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THE SOCIALIZATION OF SEASONAL EMPLOYEES

By

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Professional Paper

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INTRODUCTION

Through socialization an individual builds an identity in which their job becomes part of their definition of self. When an individual identifies with an organization, s/he/ views the organization as more than a job, but as a part of themselves. This usually translates to a deeper commitment to the organization (Cheney, 1983). Socialization constitutes communication insofar as a group conceptualizes socialization as the process of communicating the organization's culture to its newcomers. Research suggests that specifically designed socialization programs can help newcomers make a better adjustment to an organization (Chao, O'Leary, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994; Jones 1986; Hart, Miller & Johnson, 2003; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Because seasonal recreation organizations are workplaces that do not operate year round, investigating the socialization processes used in these organizations could shine light on to the unique challenges of socializing a seasonal staff. As such, one goal of this paper is to investigate the difficulties associated with the organizational socialization of seasonal recreation workers.

Seasonal organizations have a great deal to gain from the seasonal employee who becomes socialized into the organization. Individuals building an identity to an organization are less likely to quit mid-season and are more likely to return to work for multiple years. As such the objective of this paper is to first research how workers are currently being socialized to the seasonal organization and then offer a synthesis of the information collected from seasonal employees about the socialization experience. Upon

completion of this task, a training manual will be developed to provide the seasonal manager information about the most effective methods for socializing workers.

It is important to understand the socialization of seasonal employees for three reasons. First, it is beneficial to the employer if the same staff return to work season after season. Second, the life cycle of the seasonal organizational is abbreviated and how to socialize staff in a short amount of time is an interesting challenge. Third, seasonal staff often live together, work together and spend free time together. It is interesting if these extra points of contact with the organization and co-workers affect how they become socialized.

The Seasonal Organization

A recreational seasonal organization offers recreational opportunities for their clientele (e.g. skiing, whitewater rafting, and horse packing trips). The organization only operates for a portion of the year, the business is open and providing a service in the part of the year that they offer activities. As such, employees of seasonal organizations assemble for this short designated period of time and then go their separate ways upon the closing of the season. Since the organization is closed for part of the year it cannot offer traditional year-round employment to employees in the “off season,” or the part of the year when it is not in operation. This employment situation is unique because it is closed for part of the year, because there are a variety of jobs offered, and because the job can offer some unusual working conditions.

A seasonal organization is unique in that it is closed during the “off season,” but operates the same business every year. However, there are aspects of the business that change seasonally, which make it difficult for an organization to have consistency from

year-to- year. For example, each year a ski resort will have the same ski runs, lodges, eateries, and shops, but each year the employees are different. Some staff return for multiple seasons, yet every year there is a large percentage of new staff joining the organization. Thus, the nature of seasonal employment creates a new organization every year. While some staff return each season, they are often met with new management, new programs, new hires, and new equipment. Most seasonal organizations do not create specific staff socialization programs every season. Thus, it is difficult for organizations to communicate their goals, expectations, ideals, and values to the employees. Even though the work is not year round, it is perennial in nature and in an ideal workplace, the seasonal organization will have a low attrition rate season-to-season. Because of the perennial nature, it serves both the organization and employee to create a relationship that can span many seasons and aid in the retention and return of employees from season-to-season.

Another unique feature of recreational seasonal organizations is the different types of jobs in the field. By definition, these jobs involve helping people enjoy their vacation or leisure time, and can come in many forms. For example, some require little or no specialized training such as working food service in a national park, or being a lift operator at a ski resort. Unfortunately, these kinds of seasonal jobs tend to have a large turnover. Some places can not even keep staff an entire season. Many individuals believe these jobs do not pay well and do not have the same level of respect as other seasonal jobs. The seasonal jobs that people hold in a higher regard tend to require specialized training and certifications. Some people believe these jobs also do not pay well, but come with the benefit of being perceived as dangerous, fun, or exciting. Van

Maanen (1976) finds that the status of the organization or the occupation within the social structure could affect how likely the individual is eager to be a full organization member. If an individual perceives the job to be desirable it becomes easier for them to identify to it. Examples of these specialized jobs are climbing guide, ski patrolling or instructing kayaking lessons.

Seasonal recreation organizations often have the additional unique challenge of managing employees that spend more time together than in the traditional forty-hour workplace. Often employees live together as part of the job requirement, as is the case with camp counselors or guides on extended day trips. In other cases, housing is limited, and seasonal employees are housed in dorms or apartments owned by the company (Gallagher, 2007). Because people live and work together, a sense of community and connection stronger than that in traditional work places tends to exist. Not only do they have working ties with each other, they function as a social network. The identity they build not only is associated with their professional life, but with social life as well.

The Seasonal Worker

Employees in the seasonal recreation organization are motivated by different things than the individual employed by traditional organizations. Recreational seasonal workers choose to work at jobs that do not span the entire year. In many seasonal organizations, employees work together between four and six months out of the year and then pursue other endeavors. Employees may develop perennial patterns with the same organization, returning every year, or they may choose to work for a different seasonal organization every year.

Often times people do not seek out employment in the seasonal field for the high pay or great benefits. People choose to work in these jobs because they offer a unique

life experience. Because the jobs are associated with tourism and leisure the advantages usually include living somewhere beautiful, often times in an isolated location.

Additionally, those who choose to be a guide or camp counselor have the opportunity to participate in interesting and sometimes exhilarating activities. For example, those employed as summer camp counselors are often able to participate in all of the activities the campers do. Gaining skill in teaching and participating in rock climbing, art projects, canoeing, leading musical activities, and acting in plays can all be components to the camp counselors' job throughout the course of the season. In addition to gaining skills teaching a sport or art, the staff member has the opportunity to connect with others who have similar interests to their own. Seasonal workplaces offer a high concentration of people who enjoy doing the same activities, so it is a nice place to meet likeminded people.

The Traditional Organization

A traditional organization is one in which the organization operates year round, year after year. The individual and the organization engage in a long-term relationship in which both the individual and the organization benefit from the commitment. The traditional organization has months and years to socialize the worker to the organization. Because of the vast quantity of traditional organizations research regarding the socialization of newcomers has focused on these traditional settings (Bullis & Bach, 1989; Bullis & Tompkins 1989; Chao, O'Leary-Keels, Wolf, & Klein, 1994; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002; Hart, Miller, & Johnson, 2003; Jones, 1986; Pascale, 1985; Van Maanen, 1979; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

The Temporary Organization

The term temporary employee is a catchall for anyone that does not fit the requirements of a full-time employee. Recently, research has been done illuminating the advantages and disadvantages regarding the socialization of the temporary employee (Gossett 2002; Galup, Saunders, Neloson & Cerveney, 1997; Sias, Kramer & Jenkins, 1997). One reason temporary labor is attractive to organizations is the nature of the short-term relationship. Because of this, neither time nor money is spent socializing the temporary worker to organizational life. In contrast to the traditional organization, it is actually an advantage to the organization if temporary workers do not develop an affinity to the organization, as it permits the necessary ease of termination when they are no longer needed (Sias, Kramer, & Jenkins, 1997; Gossett, 2002).

Because seasonal recreation organizations are in operation for only part of the year, seasonal employees fall under the category of temporary worker. The major difference between a traditional and a seasonal organization is that a traditional organization has no pre-specified exit (Wilson, 1984). In seasonal organizations the end of employment every year is identified and expected. However, unlike an organization that hosts temporary workers but does not need them to build affiliation, the seasonal employer greatly benefits from having staff that identifies with the organization. Those seasonal organizations that do have a staff that identify with them are at an advantage to those that do not and more resemble traditional organizations than those that employ temporary workers. Since having a strategy to socialize staff is important to the success of traditional organizations (Jablin, 1984; 2001; Pascale, 1985; Van Maanen, 1979;

Wilson, 1984), seasonal organizations with a nontraditional schedule would also benefit from a specific socialization strategy.

THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Socialization

Pascale (1985) defines socialization as “the process of being made a member of the group, learning the ropes, and being taught how one must communicate and interact to get things done” (p. 27). Neophytes learn about organizations from job descriptions, clues from colleagues, superiors, subordinates, clients, and other work associates. Indeed, research suggests communicating with others to learn about the organization is essential for new employees. Chao, O’Leary-Kelly, Wolf and Klein (1994) argue that it is important for employees to learn organizational history, language, politics, people, goals, values, and performance proficiency. Furthermore, Jablin (1998) finds the more that employees understand their organizational roles and how to communicate about those roles, the more satisfied they are their jobs. Indeed, Wilson (1984) identifies that role ambiguity or expectations not being met have negative consequences for an employee. Finally, Cooper-Tomas and Anderson (2002) finds that an intensive socialization process in which emphasis is placed on learning skills is associated with positive attitudinal outcomes.

The new hire needs to learn how an organization works, and socialization is the process in which this happens. Indeed, “The purpose of socialization is to provide an individual with knowledge, ability, an motivation to play a defined role” (Van Maanen, 1976, p. 70). An intentional socialization experience includes training, mentoring, or structured social events that help a new employee learn appropriate behaviors and expectations within the organization. Myers and Oetzel (2003) find six dimensions that indicate whether individuals have been socialized into an organization. These dimensions

include: 1) building interpersonal connections and community within the organization; 2) learning and accepting the organizational culture; 3) being recognized as valuable by the organization; 4) the level of an individual's involvement with the organization; 5) job competency; and 6) adaptation and role negotiation. Once an individual understands these six dimensions, they are considered socialized into an organization. The end result of socialization is for an individual to identify with an organization. From these observations it is important to see how socialization processes result in individuals building identities with the organization, how it relates to organizational change, how long it takes, and what strategies are used to socialize employees.

How Socialization Affects Identification

Scholars agree that a key part of the socialization process is for the individual to identify with the organization (Jablin, 1986). An identity forms when an individual constructs their sense of self from the groups they belong to. More specifically, social identity theory is defines identity as “that *part* of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the values and emotional significance attached to the membership” (Tajfel & Turner, 1978, p. 63). It helps to answer the question “who am I?” Studies indicate that an individual forms identity partly by the organizations they are a part of. Workgroup, social, and cultural associations all help people define who they are (Collinson, 2003; Greene, 1978; Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). Furthermore, Cheney (1983a; 1983b) treats identification as the intertwining of person and organization. He states that individual identity and the identity of the organization join and become dependent on each other.

Identity is created through the process of socialization. As the individual is being socialized on how to behave, communicate, and how to act within an organization they are incorporating that into their sense of self. Upon understanding the six dimensions of socialization that Myers and Oetzel (2003) identify the individual has incorporated the values of the organization into his/ her professional life.

Socialization in the Context of Change

In traditional organizations the individual joins an organization, is socialized, and builds identity. Throughout the course of an individual's tenure with an organization s/he will incrementally be resocialized as the organization evolves. For example, the retirement of a prominent member of the organization will change the environment of the organization and individuals will have to be resocialized to those changes. As stated previously, there is a benefit to seasonal organizations if the workers are socialized into and identify with the organization. Because seasonal recreation organizations are active for only part of the year, they face a unique challenge. This makes it difficult for any individual to identify with the organization from season to season without being socialized every year.

Hart, Miller, and Johnson (2003) find that it is important for an organization to socialize employees during times of organizational change. Moreover, Wilson (1984) identifies that socialization facilitates uncertainty reduction. Change occurs often in seasonal recreation organizations, at the beginning of the season there are new staff members, new equipment, and additional life experiences that returning staff have participated in since the end of the previous season. The end of the season is marked by staff getting ready to pursue their next job or adventure. Van Maanen (1978) states that

“people in a state of transition are more or less in an anxiety-producing situation. They are motivated to reduce this anxiety by learning the functional and social requirements of the role as quickly as possible” (p. 20). Since there is an element of change at the beginning and end of every season for seasonal recreation organizations it is important to socialize everyone in the organization to understand current expectations in values, norms, and required behaviors yearly (Jablin, 1984).

Major, Kozlowski, Chao, and Garnere (1995) find that the first month on the job will predict the success of an individual’s socialization. If new hires are able to understand their jobs and position in the organization, they will more likely have long-term success and could become a “seasoned” veteran of the organization. In organizations with traditional work schedules, this gradual progression of negotiation from newcomer to organizational veteran occurs over a long span of time (Pascale, 1985). Unfortunately, the luxury of time is not afforded to the seasonal organization. The newcomer has to make the transition from newcomer to veteran over the course of the season.

Jablin (1987) explains that every organization has a life cycle. Organizational life cycles include the stages of emergence, growth, maturity, and decline. Although traditional organizations experience this cycle only once, it can span years or decades. The seasonal organization has to go through the organizational life cycle every year. The process takes several months, and starts anew each year. The abbreviated timeline of

the seasonal organization makes it all the more difficult to socialize staff. This is why it is important for seasonal managers to have a deliberate plan to socialize their staff every season.

Stages of Socialization

Socialization is often categorized as serial or knowledge based. In serial socialization, a new hire proceeds through a series of stages of assimilation and identity building becoming socialized at the end of the process. (Cheney, 1984; Jablin, 1984; Van Maanen, 1978). Because the seasonal organization has identified stages throughout the year, (pre season, beginning of the season, mid season, and end of season) it would stand to reason that that the staff build identity through a series of stages throughout the course of the season. Fortunately, scholars have developed methods to identify the stages that occur during the process of socialization.

