

How to Preserve and Enhance Your Ice Arena Career

by Dianne Powell

Signs of economic slowdown shout from news headlines – layoffs, stock market declines, belt-tightening and plummeting consumer confidence. What does this mean for the ice skating industry?

While optimists continue to build multi-million dollar arenas and saturation threatens some markets, increasing numbers of facilities are for sale, and others are closing their doors or being converted into warehouses and shopping centers.

In an industry dependent upon discretionary income, it's critical for ice arena owners, managers, operators and programmers to plan intelligently and work smart. Layoffs reached 133,713 last December, according to Chicago outplacement specialist Challenger, Gray and Christmas, the most since the firm started tracking layoffs in January 1993, and the news of layoffs and impending layoffs continues to hang like a storm-cloud over the economy.

Is the ice arena industry impacted by what goes on in the rest of the economy? Of course it is. If dad and/or mom lose their jobs, how long do you think little Anna will continue to take figure skating lessons or little Timmy will continue to play hockey? Ice sports are expensive and for many people a luxury that can be foregone when belt-tightening is required.

To survive in a less than robust economy, people in the ice arena industry must act defensively. In slower economic times, it's essential for employees to look out for the best interest of employers and to look out for their own best interest. Even in a down economy, people with good training and solid experience continue to be in demand.

As members of the ice arena industry, how can you preserve and enhance your career in a less than robust economy? The answer is to act defensively, to learn how to perform your job tasks more effectively, and to achieve a level of professionalism that sets you apart from less qualified individuals.

Achieving Professionalism in the Ice Arena Industry

Achieving professional certification becomes increasingly important in challenging economic times. The Ice Arena Institute of Management (iAIM) has devised a comprehensive management education program for the ice arena industry leaders of tomorrow. People who enroll in ISI's Ice Arena Programming, Operations or Management courses go through an intensive learning experience that covers all aspects of job skills and knowledge needed to preserve and enhance one's career.

iAIM graduates who successfully complete all three courses (Programming, Operations, Management) can further enhance their careers by applying for the elite level of education in the ice arena industry – Certified Ice Arena Executive. CIAE will be available only to those people who earn certification in the first three courses and meet the stringent criteria established by the iAIM Board of Regents.

As graduates of the first iAIM school noted, iAIM is a serious program for those interested in career enhancement. Students must take 30 hours of course work in each track and must pass a test to achieve certification. "We're raising the bar by providing standardization for the industry," said iAIM Board of Regents Chair Spiro Giotis.

“This (iAIM) program is long over-due,” said Regent Al Tyldesley. “This is the educational program our industry has needed for 30 years. Students who take these courses will go back to their arenas more knowledgeable and better qualified to make needed improvements. Everybody is going to benefit from this program.”

“Education is the foundation for the future of our industry; it’s the way to introduce new technologies and new management ideas,” said Jack Vivian, Ph.D., Director of the iAIM program.

Bob Furland, facilities manager from Albert Lea, MN, president of the Minnesota Ice Arena Managers Association, and an iAIM Management course graduate, described the iAIM program as “a valuable tool for everybody, from the beginner to people who have been in the industry a long time. People should take advantage of it.”

Jim Santee, skating director at Oakton Ice Arena in Park Ridge, IL, earned his certificate in Ice Arena Programming at the first iAIM school. He described the iAIM learning experience as critical to the ice arena business. To people who have not yet attended an iAIM school, Santee warns, “By not coming they’re going to lose out and may be left behind.”

“If you’re looking for job advancement, the iAIM school is the place to come,” says Tyldesley.

“Get in here as fast as you can because this is the future,” said Bob Mock, skating director at Center Ice Arena in Delmont, PA, a Certified Ice Arena Programmer and an instructor at the first iAIM school.

For more information on the Ice Arena Institute of Management, ISI’s targeted ice arena management program for industry leaders of tomorrow, contact ISI at 972-735-8800 or send e-mail to editor@skateisi.org.