

FIVE STEPS TO DEVELOPING YOUR PROGRAM

Chances are that if you have been with participants lately you have had plenty of reminders that people can accomplish things that at first seem impossible. I know from experience, that the same is true of most organizations and that adventure businesses can achieve truly remarkable results.

Whether you are a community-based program, an educational institution, a for-profit team development organization, or a guide service, and if you are interested in attracting new groups to your facility, you are running a business and therefore you have only 2 objectives: Customer Service and Business Development.

Customer Service includes things like evaluating and improving program quality, developing mission relevant curriculum, talking on the phone with clients, and keeping participants safe. Business Development encompasses marketing efforts, networking with potential customers, and getting referrals from existing clients. For many managers, the Business Development side is the work that seems mysterious or less exciting. Unfortunately, that means that many experiential programs never realize their true potential for service or revenue. Here are five steps to help your program achieve its potential:

- I. Review your mission. Take a few minutes to review your mission before setting revenue or service goals. There is no sense in trying to grow in ways that are inconsistent with your mission. It is important that your growth plan be consistent with your mission and your organization's values.
- II. Set average weekly goals. Without clearly defined goals you will never know how well you're doing. Simply take the total revenue that you want (or need) to generate during the next year and divide it by 52. You now have your revenue goal for this week. Finally, at the end of each month, make sure that you get an average to see how you're doing month by month.
- III. Make time for business development. It's easy to avoid the activities that lead to future group bookings. So set some time aside every week to develop new opportunities. Spend 3-5 hours per week writing letters to former clients, preparing a fax advertisement, or attending community or trade group meetings. Depending on the groups that you serve, these meetings might include teacher association meetings, PTA or school board meetings, your local chamber of commerce meetings, or a local chapter of the American Society for Training and Development. If you are unsure of where to get started, call a client to ask them what groups they are a part of.



IV. Be aware of how you're spending your time. Mentally check in with yourself and others to get a sense of how much time you spend serving existing clients versus developing new business? Is anyone working on future business right now? If you find a way to get everyone involved in the future success of your program, you will be on your way to great things.

V. Enjoy the adventure. I like to think of business development as a treasure hunt that allows us to share meaningful experiences with others. Undoubtedly a jump start approach to business development will be exciting and may even be a bit uncomfortable at first. After all, you will be expanding your comfort zone. So stick with it, continually evaluate and improve your processes and in time you will see results.

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