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Career Enhancement Training

by Jack Vivian

Historically, the ice arena management profession has been plagued by inconsistent management, operations and programming practices, and misleading information and data. No method existed to establish a baseline of current facilities' issues and best practices, whether physical conditions or functional and programming needs. Development and management decisions were based on crude, overly-simplistic data or the relatively limited experience of the managers, operators or programmers operating the arena. This resulted in poor decision-making that negatively impacted the credibility of the management team. Moreover, lacking sophisticated tools and analysis methods, the professional development of many in ice arena management was inherently limited. Managers, programmers and operators of ice sport facilities were forced into a cycle of experiment-evaluate-retry, which was costly in terms of their career advancement as well as the bottom line.

In the past few years, substantial strides have been made to further the ice arena management profession and establish both its credibility and its crucial role in the leisure industry. The Ice Arena Institute of Management (iAIM), formed by the Ice Skating Institute and led by a Board of Regents composed of industry leaders, is focused on helping managers develop the skills, competencies and underlying knowledge needed for success. iAIM sponsors professional development opportunities and manages a certification program that fosters continued learning and management development across a spectrum of critical topics.

Ice arena professionals can earn a certificate in ice arena management, programming or operations by taking 30 hours of concentrated classroom instruction and receiving an 85 or above grade on a comprehensive examination. The Certificate of Ice Arena Management (CIAM), Certificate of Ice Arena Programming (CIAP) and Certificate of Ice Arena Operations (CIAO) equip managers, programmers and operators with the knowledge and information they need to successfully carry out their responsibilities.

The iAIM program trains ice arena professionals with the tools necessary to work in today's information-based and technology-enhanced environment. iAIM provides a high level of flexibility to owners, including communities, schools, and the private sector, by including an optimal combination of supplier and manufacturer third-party instructors and operating arena professionals to present the various industry specific topics. By using a wide spectrum of professionals, an organization is assured consistent core information from which to validate current operating practices and professional requirements.

Training Raises Level of Expertise

iAIM is raising the level of interest and expertise throughout the United States and Canada and ultimately will raise the standards of the profession of ice arena management. The past practice of reacting to emergencies, breakdowns, and anecdotal information is being replaced with proven management, operational and programming solutions. This approach integrates high quality, rational methodologies and enterprise-level decision making.

Professional development is the way to ensure that ice arena professionals maintain the extensive knowledge base necessary to make difficult decisions. In an era where skating and hockey users are demanding exciting and dynamically run programs, where technology changes rapidly, certification

is critically importance.

Ice arena mangers, programmers and operators have been left behind in budget negotiations because they lacked the knowledge-based communications skills or the data to back up their claims and budget requests. Learning to speak from a certified knowledge-base aids one in successfully communicating with budget makers, maintenance supervisors, and top community or private owners and is key to gaining professional credibility. The iAIM educational programs are a great equalizer. Those who complete the training receive a certificate, a professional credential demonstrating that the individual has achieved competency in a wide variety of programming, operations and management matters.

Managers must look beyond day-to-day facility needs and invest in their careers and professional growth. Certified managers, programmers and operators support management practices that improve productivity, maximize the use of facilities, and increase the organization's return on investments. Certificate programs extend the common-knowledge base that managers share and enhance information integrity, validating the long-term planning process by empowering professionals with consistent, quality management information. Ultimately, certified facility management professionals have the necessary knowledge to communicate with decision-makers and the facility users in order to successfully support the mission of the facility. That's the true test of success.