Wilson (1984) identified six phases of socialization. The first is pre-entry, in which the organization and the individual are sizing each other up. The second is entry, is characterized by great uncertainty by the individual. The third stage is learning, when the individual is discovering what is expected of them. The fourth stage is negotiation. During this point expectations and role definitions are negotiated between the individual and the organization. The fifth stage, mutuality, is reached when the individual becomes part of the speech community. Finally, the sixth stage is called commitment/identification. At this point there is a psychological bond between the individual and the organization.

Pascale (1985) also posits the organizations must guide new hires through six stages before the employee can be socialized. Those stages are: 1) the careful selection

of recruits; 2) a humility-inducing experience; 3) in the trenches training; 4) rewarding individual performance; 5) clearly communicating and implanting the organization's goals into the individual; and 6) the retelling of stories and legends which establish the organizations culture.

Finally, Jablin (1984, 2001) presents his three phases of socialization: anticipatory, encounter, and metamorphosis. Anticipatory, or "prearrival," includes the interview and worldview that the employee brings to the organization. The encounter phase occurs when the employee has day-to-day experiences in the organization and learns its practices and policies. Lastly, is the metamorphosis phase is when the new participant attempts to become accepted, participating in the organization's behaviors and attitudes.

All three of these methods are sequential and place importance on individuals passing through a series of steps in order to be socialized. The steps that the seasonal organization goes through every year in the course of a season are similar to the stages of socialization. For instance, three theories and the seasonal life cycle all have a pre-employment, employment, and a functioning stage. Upon further investigation, it will be interesting to find out if the yearly cycle of the seasonal recreation organization follows a similar pattern to the stages of socialization.

Strategies of Socialization

Scholars have identified many successful strategies to socialize staff and seasonal organizations orient and train new members in a variety of ways utilizing different techniques to help the individual socialize. Van Maanen (1979) outlines several tactics an organization can use when socializing the employee. First, organizations rely on

formal and informal socialization. Formal socialization separates newcomers from other employees and focuses on preparing the individual for a specific status within the organization. In contrast, informal socialization helps people prepare for a role within the organization and it is often presented when a new hire is learning how to complete the tasks they have been assigned to while on the job. Formal socialization focuses on values and attitudes working in an organization, informal socialization focuses on specific actions and knowledge an employee will need to do the job.

An individual can also be socialized collectively or individually. In collective socialization the individual is socialized in a group, whereas individual socialization occurs by themselves. Another option, serial socialization investiture occurs when a newcomer shadows someone currently holding the job they will end up in, learning how to do the job via someone with experience. Lastly, an organization might use dismantling socialization in which the newcomer suffers humiliation and suffering before being accepted. Van Maanen (1979) suggests these types of socialization can be used individually or combined. Furthermore he states there are many ways to socialize new hires and different ways will be effective for different types of people and jobs. Additionally, there are different types of seasonal organizations and different jobs may have socialization tactics that are more or less appropriate. As it can be seen seasonal recreation organizations have a variety of techniques to use when socializing employees.

Importance of Identification to Seasonal Organizations

The success of the individual in the seasonal workplace is built on an organization's ability to build new employee's identity with the organization through training during the first few weeks of employment. If the seasonal organization actively

socializes the employee in the first part of the summer, then the organizational beliefs and values will be used to guide the staff member throughout his/her time working with the organization and help create identity. Doing so will have positive effects, for as Wilson (1984) states, “individuals who identify with an organization are more willing to accept influence, to tolerate minor injustices, and to cope with slight increases in uncertainty” (p.24). This tolerance will in turn decrease turnover and increase the number of returning staff.

Wilson (1984) finds voluntary turnover will take place as a result of ineffective socialization. However, if individuals identify with an organization, they will be more likely to stay and complete the entire season of work. Because of the costs associated with losing staff mid-season, seasonal organizations want individuals to identify with the organization. As a result, effective socialization must occur in these “temporary” organizations; employees in seasonal or temporary organizations must learn the culture and build a certain level of trust for and expectations about their superiors and peers quickly.

The likelihood of a staff member returning year-to-year has a great deal to do with how the individual members were socialized upon the beginning of their jobs. If seasonal workers are socialized to understand the culture, mission, beliefs, and values of the organization early and can build an identity including the workplace, they are more likely to stay invested for many seasons because they care about the organization and are invested in its success. A good example of this would be a summer camp. If a summer camp does a good job socializing a staff member the first season of employment, they are

more likely to return summer after summer. When organizational identification is established through socialization between an individual and an organization, they are linked and work becomes part of the identity of the employee. Indeed, the foundation of this socialization occurs in the training the staff member receives at the beginning of the season.

There are many examples indicating that an intense training process helps to build a strong sense of identity in the employee. Kaufman's (1960) study of the Forest Service is often cited as an excellent example of member socialized into an organization. His research reports that the Forest Ranger builds identity through extensive training, being at the mercy of the organization, and having a very recognizable uniform. The Forest Ranger is a good example of how the seasonal employee often has to behave, with much responsibility and little direct supervision (Bullis & Tomkins, 1989).

Exploring how to build identity in seasonal employees in the abbreviated time span available is yet to be explored. It is suggested here that there is a pattern of socialization that is common through seasonal employment. Through this research I would like to develop an understanding of seasonal worker socialization based on a case study, and give surveys to examine if this pattern does indeed exist.

RQ1 What are the socialization experiences of members of a seasonal organization?

RQ2 How are the methods that seasonal organizations use to socialize staff different across different types of organizations?

METHODS

This paper will examine several aspects of seasonal employee socialization. It will provide an in depth case study of one seasonal organization. In addition, it will provide a broad-brush view of different socialization processes of many seasonal organizations having seasonal workers. The two phases will occur concurrently throughout the summer working season.

Data collection for this analysis will take place at a high adventure summer camp in the Northern Rocky Mountains. The camp is an overnight facility for adolescent boys. It is classified as high adventure because of the activities that are offered at the camp, participants can engage in activities such as canoeing, rafting class III whitewater, rock-climbing, mountaineering, orienteering, and building communication skills through a challenge-ropes course. The staff consists of approximately 50 program staff over the age of 18. These staff members work at this facility for ten weeks during the summer and are employed elsewhere the rest of the year. The staff lives onsite and has 24 hours of leave every weekend. This research will be conducted over a 10-week time frame, lasting the extent of the seasonal workers tenure at the workplace.

I attained access to the camp by approaching the camp director to explain my research. I will not be working at the facility, but will be welcome to participate in any training or activities I would like over the course of the season. The Camp Director will allow me full access to the organization for observation of staff orientation at the beginning of the season and throughout the life span of the summer session.

The data collection will include participant observation, informal interviews and participant journals. Participant observation will be performed by the researcher. I intend to observe the week of staff training when there are no campers on site. During training week, the staff participates in “icebreakers,” builds community, and learns the skills that will be necessary for them to complete their jobs throughout the summer. During this week, I will be able to build a relationship with the staff members so that I can continue to observe and interview them throughout the season. The purpose of this research is to see how the staff training socializes them to the culture of the camp. By checking in with them throughout the summer I will be able to observe the staff over the course of the entire season. Additionally, journals will be handed out to the staff at the beginning of the season. These will give participants the opportunity to express their experiences in a written form. The journal will be anonymous and will be returned to me through a pre-paid, self-addressed envelope that will be handed out with the journal.

To provide a richer data set, and to compare the experience of a few types of seasonal employees, the journals will be completed by a cross-section of seasonal employees from different regions of the country holding differing recreation jobs. Participants will complete journals to be used as exemplars of the seasonal industry as a whole. As Myers and Oetzel (2003) argue, “since assimilation is a continual process, we encourage all employees, not just newcomers from the organization, to take part in the survey” (p. 7). Upon completion of the observation period I will analyze the data and create a training manual designed to help the recreational seasonal worker manager to socialize their staff.

ANALYSIS

To analyze the data gathered over the season of employment, the first step was to transcribe the journals, notes and interviewees and to code them into themes (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995). The researcher read the data, and openly coded observations that are important in exploring the role of socialization of the seasonal employee. After initial categories ranging from interviewing, training, orientation, communication, and the supervisor's management skills were created, they were then separately clustered into larger, more significant categories that were representative of the major themes found using a constant comparative method. The major themes *were creating friendships, personal growth, feeling that they were adequately trained, and being treated with respect by their supervisor*. Next, the categories that were significant in regards to the research questions were identified as being important to the interpretation to the data.

Interpretation

In regard to RQ 1 (What are the socialization experiences of members of a seasonal organization?) There were four themes that consistently indicated if a staff member reflected positively on the experience of being part of the seasonal organization. Those that had a positive experience expressed positive feelings toward the organization and being a member of it for the entire season. The four aspects of employment that were important to the successful socialization of the employee were as noted above; creating friendships, personal growth, feeling that they were adequately trained, and being treated with respect by their supervisor.

Creating Friendships

Overwhelmingly, the most important feature of a staff member's employment was making new friends throughout the course of the summer. The degree to which employees had a positive experience within an organization depended on if they created meaningful connections with others. These connections benefited the worker in three ways; first, it offered a support system, second, it helped them foster a spirit of team, and third, it offered the perception that their time spent in employment would offer the lifetime benefit of lasting friendships.

Friendship as Support System

The first benefit of friendship with coworkers at a seasonal organization is that it offers a support system for the employees. A support system helps seasonal workers manage stress, relieve tension, and have fun. Friendships with coworkers create a community of people that share the same stress at work in which they can connect with.

Friendship with coworkers helped seasonal workers relieve stress. The seasonal workers involved in this study had jobs that required long hours of interacting with customers. For example, at summer camp the staff lived on site for ten weeks, with only a twenty-four hour break every seven days. They interacted with children from early in the morning to late at night, which left little time to contact their existing support network of friends and family at home. The friendships that they made with co-workers became a source of support necessary to get through some tiring and stressful times. Staff members talked about how, after a troublesome encounter with a camper, it was good to know their coworkers would be there to help them debrief the experience. Participants in

this study indicated that the success they experienced over the course of the season was in a large part due to being able to relieve stress with coworkers.

After having to interact with customers for long hours day after day, the participants in this study expressed that they needed to release tensions with the friends they made at work. The participants indicated that the nature of the job was to entertain customers while at the same time keeping them safe. They expressed that the combination of these two tasks was difficult, and made more difficult by customers that would not listen. Having an outlet for frustrating experienced when the customer was uncooperative was indicated as being an important aspect of friendship with co-workers. One whitewater-rafting guide that was interviewed commented that,

The times in the shuttle van, when we don't have to deal with the guest, and we can just joke and make fun of the customers is the best part of the day. We can get all our annoyance at the stupid tourist out of the way so we don't explode on the guest when they don't listen or are rude. Friendship between the staff members provides a valuable outlet for frustration for seasonal employees.

In addition to relieving stress and providing a place to vent about the trials of the job, friendship with co-workers is fun. All participants indicated that the highlight of the work week were the good times they shared with co-workers. Some of these interactions occurred during work time, such as a spontaneous splash fight on the river or a midnight caper stealing another camping unit's award for being tidy. Not only are good times had during work, participants indicate that other fun times occurred during time off when participants socialized with co-workers outside of work. All participants indicated activities such as going to religious services, outdoor recreating (hiking, biking, going to the lake), hanging out at the bar, going out to dinner, or having barbecues as common

occurrences. One camp employee expressed it interestingly when she stated, “It is weird, I spend all week with these people, but when it comes to time off, there is no one I have more fun with.” One of the indicators of how much a staff member was connecting to the organization was how much fun they were having with their co-workers. If they were having fun, then they were enjoying the organization.

The good times had by staff during work and off of work helped to create a richer connection between the staff members. This connection served to help employees feel a deeper connection with the workplace. By associating work with enjoyable times, and associating recreation with work, the identity of the individual becomes merged with the organization.

Friendship Fostering a Sense of Team

Participants also indicated that friendships with co-workers in seasonal employment enabled them to better work as a team. A good example of this was the camp counselors who lived and worked in a unit of four other staff members for week-long blocks. When the counselors had befriended the other staff in the unit, they expressed that they had better problem solving skills, more fun activities, and felt supported and part of a unit as they worked together to accomplish the tasks of the week. Contrarily, the staff members who were at odds with the other counselors in their unit believed that they had a huge task to accomplish by themselves. Instead of feeling supported when creating programs for campers, they thought they were fighting the other staff members to get anything accomplished. The sense of team fostered when staff possessed a sense of friendship helped the employee feel that they were doing a better job.

Lifetime Friendships

The establishment of lifelong friendships by participants through the season was the final reason that friendships were important to how the workers related to the organization. Many of the participants indicated that working through the season was not time wasted because they created meaningful friendships. The deep connection they built with people they had met at the job gave them a sense of something gained over the course of the season. One raft guide indicated that the best thing about his employment was, “Meeting other guides and getting new couches to crash on in the coming years with my new friends.” Seasonal workers that left the organization feeling that they had made lasting friendships identified with being part of the organization more than those that did not feel they had connected with others.

