

Health Promotion Practitioner

Practical solutions for health enhancement programming

Making Plans for the Future

It's annual planning season again, and that means it's time to explore past, present, and future opportunities to enhance the planning process and boost participation. We've brainstormed some questions for you to consider.

Past Products

Health promotion programs and services have a life cycle just like commercial products — they go through introduction, growth, plateau, and decline phases. Review activities that were successful several years ago but have fallen off the health promotion agenda. Then ask:

- What made them successful?
- Do you still see health concerns that warrant a similar program or service?
- What can you do differently today to recreate the initial enthusiasm?
- Can you simply repackage the concept, update the materials, and offer the product as a new program or service?

Current Markets

Health promoters often fail to exploit successful programs and services. If you've received rave reviews in a certain area, do you:

- Use the momentum to reach new people by highlighting the positive feedback in promotions?
- Encourage satisfied participants to recruit new people with incentives?

- Offer additional opportunities to satisfied participants while their success is still fresh?
- Look for ways to present a successful program or service to different target groups by repackaging the promotional materials to match their needs and interests?
- Break apart program components and offer them a la carte or reconfigure parts of several programs into a new offering?
- Try to identify new uses for the same services?

Participants and Potential Participants

Long-time *Practitioner* readers know we're big supporters of participant feedback — in all areas of health promotion. Have you asked participants and potential participants:

- What they want before you decide what they need?
- How you can attract more of their colleagues?
- If your participation fee level is a motivator or demotivator?
- Which promotions entice the most?
- How well past involvement has met their needs?

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Growth Markets

Staying ahead of interests is a much greater challenge than responding to needs, because of the unknown. Disciplined inquiry is your best chance for predicting emerging trends. Do you:

- Attend health promotion conferences that highlight emerging needs and opportunities?
- Communicate regularly with Human Resources and get involved in focus groups or surveys that seek employee feedback on work life issues?
- Track trends in HR journals and newsletters?
- Read trade journals in your organization's business to know where the industry is headed?
- Correspond with your peers to get their input on the future of health promotion?

New Product Development

Mature programs have the ongoing challenge of creating fresh items that fill a real need. Do you:

- Review commercial health promotion products and services regularly for potential purchase or ideas for creating an in-house version?
- Exchange concepts and materials with other health promoters?

- Meet with your organization's product development and marketing people to see if they use techniques adaptable to health promotion?
- Interview new employees before they've been exposed to your offerings to get an unbiased view of their needs?
- Explore other service industry innovations to see if they can apply to your program?

Creative Targets of Opportunity

Thinking outside the box is especially difficult when there's so much work to do inside the box. But the next health promotion breakthrough isn't likely to come in traditional programming. To get outside the 4 walls of health promotion, are you:

- Reinvesting in your education outside of health promotion degrees, conferences, or seminars?
- Seeking demographic trend as well as health trend data?
- Spending time with visionary thinkers who have keen insight into human nature?

Before heading into day-long planning meetings, review you're answers to these questions. The process may lead to goals that in turn will help you with plans for the future. 🇺🇸



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