

SPORT MASSAGE: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING

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Abstract

Sport Massage is instrumental in improving the performance of athletes. Professionals trained in sport massage participate in the preparation, recovery and care provide of injured athletes. However it is a marginal profession in sport business.

This paper addresses the potential of enhancing the image of social status of sport massage profession. Any effort to promote the profession should be accompanied with marketing activities through advocacy, professional leadership, and evidence based practices.

The problem is there is the customer gap, is the difference between customer perceptions and expectations. There are for main gap including not knowing what customers expect, not selecting the right service designs standards, not delivering to service standards, not matching performance to promises.

Professional Leadership

A sport massage organization needs leadership, just as a community, society, or enterprise needs someone in charge of the day-to-day affairs, solving differences of opinion, and choosing from available options. This person will have the overall responsibility and thus must be given the authority and powers required to fulfill the function in accordance with the expectations of the group and maintain their efforts in line with the objectives of the organization.

Leadership requires the ability to influence others and the capacity to assume a position of responsibility. It is intertwined with all managerial functions. To implement programs, to ensure that department are organized efficiently, to motivate employees, to make decisions, and to manage by objectives, managers have to lead other people.

There are three theories explaining leadership: trait, behavior, and contingency. The trait theory claims that leaders are born with specific traits, such as charisma, intelligence, assertiveness, enthusiasm, empathy, courage, and loyalty. This theory

neglects the fact that many people with all these traits are not leaders. The behavior theory concludes that leadership as a behavior can be taught. Some authors say that successful leaders are considerate toward employees and skilled at defending and organizing jobs and departments.

Likert speaks of two kinds of leadership: employee-oriented and production-oriented. Employee-oriented leaders are more effective. Production-oriented leaders show low productivity and greater job dissatisfaction among employees. Being considerate toward employees is paramount to effective leadership behavior. Other authors find that most successful leaders use the “management grid” which consists of a series of links interconnecting people to develop mutual goals and respect between managers and employees by creating a shared vision of the organization.

The Contingency theory explains how leaders can adapt their interventions and decision to be made in the domain of their responsibilities to different situations. This model is focused on the autocratic-democratic continuous model. Employees are more satisfied under democratic leaders who elicit feedback from them and involve them in decision making. Yet, while some groups under democratic leadership are very productive, others are even more productive in an autocratic mode.

Overly routine and structured jobs create a desire in employees for greater control and less leadership. Complicated and ambiguous jobs make employees more likely to require leaderships. A successful leader has mastered two important management areas; assessing the needs in a given situation and understanding employees needs and wishes.

Less educated employees, as well as those who are inexperienced or not internally motivated, require a more autocratic style of leadership. Autocratic leadership is required

in situations involving new employees executing simple tasks. Highly-educated, self-motivated employees want to take part in the decision-making process and require a more democratic leadership style. The participatory leadership style is recommended when dealing with complicated tasks that are entrusted to experienced employees.

A good leader results in good followers by hiring the right person for the right job, establishing a shared vision of how to accomplish job goals, and understanding that every work situation and specific employee will need a different leadership style. Sport massage managers need to administer, facilitate, guide, and coordinate the activities of employees, volunteers, and affiliated members toward achieving the goals and objectives of the organization. To do this well, they must model leadership with courage and maturity to the employees of the sport massage organization. These characteristics will help maintain the service and loyalty of skilled and motivated workers, which is essential to the organization. Good leaders are also loyal, supportive, and unbiased when overseeing others, motivating them, and evaluating their actions. They give employees due credit for their work. Effective leadership then provides confidence, receptiveness, and meaningful work for employees and volunteers as they work to attain goals and objectives.

Along with the charisma required to rally everyone behind them, a leader must also have credibility, determination, knowledge, self-confidence, and empathy. Additional qualities essential to leadership include articulating and communicating ideas in a simple, precise, and coherent manner. It is needed to be able to attract voluntary cooperation, as well as to present appropriately. Good leaders are not tyrants, or despots who exercise power in an aggressive manner to impose their will on others. They have personal inborn or

acquired qualities that make people want to follow them with faith and enthusiasm. There are born leaders in history, but most of them become leaders through a series of social influences and personal learning experiences.

Among other qualities, a good leader has: 1) knows where to go and how to get there; 2) has determination, courage, and a tenacious character; 3) acts in line with principles, never trading them for personal gain or profit, and has people's trust; 4) articulately and enthusiastically communicates the importance of tasks and a feeling of confidence in the accomplishment of objective and goals, and 5) communicate self-confidence to employees that they can accomplish the tasks they are assigned.

A leader projects a charismatic profile and appears to always stand alone, be self-assured, and unfailingly face up to responsibilities. Physical qualities that can help in the early stage of career include charm, appeal, and good looks. However, these qualities are not essential to a leader. It is important to note that leaders are not mere conductors of the masses or groups, but individuals who speak with clarity and precision. They are able to instill faith in the followers themselves and in the mission they want to accomplish. They are winners whose sprints, without anticipating results, provide a winning morale to their followers.

Having studied essential items relating to the management of the organization and the functioning of the sport manager, it is necessary to provide the manager with some clues as to how improve fundamental skills in making decisions, assigning functions, selecting assistants, appointing managers to the different divisions of the organization, and managing time effectively. At the same time it is essential to safeguard one's own health, that of one's family, and last but not least, the organizations.