Seasonal employees indicated a more significant connection to the organization when they believed they had created meaningful friendships throughout the season. The friendships serve many purposes. First, it helps the staff member relieve stress and gives them an outlet to vent about frustrating encounters with customers. Second, it helps foster a sense of team or an esprit de corps. Third, it helps the employee identify a lasting benefit as a result of working for the seasonal organization.

Personal Growth

Leaving the seasonal work experience having made friends is one indicator that the participants had been socialized into an organization. Another indicator is when employees finished the season feeling they had “grown as a person”. An important indicator of socialization was if employees feel they gained a new skill or participated in a meaningful personal experience that would enhance their lives.

Employees who expressed they learned new skills exhibited indications they had been socialized more to the organization than those that did not learn something new. For example, the summer camp staff that became proficient in a skill like rock climbing, ceramics, canoeing, or archery had a more positive feeling toward the seasonal organization than those that had less specialized jobs. One organization that had an intensive two week training that included eight hours or more of time on rivers rafting or canoeing indicated that, "It is cool that we are learning how to boat. This is something I will be able to do my whole life." Those employees who understood they were not only performing a job but also getting to try new things and improve as individuals were appreciative to the organization for taking the time to train them in technical new skills. They experienced a stronger tie to the organization and were more satisfied employees than those who did not feel they learned anything new.

In addition, employees who came to the organization already proficient in the job skills required, felt gratified when they were able to improve skills or grow as a professional. An example of this was a raft guide who had been guiding for four seasons on rivers in the American Southwest. He came to the new rafting company a competent raft guide, however had not guided on a river that was as technical as the river he had moved to in the American Southeast. At the end of the ten-week journal he wrote that he had improved his skills as a raft guide and was grateful to the organization that gave him the opportunity to improve his skills. He expressed a connection to the organization that was giving him the opportunity to become a better raft guide.

Employees who did not learn a new technical skill could still feel that they had grown over the course of the season if they perceived they had experienced emotional or

spiritual growth. Many of the participants in the study were having their first long-term experience being away from home and family. Although they were not learning new skills, the fact that they were out on their own was a point of pride. Throughout the course of the season some participants indicated struggles with homesickness, communal living, and fatigue. Upon completion of the season they possessed a great sense of accomplishment. Although they did not learn a new technical skill, the perception of personal accomplishment throughout the season due to being involved with the organization made them feel more socialized to the organization than those that did not experience personal growth.

Organizations that are able to facilitate personal growth in their employees do a better job at socializing staff. Individuals who feel they have been given an opportunity to better themselves in some way feel grateful to the organization that gave them that opportunity. They want to do a good job and are more likely to return for multiple seasons. Furthermore, organizations that pointed out to employees they were offering quality opportunity for growth had employees that were more connected to them.

Employees in a seasonal organization feel a more positive association with the organization if they make friends through employment and experienced some self-growth. These two factors have much to do with the individual and decisions they make when choosing a job and interacting with people. The next two factors that affect an employee's perception of their seasonal employment are conditions that are strongly influenced by the actions of the organization. The first is if the employee believed that they were properly trained to do their job and the second is if the employee feels that they were appreciated and treated with respect by their supervisor.

Feeling Competently Trained

In the course of the study there appeared to be a trend that those employees who believed that they were properly trained for the duties they would have to perform while working had a higher degree of satisfaction with the organization than those that did not feel adequately trained. The organizations that had a specific orientation program including components such as a tour of the facility, icebreakers, instruction on organizational norms, and training for specific job functions were more socialized to the organization than those that did not. Those that believed they were properly trained for the job were, on the whole, fairly satisfied with the organization they worked for. Contrarily, those that believed they had not been trained to perform the job felt that they had been set up for failure by the organization.

Being properly trained for the tasks that one has to accomplish at a job has been identified as an important part of positive socialization. A positive attitudinal outcome was associated with an emphasis on learning skills by Cooper-Tomas and Anderson (2002). This study indicated proper training was important to participants. Those who were trained to do their jobs had a more positive association with the seasonal workplace. My observations indicated that participants who were well trained believed they acquired the knowledge necessary through trainings, meetings, information sessions, and the pre-camp package that was sent pre-employment. In addition, participants in organizations that set-up specific ice breakers, felt more comfortable in approaching experienced staff to get help in learning how to do things and receiving informal training. Participants who perceived the organization as having a well thought out, deliberate training program had more positive feelings about their organizations than those that did not.

The organizations that did not have an organized training for staff were frustrated by their lack of knowledge in the work place. One raft-guide commented about his company that

Without previous years of experience working for river rafting companies and my friend to let me in on most of the particulars of the job. I would have been a lot more frustrated and lost. But the early season at a river company and especially your first year there things tend to be a mystery until you figure it out as time passes.

A camp counselor stated, "I was never told specific details but was just expected to figure out everything for myself." However, the journals and observations indicated that at the end of the season these untrained employees were as competent to do their job as their counterparts who had organized training. During the season they were forced to acquire the knowledge necessary to successfully do the job they had been hired to do. Even if the training did not come at the beginning of employment they would learn the skills. These employees did feel that the first few weeks of the season were frustrating, and throughout the season they had negative feelings toward an organization that had not given them the skills to be successful at their job.

Organizations that create a deliberate and structured orientation for employees end up with employees that identify with the organization more than employees that do not have a structured training. Employees that feel they were not prepared to fulfill the functions of their job end up resenting the employer. Clearly communicating job expectations and duties at the beginning of the season offers the long-term benefit of more socialized employees to the seasonal organization.

Feeling Respected and Appreciated by the Supervisor

The last factor that affected how socialized an employee became to the seasonal organization was the quality of the relationship with their supervisor. Throughout journals, observations, and informal interviews no factor which indicated socialization was mentioned as much as the employees' relationship with their supervisor. When the participant felt respected and appreciate by the supervisor, they indicated a high level of connection with the organization. When the participant perceived that the supervisor was disrespectful, or not worthy of the employees' respect, the employee connected with the organization far less.

Overwhelmingly, the journals indicated that if the participant perceived a quality relationship between a supervisor and themselves, they indicated that they experienced a higher regard for the organization. Quality relationships were identified by the staff member feeling that their supervisor acknowledged the staff members' contribution to the organization. This acknowledgment went a long way in helping the staff member feel a part of the larger organization. Across the board it seemed that time spent checking in with staff and supervisors' nurturing open communication lines was significantly meaningful to staff members.

One staff member at a summer camp reported that she went to her supervisor to get some help solving a problem in the unit she was supervising. The camp director listened to her problems, talked through solutions, and checked in with her throughout the week to make sure things were improving and how the staff member was doing. The extra time the director spent with the staff member made a tremendous impact on how

she perceived the organization. For the rest of the season, her answers indicated that she felt a high level of connection to her supervisor and the organization.

When participants perceived that their supervisors cared about the experiences they were having and appreciated the jobs that they were doing, they indicated a more regard for the organization. Contrarily, participants who had negative relationships with their supervisors also regarded the organization they worked for negatively. There were three principal reasons that participants did not have good relationships with their supervisor; first, is not being acknowledged as a contributing member of the organization, second, not treating the employee with respect, and third, when the employee did not perceive the supervisor as competent at his/her job.

Participants often complained that their managers consistently did not acknowledge them as contributing members of the organization. Many staff members believed the supervisor did not take time to get to know them as individuals as such they had trouble connecting with their supervisors in any meaningful way. One of the summer camp staff said, “I would get along with the supervisor better if we were bonded more tightly, by having personal jokes (and) knowing that you are appreciated.” The staff members indicated that meaningful conversations with supervisors made them feel important. Staff who did not feel appreciated often felt isolated from the organization and only heard from supervisors when things were going wrong.

Staff who got both positive and negative feedback from supervisors perceived that the negative feedback was more constructive, and a chance for them to better themselves as individuals. Employees that only heard from supervisors when they had negative feedback for them became angry at the supervisors negative comments. For example, at

one raft company, an incident occurred where negative feedback from a manager had noticeable impact on the guides. The event happened at a point in the summer when the staff had been working long hours for many weeks and were tired. Most of the guides were working thirteen or fourteen-hour days, six days a week, and none of the staff had seen the supervisor in weeks. He would come into the office after the trips had left for the river and go home before the guides had returned. The staff felt they had been doing a good job, had kept a positive attitude to this point in the season, and had a fairly good perception of the relationship between them and the supervisor.

One evening when the guides got back from the river they found the manager had stapled notes to the timecards of all the guides suggesting alterations to behavior that he would like to see from them. The note did not contain any positive feedback about the performance of the staff. This event had a seriously negative effect on the morale of the staff. The guides perceived they were not able to address the concerns face to face with the manager, and did not feel he had a clear picture of what was happening out on the river. That week, one of the guides from that company wrote in his journal

Don't staple spineless letter to timecards because you don't have the courage or knowledge of your subject. Do it face to face. And don't speak to your employees as if they were small children. Basically, if you need an example of how not to treat your employees look no further then these managers.

If that manager had created a dialogue with the staff throughout the season, it would have been easy to provide feedback both negative and positive to the staff. Because the only time this staff heard from the manager was when he was reprimanding them, they did not hold him in good regard.

Overwhelmingly, the journals and observations reflected a tendency that staff wanted to feel that their supervisors cared enough to get to know them as individuals.

Those employees who perceived their supervisors made time to get to know them, and to help them succeed had a positive feeling about the organization. Contrarily, employees that believed their managers did not take time to get to know them as individuals had a more negative image of the whole organization. The most negative perception of managers came when staff felt they only communicated with their supervisor when things were going wrong.

Lack of respect from supervisors was another contributing factor to poor supervisory relationships among participants. Repeatedly in the journals, participants would cite lack of respect as the reason they did not get along with their supervisor. This was manifested as feeling like they were being talked down to, being yelled at, and snapped at when they approached the supervisor to ask a question. It is important for the employee to feel they are a respected individual. When employees are talked down to or not approached directly they feel frustrated. An example in the journal of a summer camp staff member, “ My job would be so much easier if she (the supervisor) actually treated me like I was an adult and did what she told me she was going to do also being more professional with me and not making me feel as if I was two. I feel as if I was not taken seriously.” Although many of the staff members at seasonal organizations are young, they very much wanted to be treated respectfully by their supervisors.

The last explanation for poor supervisor employee-relationships was the employees perception that the supervisor was not competent to do their job. When the employees perceive that the supervisor does not possess the knowledge, skill, or discipline to be an effective leader, it has a negative effect on the relationship. When the staff member perceived the supervisor to be effective at their job, they had a much better

relationship. In addition, when the manager was perceived to be hard working, the employee more embracing of working hard themselves.

The skill that employees most wanted their supervisor to possess was that of an effective communicator. Staff wanted to be better informed about what was going on in the organization, and when that did not happen, employees perceived that is was the managers lack of ability to get a job done. One staff member at a raft company said they would feel differently about their supervisors,” If they were competent managers and had actual communication skills. I just have no respect for them.” A significant number of participants resented it when managers would not communicate schedules to the staff. Camp staffers did not like that they got their unit assignments just a day before the campers arrived, and raft employees did not like that they did not have the schedule for the week until Sunday evening. Being a clear communicator was an important skill that staff believed their manager should have.

The fact that the supervisor is the main connection to the rest of the organization that an employee has, it makes sense that their relationship with the supervisor has a profound effect on how they perceive the organization. A positive perception of the supervisor translates to a positive perception of the organization. Conversely, a negative perception of the supervisor usually equals a negative perception of the organization. That important link between employee to supervisor is in some ways the link between employee and organization.

The depth of seasonal employee socialization to an organization is due to four factors. The first factor is if they connect to other employees and leave the experience feeling like they created meaningful friendships. The second factor is if they believe they

have experienced personal growth. The third factor is if the employee feels that they were adequately trained to do their job and fit into the organization. Lastly, the relationship that the employee builds with their supervisor has a large impact on how well they connect with the organization.

In RQ2: How are the methods that seasonal organizations use to socialize staff different across different types of organizations? I found that organizations vary extensively. Six organizations were observed in the course of this study and the techniques of socialization ranged from very little structure to the training to an extensive two-week paid training session. The six organizations fell into two categories, those that had little structure to the socialization process, and those that had a highly structured socialization process.

Little Organized Socialization

The first method of socialization that was observed by was one of little organized socialization. Some organizational leaders choose to spend little time formally orienting staff to the culture of the workplace. These workplaces do not spend a great deal of time building a sense of team, instilling the values of the workplace, or establishing organizational norms. These findings examine the characteristics of these organizations and the scope of their orientation.

The organizations that had little organized socialization shared characteristics with each other. Examining those characteristics helped to identify why some organizations choose to do an elaborate orientation and some choose to do little orientation. Those characteristics were shared by organizations that did little organized

socialization were; the staff did not have to be highly trained to do their job, these organizations had staff that were paid well, and finally, the staff did not live together.

The staff at these organizations did not have to be trained extensively to do their job. There were two reasons that the staff did not have to have a great deal of training to fulfill the position they served. The first was that the job was not skill intensive and had little potential of injuring someone. The second reason a staff member did not have to be trained is that they came to the organization already proficient in their respective jobs. For example, of the raft companies that were observed only hired raft guides with three or more years experience. Because of this they did not need to teach the skills of rafting to the staff, they only had to make sure that they knew the logistics of this particular raft company. Their orientation for new staff was to shadow a returning staff member for a day that was the extent of the orientation. With low reliability jobs or hiring people that are already proficient and organization does not have to offer extensive training.

