a collaboration with a local nonprofit for the event was unsuccessful, but in future years, I will start recruiting on this front even earlier to attempt to add an additional element of mental health as a benefit. Prior to the start of the day, we had 49 pre-registered participants to the event, all of which were in attendance. By counting the “walk-ins” who completed the event, we had a grand total of 87 community members take part in the recreation supported within this capstone project. The age range of participants varied greatly and ranged anywhere from age 7 to 62, with both males and females in attendance. Single participants as well as couples and families took part, and we even had a bachelorette party that was camping at the lake in participation.
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References

- Main, Penne. (President: MiniCassia Chamber of Commerce) May 2022. Interviewed by: Kimberly Hammond
- Mecham, Gordy. (Site Manager: Idaho Watersports, Burley) May 2022. Interviewed by: Kimberly Hammond