Book Reviews

Priest, S. & Gass, M.A. (1997)

Effective leadership in outdoor programming
Human Kinetics: University of New Hampshire
ISBN 0-87322-637-2.

To purchase in Australia for \$70.00 e-mail
<humank@hkaustralia.com> or Human
Kinetics 57A Price Avenue, Lower Mitcham SA
5062 (08) 277 1555

This collaborative venture provides fertility for the cross-pollination of these two gardeners previous plantings. Better known internationally as CA (corporate adventure) and AT (adventure therapy) gurus, the joint effort by these authors provides a 'meta-book' for the facilitation of technically skilled outdoor leadership. Written like a tag team wrestling match, one of the more interesting tasks for the reader is to decipher which author has contributed more to the content of each chapter. The text is written as foundation undergraduate material for outdoor education / recreation therapy particularly for the North American audience. The book is divided into five major sections of adventure programming for outdoor leaders: foundations, practical and organisational skills, instruction, facilitation, and metaskills. For ease of comprehension, each of the twenty-four chapters commences with a vignette to frontload the topic, which is discussed, then a summary entitled 'Effective Leaders Should...', and a list of questions to further elaborate the points presented. Terms are defined, models and flow charts used to provide clarity of logic. My singular criticism is that the text discusses global developmental trends in a cursory and dated fashion, and hopefully practices outside of North America would be updated for the following edition(s). The introductory chapters include philosophy, history, individual behaviour and group dynamics. The authors debate accreditation of programs versus certification of instructors, and discuss the concept of adaptive dissonance. That is, presenting tasks that have the appearance of being difficult for the timid and fearful knowing that success is highly probable and easy for the arrogant and fearless while carefully setting them up for failure.

By manipulating perceived values of risk and competence while keeping real values at acceptable levels, facilitated adventure experiences are possible. depending on the objectives and precise control of such facilitated experience, misperceiving novices will slowly come to recognize relative levels of risk and

The following chapters of technical, safety, environmental skills, plus trip planning and risk management are a good reference guide and full of practical, good common sense...*Remember that travelling to and from the trip site is usually the most dangerous aspect of any outing..* These chapters are comprehensive, written by authors thoroughly conversant with the details of preparation. Risk management is more subjectively American, however still relevant to Australia, particularly issues of negligence. The third section relates primarily to experiential education.

Adventure programs without a form of reflection in the experiential process are simply not using experiential methodologies.

There is material on helping participants set goals and objectives, plus a revised definition of leadership styles.

In the fourth section facilitation is defined as *those techniques that are used to augment the qualities of the adventure experience based on accurate assessment of the clients needs.* The authors recommend that frontloading activities should be reserved for those few times when learning needs to be primed in advance, and only using indirect frontloading as a last resort when all other approaches have failed. The latter techniques include double binds and paradoxical symptom prescriptions.

The final section discusses the mix of leadership styles appropriate to the needs of participants in line with ecological constraints.

The time is long overdue to promote a new attitude of Humans with Nature, in which the two co-exist in harmony and neither suffers at the expense of the other.

This ecological dilemma is one of the future trends noted in the final postscript. Remember the summum bonum ethic - do no harm.

'Say you had just finished this text the same time as a co-worker and she asked "What did you think of the book?" What would you need to read for you to be able to say "That was incredibly valuable. It couldn't have been better? It was everything I needed to know right now in my career." Go ahead and discover your reward.'

For me, I'd give it one onion amongst a crate of Tasmanian apples.

Rob Sveen