The organizations that did not engage in extensive training were organizations that paid their employees generously. The staff in these organizations did value those aspects of friendship, personal growth, being trained, and having a good relationship with their supervisor, however they were also motivated by making a lot of money. In addition, these organizations offered an end of the season bonus, so although not a lot of effort was put into socializing them into the organization, these individuals were motivated by the money they were making.

The last characteristics that the organizations shared is that these staff members did not have to live together. At the summer camps and some of the raft companies the staff not only had to interact at work, they had to live together on site. Part of the

compensation package was room and board. The organizations that do little orientation have staff that provide their own housing, so they have social networks outside of work.

In organizations that choose to not have a highly organized training the scope of the orientation is very small. It is limited to explaining the basic knowledge that an individual would need to perform their job. The organization had a very informal training, did not focus too much on building a team with the employees, and presented the expectations of the organization in a very informal manner.

The training program in these organizations did not have much continuity or structure. In these organizations, new staff would be assigned someone to show them around and that person was responsible for introducing them to other employees, giving them a tour, and briefing the individual about how things are done. Those that were assigned to show the person around were not specifically trained for this task. If the new employee was assigned to a gregarious, informative individual, the trainee would learn much and meet many people. Contrarily, if the person assigned was not very talkative and did not know many co-workers, the new person had very little instruction and few introductions. At the end of the day it was considered that the individual was trained and came ready to work the next day.

These organizations had no organized method in which staff was to get acquainted. No time was spent in “ice breaker” activities in which the staff would get to know more about each other. In fact, if you did not work in the same department as another staff member it could take weeks for you the two of you to meet. By the end of the season, staff in these organizations commented that they did connect with other staff

members, but that connection had nothing to do with the organization facilitating a meeting.

Lastly, these organizations presented the expectations of the organization in a very informal manner. There was no written form of the expectations such as an employee handbook. Subjects such as sexual harassment and customer service expectations were not addressed at all. At the beginning of the season the manager did hold an informal meeting which was accompanied by pizza and beer. At this meeting he presented some expectations as far as being on time and looking clean. There was no written documentation of the expectations, and after a few cases of beer the staff left the meeting uncertain of what had been expressed.

The organizations that had little formalized training chose to let the members of their organization figure out the values of the workplace and the organizational norms by themselves. Organizations that choose this method of orientation shared characteristics, such as level of training needed, rate of pay, and that staff did not co-habitate. The scope of the orientation with these organizations was not very broad, the training happened in the course of a day and one staff meeting.

Intensive Socialization Process

Some of the seasonal workplaces in this study create elaborate staff orientations that take anywhere from four days to two weeks. In these trainings, organizations spend a great deal of time educating the staff about their jobs, the history of the organization, expectations of the staff, organizational norms, and facilitate a great deal of team building to help the staff get to know each other and build trust.

Since there were shared characteristics in organizations that have little organized socialization, it makes sense that the organizations that had extensive orientations would share characteristics as well. Examining those characteristics help identify why an elaborate orientation might be helpful in retaining and recruiting staff. These characteristics shared by organizations that did a great deal of organized socialization were; one, the staff were new to the field and needed a great deal of training, two, these organizations had staff that were not paid well, and three, the staff had to live communally.

In the organizations that provided extensive orientation, much of that time was spent teaching the employees skills they would need to be effective at their jobs. The jobs usually were high reliability and also involved some complex communication skills. In a job such as camp counselor, the employee must to be able to teach activities such as archery, canoeing, and outdoor skills. They also need to be able to handle the emotional and physical needs of children, dealing with homesickness, squabbling, and making sure the children are dressed properly. For people that have never worked with children before these are important things to learn, and the organization needs to spend a good deal of time making sure the staff is proficient.

The organizations that provide in depth orientations can often not pay their employees very well. On average the summer camp staff member in this study makes two hundred dollars a week plus room and board. The staff member attracted to this type of work is not choosing this job on pay. They are very interested in learning new skills, having an adventure, helping people, or making friends. A comprehensive training session gives the staff a chance to really get to know each other before the work happens,

become proficient in new skills, and have some fun before the customer arrives. The orientation is one of the perks of the job.

Finally, in the organizations that had intensive orientations the staff had to live and work together. Time spent in get to know you activities is perceived as more important when your coworkers are the people that you will be spending twenty-four hours a day with for an entire season. By having the opportunity to see the staff interact with each other, the supervisor could also observe which people would work and live best together, making living assignments easier.

There were common themes in organizations that have intense orientations. First, they need to have highly trained staff. Second, they can not offer a great deal of monetary compensation for the jobs. Third, the staff are going to live together all summer, and it is important for them to get to know each other before the customer arrives.

The organizations that provide an in-depth orientation want to provide their staff with as much information about the organization, their job, and their coworkers as possible. Because of that the scope of the orientation is vast. These organizations have a very formal training, do an extensive amount of team building, and presented the expectations of the organization in an organized manner.

The job training in these organizations is organized and has a clear structure. These organizations take many measures to reduce uncertainty in staff before they arrive for work. They send lists of what to pack and a detailed schedule of staff orientation in the mail so the staff knows what to expect before they arrive. The managers of these organizations have spent a great deal of time outlining their goals and objectives for each

particular training and have spent months preparing workshops. Much consideration is spent in structuring each orientation day so that staff members will have some active trainings and some sedentary trainings each day. At the end of trainings, the managers ask for evaluations of the experience and each year the manager improves the training to suit the needs of the staff more directly.

These organizations spend a great deal of time building a sense of team within the staff of the seasonal organization. They progress this teambuilding, with introductions and icebreakers on the first day. The interactions build too complex games, role-plays, and ropes course activities. Many participants of the study indicated that this was their favorite part of the orientation experience. Many stated that they believed the activities did much to build trust and comrodery within the staff.

These organizations used the staff orientation to make the expectations of staff very clear. Staff members were given employee handbooks that outlined the rules and regulations for the organization. In depth workshops on subjects such as sexual harassment, tardiness rules, and drug and alcohol polices were facilitated by the manager. All of the organizations had many videos to show that staff that reinforced policies that were laid out in the handbook. Intense discussions about how the staff wanted to be treated by the rest of their community took place over the course of orientation. By the end of the experience no member of the staff that went through orientation would know the organizational expectations of that individual.

Organizations that have intensive orientations make sure that the staff is clear about what is expected of them. The characteristics of these organizations are that they need extensive training, they do not pay well, and the staff lives communally. The

orientation for these organizations is highly structured and offers skill workshops, teambuilding experiences, and clear explanation of expectations.

Although all seasonal workplaces have the commonality that they only operate a part of the year, they can have vast differences. It is the duty of the leadership of the organization to realize these differences and create an orientation that best suits the needs of the organization. Some workplaces have resources to offer intensive multi-day orientations, and other make due with short trainings or meetings.

SUMMARY

In this study I examined the socialization of employees into the seasonal workplace. Many organizations operate in a seasonal timeline. They face the challenge of not being able to offer year round traditional employment. These employers face a very unique set of challenges socializing their staff. There are few resources for seasonal managers that make recommendations on the best way to socialize these employees into the organization so they will stay productive, positive employees thought the entire season, and hopefully return year after year.

Through the study of socialization and the observations made over the course of study a manual for the seasonal employment manager has been created. The manual is intended to offer suggestions and guidelines for the managers of seasonal workplaces to socialize seasonal employees. It is organized as the season would progress: from pre-employment, arrival and training, learning the job, the middle of the season, the mid-season slump, the end of the season, and post season.

MANUAL FOR THE SEASONAL MANAGER

Introduction

The first year I worked as a seasonal employee, I was a summer camp counselor in the mountains of New Mexico. I was nineteen years old and excited to be doing something different from my every day life. I loved the interesting living situation, being in the mountains, the crazy long hours playing with kids, and most of all the sense of camaraderie that I build with my coworkers. I left that summer feeling I had grown as a person and had made some amazing new friends.

I learned a great deal about myself over that summer and had a great time, however there were some personnel issues throughout the experience that made me question if the staff were being managed in the most appropriate way. Midway through the summer, half of the staff walked out of the job leaving the camp director scrambling to find enough adult coverage so the program could continue. The people who quite left because they were unhappy and wanted to make a point. In retrospect I realized they were tired, feeling unappreciated, and could not see the benefit of completing the season. As I observed this mass exodus from the summer camp in mid- July, I wondered if there was something the organization could have done to prevent the walk out.

Jobs in seasonal recreation appeal to me, and the joy I find in helping people experience the outdoors has led me to jobs at summer camps, whitewater rafting companies, and ski resorts. In every job, I would observe the staff and became interested in how the different organizations handled the training and motivating of employees throughout the season. It struck me that the challenges of managing a seasonal

organization were tremendous and the managers had a real challenge. First of all, the staff are not only co-workers, often they are roommates. Staff lives together in housing provided by the organization or in rental units with other co-workers close to work. Second, the people that choose to work seasonally are unique folks. They are willing to take jobs that do not last the entire year. Society would label these people “free spirits,” willing to work intensely for a few months with few days off followed by months of unemployment. Third, these jobs usually can not offer the traditional benefits of health insurance and retirement options, so the manager has to identify what motivates the staff. Lastly, throughout the season, recreation based seasonal jobs require great output of energy from the employee. This is a level of energy that is difficult to maintain every day for months. The physical requirements of leading people in outdoor pursuits and the emotional energy that is given to help people enjoy their vacation is exhausting. These unique challenges of seasonal management mean that the seasonal manager has extra difficulties in keep staff motivated and productive throughout the season.

In addition to noticing the additional challenges of managing the seasonal workplace I made another observation: each season I completed began to follow a similar pattern. I began to notice that there seemed to be a series of stages that the staff would go through every season. It did not matter if it was camp, a whitewater company, or a ski resort.

In this manual I am going to describe the stages of the season that I observed as I was employed in the seasonal recreation industry. I will describe the research that has been done in the field of socialization by Organizational Communication scholars. I will then outline the research I conducted regarding how seasonal employees are currently

being socialized. I will share the results of that study, informing the manager of the issues that staff members indicated was important to them as employees. Lastly, I marry the idea of the stages of the season and the aspects of employment that the staff felt was important to give suggestions about how each stage of the season can best be managed.

My objective in this manual is to give the seasonal manager the opportunity to think about their staff in a new way. By understanding what the employees are motivated by, the manager can facilitate improved moral by enhancing the aspects of the job that are important to the staff. I hope the breakdown of this manual through the stages that the staff goes through will help the manager to understand that the behavior of the staff is natural, and in some ways can be planned for. My hope is that some of the suggestions made in this manual will help to build staff with low attrition and great attitudes.

The Stages of a Season

Let me ask you if this sounds familiar to your experiences throughout the season: At the beginning everyone would arrive to the job excited to be there. The returning staff members are catching up with each other and reminiscing about past seasons. The new staff are nervously wondering how they fit into the organization, usually connecting with other new staff. A few weeks go by, training takes place and people begin to settle into their jobs. This time is a little contentious, people are figuring out what job they are doing, and what their place in the organization is. If a staff member has been promoted they are facing the new responsibilities of leadership. New staff are becoming proficient at their responsibilities, and everyone is defining their rolls within the community. This is also the time that people are beginning to create social circles. Friendships are forming, romances are blossoming, and the community is taking shape.

The next phase is when the manager is most happy, I refer to it as the “sweet spot”. In a good season this time can last for a few weeks, in a bad season it only last a few hours. This is the point where the staff understands the scope and responsibility of their job and is performing it with enthusiasm. The staff also has formed social networks. They are not exhausted yet, work is steady and they are happy to be making money.

Sadly, the staff will get tired. As they get tired, the next phase begins. This phase is the toughest to manage and is the time when people are most likely to quit in the middle of the season. At this point the staff is tired, they are getting a bit bored of the job, bored of their social circle and maybe they have broken up with the sweetheart they started seeing at the beginning of the season. The end of the season seems far away, and the staff can not imagine having to keep up the hard work for a few more weeks.

The last phase is the end of the season. This phase can work two ways. In the first way, the staff member has made the decision that they will not return to the organization, and so they demonstrate undesirable behaviors. The second is the individual wants to end on a positive note and puts in extra effort. Let us examine the two possibilities.

In a negative end to the season the staff member is completely burnt out and has made the decision that they will never return to work for the organization again. They have had it with management, their co-workers, the customers, and the job. If things are really bad, some disgruntled staff members who feel they have not been properly compensated for their work will steal materials and equipment that belong to the organization. They may purposely provide bad customer service to punish the organization. In this scenario, the individual is unhappy and the more damage they can do to the organization the happier they are. Clearly, this is not the end of season behavior

that a manager is trying to produce, and demonstrates little affiliation with the organization.

If the employee has created a connection with the organization, they will approach the end of the season in a different way. The employee that feels an affiliation to the organization will want to end the season on a positive note, and will put an extra effort into the end of the season to end it on a high note. This individual is hoping to be invited back for the next season and wants to spend the last days of the season enjoying the friends they have made and the job they are doing.

