Lessons from Leaving

An examination of early dismissal / departure data from Outward Bound California

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INTRODUCTION

Having a student depart course early can have a significant and negative impact on an Outdoor Adventure Experience (OAE) for a variety of reasons. The ripple effects from a student departure can affect other participant experiences, intended learning outcomes, itinerary objectives, and practitioner stress levels. In addition to the programmatic costs of early departure, there are often significant financial implications and resource burdens.

If possible, prevention strategies, beginning with screening prior to course, can have serious benefits towards successful completion. If signs or symptoms manifest during the OAE, instructors will want to employ strategies to mitigate behaviors or motivations that may lead to a departure or dismissal. Organizationally, having clear policies and procedures regarding early dismissals will have a positive effect on instructors that are weighing the decision of dismissing a student due to inappropriate behaviors or motivational decline. This study sought to investigate potential patterns, trends, and solutions to this underrepresented issue in the OAE field.

ACTION ITEMS

- 1. Identify significant factors to consider when an early dismissal decision is required on course.
- Examine effects of dismissed students from course for behavioral reasons.
- 3. Explore behavioral intervention strategies that are available prior to dismissing student (s) from course.

METHODS

Early departure data was collected from the Outward Bound Incident Reporting System (IRS) over a two year period and categorized based on the primary reason for dismissal. If multiple effects contributed to the departure / dismissal, the incident was grouped into the primary or first event.

FINDINGS / RESULTS

2014-2015 OBCA Early Dismissal Data

Behavioral
Illness
Injury
Motivational
Other

22.2%

N=27

3 Ways that Increase liklihood for behavioral and motivational issues

- 1. Removing students from normal coping environments
- 2. Removing students from social support systems
- 3. Pushing too far or too fast

3 Ways that relieve anxiety and stress symptoms on expeditions

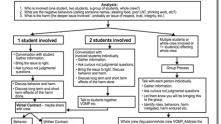
- Provide opportunities to expand comfort zones / capacity to manage anxiety.
- Provide alternate social / support systems that may be more conducive to healthy coping strategies.
- 3. Provide perspective for real or perceived threats

*Removing anxiety and stress can signifiacntly decrease the liklihood of an early departure

Average cost of an early departure = \$___

Behavioral Incident Prevention Flow Model Source: OB Field Manual

> Identify Problem/Issue/Concern



Between resolved.

Go table to be individual.
2-added or group process.

Our survey found the leading cause of early departures is...

contract/agreement may result from the group forur

Make sure you have talked to the individual(s) first and let them know it will be brought to the group.

Behavior and Motivation

poof transmits circles disorder numbing disturbance. World Parket State of the Committee of

DISCUSSION

Motivational and behavior issues continue to dominate the issue of early dismissals from OAE experiences with a combined percentage of 44.4%. Building on the work of Davidson and Ottley (2014), the OAE industry should continue to evaluate and modify the way it trains instructors to deal with behavioral and motivational issues. Further, better tracking and documentation of motivational issues needs to be undertaken to increase understanding of this issue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reevaluate and restructure how OAE programs are training instructors to handle behavioral and motivational issues.
- Simulate behavioral and motivational responses during pre season trainings.
- Consider an insdustry wide training, similar to wildenress medicine, type of certification in behavior management.

References

- 1. Outward Bound Field Manual 2015
- 2. Outward Bound USA Safety Database Outward Bound California 2014 2015
- 3. OBCA Anxiety Presentation from Student Management Skills Training 2015 *Trainer: BJ Allen*
- Davidson, C and Ottley, G. (2014). Examining outdoor training and certification standards by incident data. Poster presented at the Wilderness Risk Management Conference. Stone Mountain, Georgia.

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