

# teaching note

## *In Case Fun Happens, Keep Calm and Try to Stay Dry: Managing Profitable Activities at a Resort in Spite of Mother Nature*

### Summary

The case introduces the importance of Activities programming, provides the details of one resort's activities department, and describes a rainy day scenario that involves decision making to address vendors, employees, and guests. The case describes costs and implications considered in the decision making process to achieve the desired outcome. Details of the actual decision and outcome are provided.

### Teaching Objectives

The case addresses four objectives: 1) inform students on the importance of resort experiences, 2) provide an understanding of the scope of responsibilities of an actual Activities department, 3) introduce the various factors that drive decision-making and alternate programming choices, 4) identify the critical information necessary in advance, during, and after programming changes

This case study may be best suited for Resort Operations

- program planning and guest needs identification,
- budgeting and scheduling,
- program promotion and evaluation.

It is set in the context of a shared ownership/timeshare resort; however, the example is applicable to any resort hotel that provides activities for its guests. As the situation is relayed through the Activities Department, this is a multi-disciplinary case that may be utilized in a variety of courses and subject matters in addition to Resort Operations.

Guest Satisfaction and Service

- Meeting guests' expectations
- The value of word of mouth (repeat and referral guests)
- Problem solving for guest satisfaction

Human Resources

- Staffing responsibilities
- Scheduling challenges
- Responding to change

Resort Development:

- Selection of activities and experiences according to resort setting
- Facilities planning and design
- Developing an amenity strategy

### Teaching Approach and Strategy

This case study can be incorporated into both undergraduate and graduate level courses. It can be a single class discussion that addresses the more apparent issues of the study, or it can serve as the basis for a more in-depth assignment wherein the students would research

and investigate various strategic management theories or operational strategies related to the core components of the case. Examples are listed below:

**Guest Satisfaction and Service:** Discuss the implications of amenities and activities as it relates to guest satisfaction. What is the selection process to determine which activities will be offered or continued? How is guest satisfaction measured? What role do activities play in overall guest satisfaction? What data should be available to the Activities Manager, Director of Fun, GM?

**Human Resources:** Does the fact that the Activities staff positions revolve around fun make it less or more important to the overall operation? How can the job description be written to manage the various responsibilities of the position to ensure that the right individual is attracted to and can succeed in the position? What are the appropriate divisions of responsibility within the activities staff? What considerations should be made related to the different classifications of associates: full-time, part-time, and seasonal? What is an alternate organizational structure and how might modifying it benefit the operation?

**Resort Development:** At which point in the resort development life cycle should the activities be considered? What role does the local environment or geographical setting play in activities selection? How is facilities planning and design impacted by activities offered at the resort? What design recommendations could be made to avoid issues with programming related to similar or other events described in this case?

**Resort Operations:** How does one determine which activities to offer to guests at a resort? What elements of program planning are critical in ensuring an efficient operation? Should a budget be allocated for activities? If so, is it a zero-based budget or is there an anticipation of profit? What are the pros and cons for expectations of profitability as it relates to programming and guest satisfaction? How can a recommendation for purchase of equipment, facilities, or hiring of staff be developed to be successful? What are the determinants of a successful activities program? What are the various means by which an activities program can be evaluated?

### Teaching Approaches

This case study can be used in multiple ways within a variety of course subjects. A few examples and recommended time allocation are listed below:

1. Individual Discussion: The case study can be used as a complementary teaching instrument. After instructing on Resort Activities, the full case study can be distributed to students individually, giving them ample time to read and digest the

information followed by dialogue directed by the Discussion Questions. Alternatively, the case study, without the solution, may be given to students as a rudimentary group discussion wherein the students would raise the issues that need to be addressed, factors that would be considered, as well as possible outcomes. Approximate time: 30 minutes

2. Written Essay/Report/Academic Paper: In more advanced applications, the case study could be a course assignment in which the students would be required to identify the issues in the case study, relate that to theoretical or managerial foundations by partnering with supplemental resources, i.e., Strategy Safari, and provide critique for the actual outcome. Approximate time: 15 minute student led discussion related to assigned topic
3. Small Group Discussion: The case study can be given as an in-class group discussion wherein team members role play in various roles of the scenario, i.e., guests who have expectations, staff members who must make recommendations and interact with the guests, the Director of Activities who will make the ultimate decision on the course of action, as well as a General Manager, Director of Finance, Concierge, etc. who are all dependent upon and implicated by the decisions of the Activities staff. Approximate time: 20 minutes