Through my experiences I saw organizations that ended the season in both ways. I looked for the reasons that some organizations ended their season with a staff feeling nostalgia and a sense of belonging to the organization, and those that hated the place. I made the observation that the organizations that took time at the beginning of the season to help the staff understand the culture of the organization they worked for had higher moral and less turnover throughout the summer. The more the individual felt “part of the team” the better their attitude was and the better customer service they provided.

My guess is that, as a seasonal manager, these stages looked familiar to you. These stages are repeated year after year in seasonal recreation organizations in every state and every industry. As I progressed through seasons of work, I would wonder more and more about these stages and if they were only occurring in seasonal organizations. I also wondered if the tendency of better performance from individuals that were invested into an organization was unique to the seasonal organization or if this was true of many industries.

The Stages of Socialization

It turns out that a group of scholars in the discipline of organizational communication have been studying what is called the socialization of individuals into an organization for years. Pascal (1985), one of these scholars, defines socialization as, “the process of being made a member of the group, learning the ropes, and being taught how one must communicate and interact to get things done.” It turns out that organizational communication scholars have not only identified the process of socialization, but they have identified stages of socialization that an individual experiences as they begin to identify with an organization. Below I present three prominent theories of the stages of socialization.

The first theory is by Wilson (1984) who identified six phases of socialization. The first stage is pre-entry, in which the organization and the individual are sizing each other up. The second is entry, is characterized by great uncertainty by the individual. The third stage is learning, when the individual is discovering what is expected of them. The fourth stage is negotiation. During this point, expectations and role definitions are negotiated between the individual and the organization. The fifth stage, mutuality, is reached when the individual becomes part of the community. The sixth and final stage is called commitment/identification. At this point there is a psychological bond between the individual and the organization.

Pascale (1985), posits that the organizations must guide new hires through six stages before the employee can be socialized. Those stages are: 1) the careful selection of recruits; 2) a humility-inducing experience; 3) in the trenches training; 4) rewarding individual performance; 5) clearly communicating and implanting the organization’s

goals into the individual; and 6) the retelling of stories and legends which establish the organization's culture.

Finally, Jablin (1984, 2001), presents his three phases of socialization: anticipatory, encounter, and metamorphosis. Anticipatory, or “prearrival,” includes the interview and worldview that the employee brings to the organization. The encounter phase occurs when the employee has day-to-day experiences in the organization and learns its practices and policies. Lastly, the metamorphosis phase is when the new participant attempts to become accepted, participating in the organization’s behaviors and attitudes.

All three of these methods are sequential and place importance on individuals passing through a series of phases to be socialized. The steps that the seasonal organization goes through every year in the course of a season are similar to the stages of socialization. For instance, the three theories and the seasonal life cycle all have a pre-employment, employment, and a functioning stage.

A Study of the Socialization of the Seasonal Employee

The work done by these scholars inspired me to take my casual observations of the seasonal phases and formalize them by developing a study that would examine the stages of the season in a more empirical manner, thus increasing the credibility of my observations. I wanted to study the best way for an organization to foster identification to the organization by the individual. I created a study of over a hundred seasonal employees that spanned a summer season. To get as thorough concept of the socialization of the seasonal worker as I could, I used two research methods.

To get a broad-brush idea of seasonal employees, I worked with an array of seasonal organizations. I solicited the help of summer camp employees, whitewater rafting companies, fly-fishing outfitters, a ski resort with a summer program, and national park concessionaires. I gave the staff members of these organizations a journal with specific questions to answer throughout staff training and season. In these journals I asked individuals to think about things like; how invested they felt in the organization, how they related to their co-workers and boss, and if they felt that they had been properly trained for the job they did. At the end of the season the staff members mailed the completed journals to me. I then categorized themes in the journals entries about the important factors to socializing staff members.

To get a more in-depth view of the socialization of seasonal employees, I used one high adventure summer camp and one whitewater raft company as a case study. Over the course of the summer I observed the staff training, work throughout the season, and the staff leisure time. In my time spent with the staff I had the opportunity to conduct informal interviews throughout the summer. After transcribing my notes from these observations and interviews I was able to identify the themes of what helped a member of these organizations feel like part of the organization.

Reoccurring Themes of What is Important to the Seasonal Employee

As observed previously in the writings, the seasonal employee is not privy to benefits that normally inspire the traditional worker. Job security is not available because the season is going to end and they will be unemployed for a part of the year. Most seasonal workplaces can not offer benefits such as health insurance or a 401 K. Although

the rare seasonal job pays well or offers the opportunity for tips and gratuity, many seasonal jobs offer compensation in the form of housing and meals.

In creating my study, I felt it was important to get an understanding of the things that motivated the seasonal employee. Questions in the journal and interviews focused on what aspects of seasonal employment were fulfilling to the workers. The results were interesting. There were four themes that consistently indicated positive on the experience of being part of the seasonal organization for the entire season by a staff member. These aspects of employment that were important to the successful socialization of the employee were as follows; creating friendships, personal growth, feeling that they were adequately trained, and being treated with respect by their supervisor.

Friendship

Overwhelmingly, the most important feature of a staff member's employment was making new friends throughout the course of the summer. The degree to which employees felt they had a positive experience within an organization depended on if they created meaningful connections with others. These connections benefited the worker in three ways; first, it offered a support system, second, it helped them foster a spirit of team, and third, it offered the perception that their time spent in employment would offer the lifetime benefit of lasting friendships.

Friendship as Support System. The first benefit of friendship with coworkers at a seasonal organization is that it offers a support system for the employees. A support system helps seasonal workers manage stress, relieve tension, and have fun. Friendships with coworkers create a community of people that share the same stress at work, which they can connect with.

Friendship with coworkers helped seasonal workers relieve stress. The seasonal workers involved in this study had jobs that required long hours of interacting with customers. For example, at summer camp the staff lived on site for ten weeks, with only a twenty-four hour break every seven days. They interacted with children from early in the morning to late at night, which left little time to contact their existing support network of friends and family at home. The friendships that they made with co-workers became a source of support necessary to get through some tiring and stressful times. Staff members talked about how, after a troublesome encounter with a camper, it was good to know their coworkers would be there to help them debrief the experience. Participants in this study indicated that the success they experienced over the course of the season was in a large part due to being able to relieve stress with coworkers.

After having to interact with customers for long hours day after day, the participants in this study expressed that they needed to release tensions with the friends they made at work. The participants indicated that the nature of the job was to entertain customers while at the same time keeping them safe. They expressed that the combination of these two tasks was difficult, and made more difficult by customers that would not listen. Having an outlet for frustrating experiences when the customer was uncooperative was indicated as being an important aspect of friendship with co-workers. One whitewater-rafting guide that was interviewed commented that,

The times in the shuttle van, when we don't have to deal with the guest, and we can just joke and make fun of the customers is the best part of the day. We can get all our annoyance at the stupid tourist out of the way so we don't explode on the guest when they don't listen or are rude.

Friendship between the staff members provides a valuable outlet for frustration for seasonal employees. In addition to relieving stress and providing a place to vent about the trials of the job, friendship with co-workers is fun.

All participants indicated that the highlight of the workweek were the good times they shared with co-workers. Some of these interactions occurred during work time, such as a spontaneous splash fight on the river or a midnight caper stealing another camping unit's award for being tidy. Not only are good times had during work, participants indicate that other fun times occurred during time off when participants socialized with co-workers outside of work. All participants indicated activities such as going to religious services, outdoor recreating (hiking, biking, going to the lake), hanging out at the bar, going out to dinner, or having barbecues as common occurrences. One camp employee expressed it interestingly when she stated, "It is weird, I spend all week with these people, but when it comes to time off, there is no one I have more fun with." One of the indicators of how much a staff member was connecting to the organization was how much fun they were having with their co-workers. If they were having fun, then they were enjoying the organization.

The good times had by staff during work and off of work helped to create a richer connection between the staff members. This connection served to help employees feel a deeper connection with the workplace. By associating work with enjoyable times, and

associating recreation with work, the identity of the individual becomes merged with the organization.

Friendship Fostering a Sense of Team. Participants also indicated that friendship with co-workers in seasonal employment enabled them to better work as a team. A good example of this was the camp counselors who lived and worked in a unit of four other staff members for weeklong blocks. When the counselors had befriended the other staff in the unit, they expressed that they had better problem solving skills, more fun activities, and felt supported and part of a unit as they worked together to accomplish the tasks of the week. Contrarily, the staff members who felt at odds with the other counselors in their unit felt that they had a huge task to accomplish by themselves. Instead of feeling supported when creating programs for campers, they felt they were fighting the other staff members to get anything accomplished. The sense of team fostered when staff felt a sense of friendship helped the employee feel that they were doing a better job.

Lifetime friendships. The establishment of lifelong friendships by participants through the season was the final reason that friendships were so important to how the worker related to the organization. Many of the participants indicated that working though the season was not time wasted because they created meaningful friendships. The deep connection they felt to people they had met at the job gave them a sense of something gained over the course of the season. One raft guide indicated that the best thing about his employment was, “Meeting other guides and getting new couches to crash on in the coming years with my new friends.” Seasonal workers that left the organization feeling that they had made lasting friendships identified with being part of the organization more than those that did not feel they had connected with others.

Seasonal employees indicated a more significant connection to the organization when they felt they had created meaningful friendships throughout the season. The friendships serve many purposes. First, it helps the staff member relieve stress and gives them an outlet to vent about frustrating encounters with customers. Second, it helps foster a sense of team or an esprit de corps. Third, it helps the employee identify a lasting benefit as a result of working for the seasonal organization.

Personal Growth

Leaving the seasonal work experience having made friends is one indicator that the participants felt that they had been socialized into an organization. Another indicator is when employees finished the season feeling they had “grown as a person”. An important indicator of socialization was if employees feel they gained a new skill or participated in a meaningful personal experience that would enhance their lives.

Employees who expressed they learned new skills exhibited indications they had been socialized more to the organization than those that did not learn something new. For example, the summer camp staff that became proficient in a skill like rock climbing, ceramics, canoeing, or archery had a more positive feeling toward the seasonal organization than those that had less specialized jobs. One organization that had an intensive two week training that included eight hours or more of time on rivers rafting or canoeing indicated that, “It is cool that we are learning how to boat. This is something I will be able to do my whole life.” Those employees who felt they were not only performing a job but also getting to try new things and improve as individuals were appreciative to the organization for taking the time to train them in technical new skills.

They felt a stronger tie to the organization and were more satisfied employees than those who did not feel they learned anything new.

In addition, employees who came to the organization already proficient in the job skills required, felt gratified when they were able to improve skills or grow as a professional. An example of this was a raft guide who had been guiding for four seasons on rivers in the American Southwest. He came to the new rafting company a competent raft guide, however had not guided on a river that was as technical as the river he had moved to in the American Southeast. At the end of the ten-week journal he wrote that he had improved his skills as a raft guide and was grateful to the organization that gave him the opportunity to improve his skills. He expressed a connection to the organization that was giving him the opportunity to become a better raft guide.

Employees who did not learn a new technical skill could still feel that they had grown over the course of the season if they perceived they had experienced emotional or spiritual growth. Many of the participants in the study were having their first long-term experience being away from home and family. Although they were not learning new skills, the fact that they were out on their own was a point of pride and growth. Throughout the course of the season some participants indicated struggles with homesickness, communal living, and fatigue. Upon completion of the season they felt a great sense of accomplishment. Although they did not learn a new technical skill, the perception of personal growth throughout the season due to being involved with the organization made them feel more socialized to the organization than those that did not experience personal growth.

Organizations that are able to facilitate personal growth in their employees do a better job at socializing staff. Individuals who feel they have been given an opportunity to better themselves in some way feel grateful to the organization that gave them that opportunity. They want to do a good job and are more likely to return for multiple seasons. Furthermore, organizations that pointed out to employees they were offering quality opportunity for growth had employees that felt more connected to them.

Employees in a seasonal organization feel a more positive association with the organization if they make friends through employment and experienced some self-growth. These two factors have much to do with the individual and decisions they make when choosing a job and interacting with people. The next two factors that affect an employee's perception of their seasonal employment are conditions that are strongly influenced by the actions of the organization. The first is if the employee felt that they were properly trained to do their job and the second is if the employee feels that they were appreciated and treated with respect by their supervisor.

Feeling Competently Trained

In the course of the study there appeared to be a trend that those employees who felt that they were properly trained for the duties they would have to perform while working had a higher degree of satisfaction with the organization than those that did not feel adequately trained. The organizations that had a specific orientation program including components such as a tour of the facility, icebreakers, instruction on organizational norms, and training for specific job functions felt more socialized to the organization than those that did not. Those that felt they were properly trained for the job were, on the whole, fairly satisfied with the organization they worked for. Contrarily,

those that felt they had not been trained to perform the job felt that they had been set up for failure by the organization.

Being properly trained for the tasks that one has to accomplish at a job has been identified as an important part of positive socialization. A positive attitudinal outcome was associated with an emphasis on learning skills by H. Cooper-Tomas and N. Anderson in 2002. This study indicated proper training was important to participants. Those who were trained to do their jobs had a more positive association with the seasonal workplace. My observations indicated that participants who felt they were well trained perceived they acquired the knowledge necessary to do the job through training's, meetings, information sessions, and the pre-camp information packet that was sent pre-employment. In addition, participants in organizations that set-up specific ice breakers, felt more comfortable in approaching experienced staff to get help in learning how to do things and receiving informal training. Participants who perceived the organization as having a well thought out, deliberate training program felt more positive about their organizations then those that did not.

