

INTEGRATING SPORT SALES EXPERIENCES TO A CLASSROOM SETTING

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INTRODUCTION

During the past few years the topic of sport sales has increasingly been discussed by sport management practitioners and academics alike. A number of practitioners question the minimal amount of sport sales education afforded current sport management students. Due to limited experience in sport sales practitioners have questioned the readiness level of current sport management students in regards to their potential success in the field of sport sales. The lack of sport sales offerings via current sport management programs is troubling. At the 2004 Sport Marketing Association conference, Andy Dolitch, keynote speaker and President of Business Operations for the Memphis Grizzlies, echoed this sentiment when he discussed the lack of sport sales opportunities in current sport management courses and curriculum.

PROJECT OR PLAN

It is suggested that there is a need to increase sport sales experiences for our students. Often a sport management graduate's first job in sport involves sport sales. Many entry level sport positions involve ticket sales and the reality is that most job openings are in ticket sales (Washo, 2004). Having sport sales skills is a key in helping our graduates secure positions in the sport industry. Often, skills sought by employers tend to emphasize sales and marketing (Fullerton, 2007).

Sport sales should be part of a sport management curriculum. Unfortunately, few colleges and universities teach about sales as a profession and virtually no one teaches about ticket sales (Washo, 2004). Sport sales experiences can be added to current sport management curriculum and be delivered in various formats. It is important to remember that there is no one "best way" to deliver this information. Students should gain as much experiential education via the sport sales experience as possible. Academic programs in sport management require practical experience as part of the educational process to prepare students for demanding careers in sport business (Pitts, 2002). This valuable type of learning may go a long way in helping our students' secure entry level positions in the sport industry.

RESULTS OR EXPECTED RESULTS

Some sport management programs are adding sport sales as either part of a course or as its' own stand alone course. At larger universities sport management programs may be able to team up with their athletic departments to deliver sport sales. At smaller institutions working in conjunction with a local minor league team may lead to favorable results. At College Misericordia sport sales was incorporated into an existing course. The focus of the sport sales experience included working with a local minor league team to sell a specific game night. Students were immersed in all aspects of sport sales. In the Fall of 2005 the University of Memphis, as a collaborative initiative with the Memphis Redbirds, started the Sport Sales Training Program. Georgia Southern University offers a sales class that teaches students various sales tactics that benefit them in pursuit of employment. In 2007 Duquesne University's Sports Marketing Program created a new classroom initiative. The initiative, called The Bull Pen, provided students with real-life learning.

As the need for sport sales learning opportunities continues to grow, new initiatives are being developed. Some collaborative efforts of practitioners and academics are set to debut in 2007. The inaugural sport sales training program, called Sport Sales Combine, is coordinated by Dr. Bill Sutton, Vice President of Team Marketing and Business Operations for the NBA, and Dr. Richard Irwin, founder of the University of Memphis Sport Sales

Training Program. The Sports Sales Combine is designed to develop and refine participants' sales talent. Ohio University is hosting the first Ohio University Sports Sales Academy in conjunction with Mandalay Sports. The Academy is designed to give participants practical sport sales experience. Discussion Sport sales should be incorporated into current sport management curricula. A position in sport sales often is a sport management graduate's first job in sport. Experiential sport sales learning can better prepare our students for careers in the sport industry.

REFERENCES

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