The individuals that did not have an organized training for staff felt frustrated by their lack of knowledge in the work place. One raft-guide commented about his company that

Without previous years of experience working for river rafting companies and my friend to let me in on most of the particulars of the job. I would have been a lot more frustrated and lost. But the early season at a river company and especially your first year there things tend to be a mystery until you figure it out as time passes.

A camp counselor stated, "I was never told specific details but was just expected to figure out everything for myself." However, the journals and observations indicated that at the

end of the season these untrained employees felt they were as competent to do their job as their counterparts who had organized training. During the season they were forced to acquire the knowledge necessary to successfully do the job they had been hired to do. Even if the training did not come at the beginning of employment they would learn the skills. These employees did feel that the first few weeks of the season were frustrating and throughout the season they had negative feelings toward an organization that had not given them the skills to be successful at their job.

Organizations that create a deliberate and structured orientation for employees end up with employees that identify with the organization more than employees that do not have a structured training. Employees that feel they were not prepared to fulfill the functions of their job end up resenting the employer. Clearly communicating job expectations and duties at the beginning of the season offers the long-term benefit of more socialized employees to the seasonal organization.

Feeling Respected and Appreciated by the Supervisor

The last factor that affected how socialized an employee became to the seasonal organization was the quality of the relationship with their supervisor. Throughout journals, observations, and informal interviews no factor which indicated socialization was mentioned as much as the employees' relationship with their supervisor. When the participants felt respected and appreciated by the supervisor, they indicated a high level of connection with the organization. When the participant perceived that the supervisor was disrespectful, or not worthy of the employees' respect, the employee connected with the organization far less.

Overwhelmingly, the journals indicated that if the participant perceived a quality relationship between a supervisor and themselves, they indicated that they felt a higher regard for the organization. Quality relationships were identified by the staff member feeling that their supervisor acknowledged the staff members' contribution to the organization. This acknowledgment went a long way in helping the staff member feel part of the larger organization. Across the board it seemed that time spent checking in with staff and supervisors nurturing open communication lines was significantly meaningful to staff members.

One staff member at a summer camp reported that she went to her supervisor to get some help solving a problem in the unit she was supervising. The camp director listened to her problems, talked through solutions, and checked in with her throughout the week to make sure things were improving and how the staff member was doing. The extra time the director spent with the staff member made a tremendous impact on how she perceived the organization. For the rest of the season, her answers indicated that she felt a high level of connection to her supervisor and the organization.

When participants felt that their supervisors cared about the experiences they were having and appreciated the jobs that they were doing, they indicated a higher regard for the organization. Contrarily, participants who had negative relationships with their supervisors also regarded the organization they worked for negatively. There were three principal reasons that participants did not have good relationships with their supervisor; first, is not being acknowledged as a contributing member of the organization, second, not treating the employee with respect, and third, when the employee did not perceive the supervisor as competent at his/her job.

Participants often complained that their managers consistently did not acknowledge them as contributing members of the organization. Many staff members believed the supervisor did not take time to get to know them as individuals as such they had trouble connecting with their supervisors in any meaningful way. One of the summer camp staff said, “I would get along with the supervisor better if we were bonded more tightly, by having personal jokes (and) knowing that you are appreciated.” The staff members indicated that meaningful conversations with supervisors made them feel important. Staff who did not feel appreciated often felt isolated from the organization and only heard from supervisors when things were going wrong.

Staff who got both positive and negative feedback from supervisors felt that the negative feedback was more constructive, and a chance for them to better themselves as individuals. Employees that only heard from supervisors when they had negative feedback for them became angry at the supervisors negative comments. For example, at one raft company, an incident occurred where negative feedback from a manager had noticeable impact on the guides. The event happened at a point in the summer when the staff had been working long hours for many weeks and were tired. Most of the guides were working thirteen or fourteen-hour days, six days a week, and none of the staff had seen the supervisor in weeks. He would come into the office after the trips had left for the river in the morning and go home before the guides had returned. The staff felt they had been doing a good job, had kept a positive attitude to this point in the season, and had a fairly good perception of the relationship between them and the supervisor.

One evening when the guides got back from the river they found the manager had stapled notes to the timecards of all the guides suggesting alterations to behavior that he

would like to see from them. The note did not contain any positive feedback about the performance of the staff. This event had a seriously negative effect on the morale of the staff. The guides perceived they were not able to address the concerns face to face with the manager, and did not feel he had a clear picture of what was happening out on the river. That week, one of the guides from that company wrote in his journal,

Don't staple spineless letter to timecards because you don't have the courage or knowledge of your subject. Do it face to face. And don't speak to your employees as if they were small children. Basically, if you need an example of how not to treat your employees look no further than these managers.

If that manager had created a dialogue with the staff throughout the season, it would have been easy to provide feedback both negative and positive to the staff. Because the only time this staff heard from the manager was when he was reprimanding them, they did not hold him in good regard.

Overwhelmingly, the journals and observations reflected a tendency that staff wanted to feel that their supervisors cared enough to get to know them as individuals. Those employees who perceived their supervisors made time to get to know them, and to help them succeed had a positive feeling about the organization. Contrarily, employees that felt their managers did not take time to get to know them as individuals had a more negative image of the whole organization. The most negative perception of managers came when staff felt they only communicated with their supervisor when things were going wrong.

Lack of respect from supervisors was another contributing factor to poor supervisory relationships among participants. Repeatedly in the journals, participants would cite lack of respect as the reason they did not get along with their supervisor. This

was manifested as feeling like they were being talked down to, being yelled at, and snapped at when they approached the supervisor to ask a question. It is important for the employee to feel they are a respected individual. When employees are talked down to or not approached directly they feel frustrated. An example in the journal of a summer camp staff member, “ My job would be so much easier if she (the supervisor) actually treated me like I was an adult and did what she told me she was going to do also being more professional with me and not making me feel as if I was two. I feel as if I was not taken seriously.” Although many of the staff members at seasonal organizations are young, they very much wanted to be treated respectfully by their supervisors.

The last explanation for poor supervisor employee-relationships was the employees’ perception that the supervisor was not competent to do his/her job. When the employees perceive that the supervisor does not possess the knowledge, skill, or discipline to be an effective leader, it has a negative effect on the relationship. When the staff member perceived the supervisor to be effective at his/her job, they had a much better relationship. In addition, when the manager was perceived to be hard working, the employee felt much better about working hard themselves.

The skill that employees most wanted their supervisor to possess was that of an effective communicator. Staff wanted to be better informed about what was going on in the organization, and when that did not happen, employees perceived that is was the managers lack of ability to get a job done. One staff member at a raft company said they would feel differently about their supervisors,” If they were competent managers and had actual communication skills. I just have no respect for them.” A significant number of participants resented it when managers would not communicate schedules to the staff.

Camp staffers did not like that they got their unit assignments just a day before the campers arrived, and raft employees did not like that they did not have the schedule for the week until Sunday evening. Being a clear communicator was an important skill that staff felt their manager should have.

The fact that the supervisor is the main connection to the rest of the organization that an employee has, it makes sense that their relationship with the supervisor has a profound effect on how they perceive the organization. A positive perception of the supervisor translates to a positive perception of the organization. Conversely, a negative perception of the supervisor usually equals a negative perception of the organization. That important link between employee and supervisor is in some ways the link between employee and organization.

The depth of seasonal employee socialization to an organization is due to four factors. The first factor is if they connect to other employees and leave the experience feeling like they created meaningful friendships. The second factor is if they feel they have experienced personal growth. The third factor is if the employee feels that they were adequately trained to do their job and fit into the organization. Lastly, the relationship that the employee builds with their supervisor has a large impact on how well they connect with the organization.

I have described the progression of the season and how most organizations experience stages throughout the season. I have also shared the four aspects of seasonal employment that the staff indicated were important to them while working that helped individuals feel connected to an organization. I think it is important to link the stages with the things that motivate a staff, so that in each stage of the season the manager can

deliberately enact a plan to keep staff motivated and excited about the job. The stages that will be explored are pre-employment, arrival and training, the beginning of the season, the sweet spot, the end is not near, I cant believe is over or don't let the door hit you on the way out, and the off season. I will offer some suggestions of activities and behaviors that a manager can provide to increase the staffs connection with the organization. I am also going to specifically point out how the four motivators that were identified in my study can be provided in each stage.

I would like to point out that this is only a manual to discuss some ways to navigate the seven stages of the season. I know this is a very narrow view of what occurs at the seasonal workplace. I understand that this manual does not take into account strong personalities, accidents that may occur throughout the season, and other events that shape a season. This manual simply provides an outline of the stages and hopefully will help you, as a manager, design a game plan to anticipate the different parts of the season and help to motivate staff using the four motivators they indicated were important to them. This manuscript does not hold every answer to seasonal workplace management, but it will hopefully offer a roadmap in how to navigate the season.

The first two stages are pre-employment and initial arrival and training. These two stages are critical to how an employee will connect to the organization. You have probably heard that first impressions are important when meeting people, that is not different for a potential employee first becoming aquatinted with an organization. The first interactions an individual has will help to formulate their long-term relationship with the organization.

The premise of this manual is that if employees identify with the organization, they will provide better customer service and be less likely to leave in the middle of the season. Much of identity building occurs during the beginning of the individuals experience with the organization and if a strong connection is formed at the beginning of the seasonal, the middle and end of the season will be easier to manager.

Pre-employment

I will begin this section with a story of how I decided that I did not want to work for a seasonal organization before I even interviewed with them. I had found this company on-line and thought it would be a fun place to spend a summer working near a famous national park. I sent them a cover letter and resume and the owner of the organization called me to set up an interview. First he said that he wanted me to come to his office, I was in Utah at the time and he was in northern Montana. He then suggested I speak with his business partner who also wintered in Utah. I told him I would be glad to contact his partner and set up an interview. The owner then let me know he would be in Utah the next weekend, and we could meet then. I agreed, until he suggested the interview should take place in a hot tub at 8:00 PM on a Friday night at a ski chalet in the mountains. I felt that it was not a very professional proposition. Plus, I did not want to get my interview clothes all wet. I immediately decided that was not the company for me.

Pre-employment encompasses any interaction that the staff member has with members before they arrive to work on the first day. This includes advertisements for employment, viewing the organization's web site, the application process, the interview, the job offer, and the hiring packet that is sent to the employee when he/she accept the

job. The pre-employment stage has two purposes, one is for the employer to attract quality individual they want to work for them and weed out the people they don't want to employ. The other is to reduce anxiety for those individuals that the organization wants hire. The goal for the organization in this stage is to present itself as a good organization to work for.

Recruitment

In most of the seasonal recreation organizations I have worked for, it is a real challenge to recruit enough quality staff members to fill all the jobs over the season. The traditional staff of college students on summer vacation becomes harder and harder to come by. An organization has to have a specific plan to attract the kind of individuals they are trying to recruit. Some organizations are still able to recruit staff in traditional manners such as newspaper ads. Others find that they have to become creative to reach potential staff.

The first place organizations should look to recruit quality staff is its customers. Summer camps have known for a long time that councilor-in-training (CIT) programs for older campers is a great way to grow your own staff. It makes sense that if an individual enjoys an activity enough to be a paying customer, they would probably enjoy doing that for a living. A ski organization or summer outfitter might put a recruiting announcement in advertising information that goes to customers. Think about it, people on your mailing list, especially past customers, may have always dreamed about a trying seasonal work, and letting them know that positions are available can not hurt. In addition current staff should be on the lookout for customers who express interest in working for the

organization. I can think of at least five really good raft guides who became employees because they were recruited by their trip leader.

Every organization knows that a good web site is important to attract customers, but it is also an important tool for recruiting staff. Having space on the organizations' web site that is specific to staff recruitment is a convenient place for people to get a lot of information about employment. I have found that when I am making the decision about where I want to work, often the quality of the web site and the information it offers about the organization play a great deal in the decision I make. Even if there is not specific hiring information on the web, know that, most likely, potential staff will be checking out the web site to get an idea of what the company is like. The trip to the web site is likely the first impression that a potential staff member will have of your organization. Make sure it makes a statement about the values of the company.

The internet is a handy recruiting tool beyond the organizations' web site. There are websites dedicated to matching individuals with seasonal employment. A popular website for seasonal jobs is coolworks.com, this website lists seasonal recreation jobs all over the US. In addition many web sites dedicated to recruiting seasonal summer camp help are in existence. Listing help wanted on these sites means an organization can connect with people all over the country that are looking for a new experience.

Most universities and colleges have a summer job fairs at some point of the spring semester. Those can be a great way to meet college students looking for a job. If the school does not offer a spring job fair, often the student affairs office will allow organizations to set up an informational booth in the student union. This can be a good way to connect with potential staff. Community colleges can also be a rich source of

staff. Because organizations often overlook community colleges, they can be untapped resources of students that have not had the opportunity to move away from home during the school year and would love to have a summer adventure.

The Application

It is never too early to start informing staff about the values of the organization. A good way to do some pre-employment socialization is to offer a cover letter in the application materials that shares information about the organization and what is expected from a staff. If an organization has a strict no drugs and alcohol policy, it is better to inform the applicant of that from the beginning so that they are not surprised when they start the job. If the organization wants to attract a certain sort of person to be the staff, then they need to communicate the type of person they want working for them from the beginning. Making it clear in the application what is expected from a staff member is a great way for the individual to self select the organization and decided if their values will be a match.

The Interview

The interview, what an exciting time! This is the first time that the organization and the potential staff member have a long conversation. It is critical for the interviewer to remember that not only are you evaluating individuals to see if they are a good fit for the organization, it is also when the individual is deciding if this is where they want to work.

I had one summer that I was undecided about where I wanted to work. I had interviewed with several companies and all of the jobs were interesting. However, one interview stood out among the others. It was a phone interview and the interviewer at

this job talked to me for about two hours. Not only did he ask me about myself, he seemed interested in what I could bring to the company. For example, he was interested in my past experience working with team-building programs, he had the ability to not only be concerned with what I could bring the organization immediately, he wondered how my skills could help develop the organization in the future. It made me feel valued, and I understood that the organization was growing and concerned with putting talent in place for the future. He also told me the history of the organization, he talked about the community, the living situation, he described some of the people that worked there, what a day of work looked like, and how much work a first year employee could expect. Not only did he inform me about the history of the organization he took the time to talk about the vision for the future that the owners had, and how my skill set my fit into that.

He did a great job of really painting a picture of the work I would be doing, and the organization I would be a part of. The other great thing he did was acknowledge where the organization could improve, he was honest about where there was room for growth and what the company was doing become better. He left the interview giving me several ways to contact him and the numbers of other employees to call if I had a question.

When it came time to make a decision about where I wanted to work, that organization stood out among all the others. Although the organization was 2000 miles away from where I was living at the time, I had an image of what life would be like. His willingness to get to know me, and share so much about the organization made me realize that it was a place I would like to be involved with.

The first step to a good interview is to come up with several questions that will help you get to know the individual that is applying for the job (See Appendix A for examples). Make sure the questions give them the opportunity to be creative and show how they will benefit your organization. Also, make sure that you share some information about what is expected from employees. Paint a clear picture of what the job is like, and give the interviewee the opportunity to ask questions.

Lastly, at the end of the interview give the applicant a way to get a hold of you with questions. Provide them with an e-mail address and phone number for future communication. Also, give them a timeline of when you think you will have an answer for them about offering them a position, and be sure to honor that timeline. If you have trouble getting a hold of their references call the applicant and let them know what is holding up the process.

Uncertainty Reduction

From the point they are hired until they arrive at the job, what will help them easily socialize into the organization is if you as a supervisor do everything in your power to reduce their uncertainty about the new job. If the new hire feels that the supervisor has gone out of their way to make the transition to the new job easy, it will be a good foundation for the individual to feel a part of the organization.

I have had jobs where employers have sent out hiring packets and I have had jobs where I did not know what to expect until I showed up for work. One example of how not to do things occurred as I was seeking employment as a guide in the summer season. I had a very good interview with this organization, I felt that we had connected and when we were through the interviewer told me he would let me know if I had the job in a few

days. Well, two weeks passed and I had not heard anything from him. I called my references, and they had all talked to him. I decided to follow up and give him a call, when I did he said, “ Oh, Maria, I have been meaning to call you, we would like you to come and work for us. I am about to go on vacation, but I will e-mail you an agreement letter, and you can sign it and mail it back.” When the e-mail came, there was no information on it. It was a blank sheet. My wage, the starting and ending date of the job, and if housing was provided was left blank and the owners were out of the country for two weeks.

When two weeks passed and I thought they would be back in the country, I called and was greeted with, “Maria, we are so busy just getting back. We will be in touch when things slow down a bit.” This went on all spring. I never got in touch with them to talk about my rate of pay, where I was going to live, or even my start date. They ended up calling me desperate at the end of May wondering if I could start work a week earlier than the date I had planned to. I found the lack of communication frustrating and it made me nervous about the company. I understood that pre-season was a busy time for the owners, however I wondered about a company that could not make time to talk to a staff member for a few moments. I never did fully trust those employers, and the theme of being too busy to talk to the staff was something that reoccurred throughout the season.

The best thing that an organization can do is create a hiring packet that they send to new staff as soon as they agree to take the job. Some suggestions of what may go in the hiring packets are:

- A written offer of salary and benefits
- A written job description

- A map to the where the are going to work
- A description of the living situation
- A list of what employees may want to pack or what they will need for the job
- The address of where employees can receive mail during the season
- Materials the organization uses for advertising, so the staff know what customers are being sold
- The date and time the individual is expected to report for work
- A list of frequently ask questions
- A tentative training schedule
- A list of the staff that has been hired and where they are coming from
- A written pay scale of all the jobs so the employee can see the justification of what they are being paid

The most important thing about this time is **Uncertainty Reduction!!!** Do everything you can to make staff members feel welcomed and prepared for the job they are going to do.

Here are ways that the four themes that are important to a seasonal worker can be addressed in the pre-employment phase:

Friendship

- In the interview describe some of the staff members you know will be returning
- Describe some of the capers and fun that past staff were involved with
- Send a list of the staff you have hired and where they are from and their e-mail addresses in the pre-hire packet so they begin to feel like a team and can contact each other

Personal growth

- In the interview talk about some of the skills that will be acquired through the job
- In recruitment information emphasize the unique learning opportunities that your organization and the job offer

Training

- Send a schedule of the training to the individual so they have an idea of what to expect
- Send information about the history of the organization and things you would like them to start learning before they arrive at the job so they can get a head start

Good relationship with supervisor

- Make sure that you offer your contact information at the interview
- Make sure to be professional setting up the interview and conducting the interview
- This is your first opportunity to prove yourself as a supervisor that is trustworthy and competent, make sure the hire packet is sent out filled with helpful information in a timely manner

Initial Arrival

I will begin this section with a story about an initial arrival that was done really well. My first seasonal job was at a camp in New Mexico. It was my first time living away from home and as my parents dropped me off, we were all a little nervous. The camp did a great job of making me feel welcome. They had welcome signs with all the staff names on them. The directors were there to greet everyone and gave them a schedule for the pre-camp training.

They then gave us maps of the facility and directed us to where we could unpack our things. They had returning staff directing traffic and helping to new staff unpack.

Everyone met at a designated time for a meal and a tour of the camp, by the end of the first day, I felt I knew my way around the camp and since I had time to unpack, I felt I had a little corner to call my own.

Uncertainty reduction is just as important in the initial arrival as in the pre-season correspondences. I have often observed seasonal workplaces that lose staff in the first forty-eight hours because people feel overwhelmed by the newness. First and foremost, give the staff a friendly and welcoming greeting. Let them know you are glad that they have joined you for the season.

The next thing that you want to do is give a tour of facility. Let the staff know where they can park, where they will live, where they will report for training, and most importantly where the bathrooms are. These things are easy to overlook, and I am always surprised at how many organizations do not offer a tour right away. The tour is a very important part of the individual understanding the physical layout of where they are going to be spending the next few weeks.

It does not matter the length of the training, if the training is only a few hours or a few days it is important to give the employees a written schedule of what to expect from the training. This relieves uncertainty, and gives them aspects of the training to look forward to. It is also useful to write descriptions of each of the training sections and what learning outcomes they should leave the training with.

It is sometimes difficult to just go and introduce yourself to a stranger. Although everyone says they hate ice breakers and formal introductions, it is a great way to help people begin to connect with one another. In addition it gives them things to talk about during breaks and meals.

Training should provide the new hire with two kinds of information. The first kind of information is technical. It is what the individual needs to know to perform the job. This information aids in developing particular skills and abilities that will allow the staff member to offer the customer great service. The second sort of information is the expectations the organization has for its staff. This will vary for each organization, but if the staff member is unaware of what the organization expects from them, they will not be able to adhere to the standards of the organization.

This summer I found it very interesting as I observed the staff trainings of two different raft companies that operated on the same river. The technical trainings were very similar. There is only one way to successfully paddle a boat through class IV rapids. What made the two companies different was the organizational values of the two companies. The two organizations had different expectations of staff, and communicated these expectations in very different ways.

One company had a religious affiliation and much emphasis was put on the fact that the staff was not to drink alcohol, engage in romantic activity with other staff, and that profanity was not allowed in this organization. There were parts of training dedicated to discussions on proper behavior at work and in free time. This staff knew that they had to adhere to a specific behavior code and the staff embraced and accepted those standards.

The other raft company had beer at all the staff meetings, spent a great deal of the training cussing, and after the training went to the bar as a staff to drink more and hit on each other and the good people of the town. The only mention of behavior expectations were that the boss said they could not be drunk at work, and no beer was allowed in the

shuttle vehicle. The staff had to wait until they got back to the base to begin drinking. If all of a sudden the owner of the second raft company started requiring the behavior of the first raft company, the staff would be upset, because that is not the expectations that were presented to them at the beginning of the season.

As information is being presented to the staff, make sure that the presentations are informative and interesting adhering to the basic rules of public speaking. In my research this summer, I had the opportunity to observe a staff training that involved the director standing in front of the staff and reading the staff handbook in a monotone voice. It was boring, and I don't think the staff was listening to a word he said. Remember the basics of public speaking, make good eye contact, use intonation, express yourself through body language, and keep it brief. People stop listening after twenty minutes, so even though you have a lot to cover, break it up into mini lectures not longer than that. Also remember that people have different learning styles, so incorporate activities, hands on projects, discussion, written tasks, and games.

Lastly, most organizations have a uniform or staff shirt that they expect staff to wear. Instead of just handing it out before they start their job, make receiving the uniform a fun graduation ceremony from the training. Make it known that the staff has earned the uniform by completing training. Let the uniform symbolize an achievement and status. That way, the uniform will be more than just an outfit, it will be a connection to an organization they have worked hard to be a part of through training.

Here are ways that the four themes that are important to a seasonal worker can be addressed in the initial arrival phase:

Friendship

- Provide structured activities and ice breakers that will allow staff to discover commonality about each other
- Provide opportunities for people to connect with each other
- If the pre-season training has opportunities to create shared experiences between the staff, that will provide memories to share throughout the season

Personal growth

- Emphasize to the staff when they are learning new skills
- Provide them with a journal and time to reflect about the new things they are learning and doing

Training

- This is the most important time for training, use time wisely and try to give them all the knowledge and tools they will need to do the job
- Make the trainings interactive, remember people have different learning styles and be sure to use different styles of teaching
- Spend time creating useful training sessions, if the trainings are perceived to be boring or not useful it can frustrate new staff

Good relationship with supervisor

- Be prepared for the training, make sure you are prepared and knowledgeable about the subject you will be training
- Make time in the arrival stage to get to know your staff, eat meals with them, and attend the trainings that you are not leading

Beginning of the Season

The excitement and novelty of a new season and a new job is still high, but the realities of the job are beginning to set in. The training time is over and it is time to get working. The beginning of the season is tough for staff members on the job and socially. The beginning is the most critical point of the season for an individual to build a sense of identity with the organization. By this point they will begin to ascertain whether or not they have made friends, if they are growing as an individual, if they are properly trained, and if they like their supervisor. The staff has had a chance to get to know about the job, meet one another, and start to understand you as a manager. The beginning of the season is when the staff member will decide if they have formed an attachment to the organization and will be willing to stick it out with a positive attitude for the whole season. The beginning is when the manager has the chance to create a relationship with the staff member, and make sure they are supporting that staff member as a quality supervisor.

At the beginning of the season the job is difficult because it is still new. Although the staff went through training, this is the first time they are interacting with customers. It is likely that they have many questions and are making mistakes. The best thing a manager can do is acknowledge there is a learning curve and provide a way for the new staff members to ask questions without feeling that they are getting in the way.

I observed one seasonal organization in which the office manager knew that they would be busy and unable to answer questions from the new staff. This office was in charge of taking reservations, so it was critical that the job was done properly. Knowing that the beginning of the season would be tough, this manager appointed one of the

returning staff to be a contact person for the new staff to ask questions. This returning reservationist had no other responsibilities for the first two weeks then being there to help the new employees. It worked great, the manager had time to get her job done, and the new reservationist had a point person to ask questions.

The beginning of the season is the perfect time to establish how you are going to communicate with your staff. My study indicated the importance of the manager taking time to acknowledge the staff and get to know them. If the manager makes time from the beginning of the season to check in with employees and help them problem solve work issues that will be acknowledged and appreciated when things get difficult latter in the season. One camp director that I observed this summer knew that she would have a difficult time getting to chat with each of the staff members individually over the course of the summer, so she had the staff communicate with her through journals once a week. The journal worked more like a way for the director and the staff member to write notes to each other. They did not have to be long entries, but it did provide a chance to touch base during the week. Surprisingly, none of the staff complained about the extra work of filling out the journal, on the contrary, they all appreciated the opportunity for communication.

Socially, this is also a difficult time for the staff. This is the time when friendships are being formed and people are trying to figure out where they fit into the group. Although there is little the supervisor can do about this, it is good to know it is going on, and that this is a time when people are sizing each other up. Being patient and encouraging positive social interactions and possibly sponsoring social activities that will be all inclusive will help people build positive connections.

Here are ways that the four themes that are important to a seasonal worker can be addressed in the beginning of the season phase:

Friendship

- Understand this is a time when people are trying to figure out how they fit
- Sponsor all staff activities that will help them to connect

Personal growth

- Encourage the staff, as they are learning new skills and mastering aspects of the job, celebrate that with them

Training

- Make sure there is someone they can go to with questions without feeling like they are being bothersome
- If they are having trouble completing a part of the job, retrain them so they can be successful

Good relationship with supervisor

- Create open paths of communication
- Even though you are busy as a manager, take time to get to know your staff
- Appreciate the work the staff is doing

Smooth Spot

Sit back, relax, let out a deep breath and enjoy this time of the season. It may last a few moments or a few weeks, but this is the point in the season where your hard work in recruiting, hiring, training, and communicating with your staff have paid off. They understand the job and are having fun doing it, they have made friends, and they are not yet burnt out by the intensity of the seasonal job.

This stage is great and as a supervisor you do not have to be worrying about doing anything but maintaining the good relationships you have built with the staff. It is important to continue to make the staff feel appreciated and celebrate how much they have learned up to this point in the season.

Most whitewater rafting companies have a great deal of business from late June to mid-August. I have worked for companies where I did not have a day off for more than a month. One owner of a raft company I worked for implemented the Sunday evening paddle for his entire staff. He would provide shuttle, any boat in the fleet, and dinner to any member of the staff that wanted to go paddle the river with him every Sunday evening. It was such a wonderful change to be out on the water and not be working. The staff was always refreshed and reminded of what made the job special. In addition it was a great way for the owner of the company to talk to staff, get to know them, and provide the staff an opportunity to socialize with each other.

Enjoy this phase, and make it last as long as possible. It is inevitable that the staff will begin to feel burn out at some point, so make sure they have this relatively easy and fun time to remember when they are making the decision if they want to come back in the off season.

Here are ways that the four themes that are important to a seasonal worker can be addressed in the smooth spot phase:

Friendship

- Provide opportunities for staff to have fun together
- Encourage having fun while the staff do the job

Personal growth

- Remind them how much they have learned and what a good job they are doing
- This is a good time to encourage staff to try different aspect in the organization, if they work in reservations, encourage them to try skiing on their days off so they can get better

Training

- Look for staff that are excelling and start to give them more responsibility to prepare them for more leadership the next season

Good relationship with supervisor

- Keep acknowledging the good job the staff is doing
- Keep communicating with them
- Offer constructive feedback on how they can improve

The End is Not Near

Although the phase of the “sweet spot” is fun and the staff is content, they are working hard and playing hard through this time. They are getting increasingly fatigued and the job that once held a sense of adventure and excitement has become the norm. At the end of the “sweet spot” the combination of fatigue and routine begin to equal burn out. This issues in the next phase of the season, which is the end is not near.

In the rafting business we called it the August blahs. The entire staff would feel the effects of hard physical work, communal living, and interacting with customers every day. In August the favorite topic of conversation is complaining about the job, the management, the customers, and co-workers.

The toughest thing about this part of the season is that there are still a few weeks of hard work ahead, and the end of the season seems so far away. This is a hard part of the season, morale drops, friendships are fractured, and people are tired and bored. Often, when people leave mid season, this is when it happens. If a staff member has not formed a connection to the organization they have no reason stay to the end of the season. They have earned some money and feel they are free to leave the organization.

The challenge for a manager in this phase is to remind the employees of the connection they have with the organization. It is also important for the manager to make sure the employee knows they are a valued member of the team. Hopefully, the work put into building a solid relationship with the staff at the beginning of the season will pay off. If through the pre-season, training, and the beginning of the season the employee felt a connection and embraced the values of the organization, that connection can be drawn upon when things get difficult for the staff. If the individual identifies with the organization it will be difficult for them to leave in the middle of the season and let the people that they have grown to care for down. On the other hand, if the job is nothing more than a pay-check, it is easy for them to go.

One of the most difficult parts of this phase is that not only are the staff feeling tired, but managers are exhausted as well. Although you have probably had your fill of the staff complaining, it is important to take time to listen. Managers need to lead as an example of doing a quality job. Continuing to communicate with the staff and responding to their complaints in a calm and cool manner will help to get everyone through this time. This is a point to monitor your words and actions and make sure that fatigue and impatience are not leading your decision making and communication.

The best thing that a supervisor can do at this point is to make sure you let the staff know they are doing a good job and feel appreciated. This is not to say that you should not give constructive criticism to the staff when there are things that can be improved, but make sure that you are also letting them know when they are doing things well.

It is likely that the playful spirit that led the previous phase of the season is gone, but this does not mean that the staff does not want to have a good time. Make sure that the staff is provided with opportunities to have fun. If necessary, have the management encourage hijinx among the staff.

It was during this point of the season that one of the camp directors noticed that the staff had lost some of their spark. It was a really hot day so the camp director got all the supplies needed for a water fight. Water balloons, hoses, buckets, sponges, and water cannons were rounded up and brought to the flag pole area which was the meeting place when a fire alarm was sounded.

The camp director pulled the fire alarm and when the whole camp got there and was accounted for the largest water fight in the camps' history commenced. It was fun. It was energizing, and when it was over the laughter and unexpected play time was just what the staff had needed.

Another organization I worked for rented a bowling alley in town and shut it off to the public. For three hours the staff bowled and had a good time. The next day, staff morale was higher.

At this point even a smallest gesture can mean a great deal. One summer when I was directing camp, I realized that morale was down, and I delivered root beer floats to

each unit of the camp after the councilors had put the campers to bed. It was a nice chance to say thank you in and the supplies did not cost more than fifteen dollars. The important thing here is that the staff feels appreciated and that the hard work they are doing is being noticed.

Here are ways that the four themes that are important to a seasonal worker can be addressed in the initial arrival phase:

Friendship

- Without being the staff gossip, try to be aware of break-ups and fights between staff so you do not schedule them together
- Provide opportunities for venting and fun

Personal growth

- Emphasize that this time is hard, and that they are showing strength of character by continuing to offer quality customer service

Training

- This might be a good time to conduct some workshops on interpersonal skills

Good relationship with supervisor

- Acknowledge the hard work the staff is doing
- Sandwich constructive criticism in with feedback about what the staff is doing well
- Provide opportunities for fun

I Cant Believe it's Over or Don't Let the Door Hit You

The staff that survives the end is not near has made it to the end of the season. The staff that has been employed all season is reacting to the end in one of two ways. The first ways is that they have no loyalty to the organization and are glad to be leaving, the second is they feel a connection to the organization and are sad that the season is ending.

The staff that are feeling no connection to the organization present a real challenge to management at the end of the season. These individuals have made it to the end of the season, however they feel no connection to the organization and possibly resent it. They have no intention of returning to the organization for the next season and feel they have nothing to loose in regards to the organization. One individual I interviewed this summer expressed that they felt the organization had underpaid them, used them, and they were going to try to steal as much equipment from the organization that they could in an attempt to be properly compensated. They felt that the organization owed them for the hard work they did over the course of the season and was looking for ways to make up for it. They described how they had stolen climbing equipment, medical gear, and paddling clothes from the organization and were looking forward to being rid of the job, but in possession of some great new gear.

Another seasonal worker I knew at a ski resort had been working for a fancy hotel delivering room service. The last month that person worked there he would take one thing from the restaurant every shift that he worked. He did not consider it stealing, he considered it a tip from a place that did not pay him enough. What he took would vary, once it was a fancy bottle of wine, once a bunch of artichokes, the most memorable was a

five pound bag of guacamole. This individual had felt used for long hours of hard work, and felt no remorse in taking from the organization.

The individuals that feel resentment to the organization will also have no problem with providing bad customer service. Because the job is ending soon anyway and they have no intention of returning the next season, they take joy in providing the customer with poor service. At this point of the season, there is not much a manager can do to mitigate these behaviors, other than keeping a close eye on staff they feel are unhappy. This is when the importance of building a staff who identify with the organization at the beginning of the season becomes apparent. Those with a loyalty to the organization take a different approach than those that are angry, those with loyalty feel that they would like to make the last days of employment ones to remember and put effort and enthusiasm into the job.

I can remember my first season as a raft guide. I had experienced all four of the themes that help a staff member identify with an organization. I had made some quality friends. I had learned a new skill, and felt I had grown as a person in ability and confidence. After the two month training program, I felt that I was prepared to do my job. Finally, when the owner of the company approached me about a promotion the next season I felt that I was appreciated by my supervisor. The last week of my first season, I could not believe the season was over, and even as I was still working I felt a sense of nostalgia for the amazing summer I had just completed.

Even though I was exhausted and burnt out on the job, I wanted to make my last few trips of the season my best trips ever. I put all of my effort into providing my final customers with an amazing river experience. As a manager, if you can foster that sense

of making the end special, it will help the staff rally to do a quality job at the end of the season. This will result in customers leaving feeling that they had a great time at your company. More importantly, staff will leave the season with a feeling of goodwill which will hopefully last through the off season, inspiring them to return as quality staff members the next season.

A last important thing a manager needs to do at the end of the season, is make sure the staff is sent away feeling appreciated. I have seen this best accomplished in two ways, an end of season party, and an end of season bonus. The end of the season staff party is a great way to end the season. Good food, revelry, and a last meal with the community of fellow staff members is a wonderful way to end the season. I have seen them casual and fancy, the important part is that they happen. It is also important for the owners and managers to be present at the party to celebrate the successes of the season with the staff. A toast or short speech thanking the staff for their contributions is appreciated and appropriate. I emphasize the word short.

The end of season bonus is another effective way for the staff to leave feeling appreciated. This can be a tool to keep staff the entire season and can range from a small amount of money that is more of a gesture to something significant, like four dollars per day worked through the season as long as they make it to the end. The check that arrives post season is a nice way for the organization to say an additional “thank you “to quality staff. The most important thing at the end of the season is that it is a chance to celebrate the season and its completion.

Here are ways that the four themes that are important to a seasonal worker can be addressed in the end of season phase:

Friendship

- Give staff the time and space to say goodbye to each other
- Provide an end of the season celebration

Personal growth

- Remind the staff how far they have come, referring staff training and what has been accomplished throughout the season

Training

- Since this is the end there is not a great deal of training to be done at this point

Good relationship with supervisor

- Show your appreciation for the staffs' hard work

Post Season

There is no better feeling than driving out of the seasonal facility for the last time at the end of the season. Although in the back of your mind you know you will miss it within a few days, it is reasonable to feel tired and as a manager, you deserve a break after the large amount of work you just did. When that break is over, it is important to remember that though the season that just ended is over, it is time to start thinking about the next one. If you want to keep staff returning from year to year it is important to maintain a relationship with the staff you want to return in the off season.

This does not have to take up a great deal of time. An easy way to correspond with many people is a newsletter about what staff is up to during the off season and what is being planned for the next season. It is also a nice idea to send a holiday card to the staff in December. Another nice touch is to send birthday cards to staff who have birthdays in the off season. All of these are little ways to remind staff that they are part

of a community that cares about them. If they are reminded of how great your organization is throughout the year, they will remember they want to go back and work there for the next season.

Lastly, when you are beginning the staffing process for the next season make sure to send an invitation for employment to those staff members you want to return. The formality of an invitation makes the individual realize that they are important to the organization.

Here are ways that the four themes that are important to a seasonal worker can be addressed in the post season phase:

Friendship

- Before the staff leave at the end of the season, make sure they are given a list with everyone's phone number, address, and e-mail address
- Send out e-mail newsletters every few months that let staff know the adventures that other staff members are having

Personal growth

- In the newsletter include tips that help them sell the skills they gained in your organization on resumes and cover letters

Training

- If you come across articles or things that may help them in their seasonal jobs, forward them onto them or incorporate them into the newsletter

Good relationship with supervisor

- Keep communicating with staff you want to return for the next season
- Make sure quality staff are invited back to work for the next season

The End

This manual has been a collection of ideas and observations I have made about the seven phases that a seasonal organization goes through. I hope that by being aware of them, and creating a deliberate plan to manage the phases you can have a content staff, a less attrition, a higher return rate and many productive seasons.

Most people do not get to recreate enough in life, and know that the service of providing individuals that chance to recreate is important business. Also know that taking the time to be a quality manager to seasonal employees is a difficult task, but so important. Giving the opportunity to help others facilitate growth, learning and fun in a safe way is an exciting endeavor.

Good luck to you.

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APPENDIX A

Job Interview Questions

Why do you want to work at this job?

What skills do you think are important to be successful in this job?

What is unique about you that you are bringing to the job?

What excites you most about this job?

What challenges do you think will be part of this job?

Give a description of what you think this job will be like?

What is appealing about how you described the job?

What sounds not appealing about how you described the job?

Tell about your style of interacting with people?

Give an example of a conflict you have had with someone in your life, and how it was resolved?

Give an example of a time when you received exceptional customer service. What made the service so good?

What is your style of working? Do you think of yourself as someone that best operates on their own or works better with other people?

What helps you stay motivated at a job?

How does this job help you achieve your eventual life goals?

What are your personal values in life, and how does this job fit into these values?

What do you expect in a supervisor?

What type of supervision works best for you?

Do you think it is important to have social relationships with your co-workers?

What are you hoping to learn or gain from working at this organization?

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