Advocacy

Sport masseur have recognized on obligation to be an advocate for those who are oppressed or dispossessed. Sport massage organization believes that society has responsibility to all of its members to provide security, acceptance, and satisfaction of basic cultural, social, and biological needs. It is thought that only when individual basic needs are met is it possible for them to develop their maximum potentials. Since Sport Massage Organization believes in the value of the individual, it has special responsibility to protect and secure civil rights based upon democratic principles.

Sport masseurs have a moral responsibility to work toward eradicating discrimination for any reason. Civil rights of clients need to be protected in order to preserve human dignity and self respect. Sport massage organization requiring that the effectiveness of service programs be measured. Gradually program found to be ineffective are being phased out. While some sport masseur view accountability with trepidation and claim the paper work involved interferes with serving clients, members of the sport masseur profession have an obligation to funding sources to provide the highest quality services.

Two hundred years ago bloodletting was thought to be an effective treatment technique. Only a few decades ago lobotomies were erroneously thought to be effective. At the present time the value of electroshock therapy, psychoanalysis, and other therapy techniques is being questioned. Sport masseur need to be come skilled at evaluating the extent to which they are being effective in providing services.

At the agency and program levels a wide variety of evaluation techniques are now available to assess effectiveness of current services and to identify the needs and service

gaps. One of the most useful approaches is management by objectives (MBO). This technique involves specifying the objectives of a program, starting in measurable terms how and when these objectives are to be met, and then periodically measuring the extent to which the objectives are being met.

Management by objectives is perhaps also the most useful approach that sport masseur can use to assess their effectiveness. Many agencies are now requiring each of their workers, with the involvement of their clients to identify and specify what will be the goals for each client generally this is done together with clients during the initial interviews. Also to write down in detail what the client and the worker will do in order to accomplish the goals deadlines for accomplishing the task are also set. Clients must to be assess when treatment is terminated (and perhaps periodically during the treatment process), the extent to which the goals have been achieved.

If goals are generally not being achieved the worker needs to examine the underlying reason. Perhaps unrealistic goals are being set. Perhaps the program or the treatment techniques are ineffective. Perhaps certain components of the treatment program are having an adverse effect. Perhaps the reason account for the low success rate. Depending on the reason that the goals are not being achieved, appropriate changes need to be made. On the other hand, if the goals are generally being met workers can use the information to document to funding sources and to supervisors that high quality services are being provided.

Marketing Sport Massage as a Profession

Even though the market is the actual buying and selling of a product and not only the place where this physically occur sport in itself is not for sale and, as such, is not on the market. What people buy as product is sport massage service. The sport massage organization positively influences the perception and opinion of the general public by enhancing the image of sport massage service. Marketing concepts and the reasons for sport massage organizations to define a marketing strategy and outline a marketing plan for their activities must be methodically. Extensive research need to identify public, and then to determine the type of sport massage services that wish to stage and market, the image that wish to portray.

Sport massage marketing may be considered from three different points of view, depending on the focus of the marketing activity. First, when the focus of the activity is on sport massage service programs, which considers as potentially satisfying its marketing needs. Second, the buying and selling of an image to obtain cash for sport masseur. Third, the marketing plans of sport massage organization. Sport massage marketing is the sale by a sport massage organization of the image of its sport massage services to satisfy public demand. Organizations can do this on their own behalf or by professional managers or marketing agencies who understand the process of sport massage marketing and have the necessary selling power.

Marketing mix is the management of certain elements (price, promotion, product, place, public) to influence and increase demand on the part of public, consumers for sport massage services and sport massage organization. Market research is the study of peoples

attitudes toward a service and of the element that influence their behavior as consumers of the service.

As with any other business, sport massage organizations need to emphasize customer satisfaction. Mature and professional organizations need a marketing plan to achieve superior goals. Marketing opportunities are never these for a long and do not wait to catch the eye of sport massage organization. Use some marketing concepts and information during the strategic planning stage, when selecting actions, to ensure that the organization is ready and fit to take action.

Before successfully carrying through any marketing activities, a sport massage organization must prepare its own marketing strategy for the given service. In preparing such a strategy, the organization should follow a step-by-step approach as follows:

- 1)asses the identity and image of the national or international sport massage organization;
- 2)develop a strategic plan to modify and enhance the image of the organization and services;
- 3)communicate with the organizational units involved and implement the plan at the various levels;
- 4)evaluate the marketing effectiveness and make necessary adjustments at all levels;
- 5)prepare marketing plans to satisfy needs, wants, and demands for the sport massage customers;
- 6)define target customers for the sport massage: athlete, official, worker and the potential growth of these groups in the community;
- 7)estimate income: define the range of income of people included in the target market.

Factors that Influence Customer Expectations of Services

Because expectations play such critical role in customer evaluation of services, marketers need and want to understand the factors that shape them. Marketers would also

like to have control over these factors as well, but many of the forces that influence customer expectations are uncontrollable.

Service expectations are formed by many uncontrollable factors, from the experiences of customers with other masseur and their advertising to a customer's psychological state at the time of service delivery. What customers expect is as diverse as their education, values, and experiences. The same advertisement that shouts "personal service" to one person tells another that the advertiser has promised more than it can possibly deliver.

Two of largest influences on desired service level are personal needs and philosophies about service. Personal needs, those state or conditions essential to the physical or psychological well being of the customer, are pivotal factors that shape the level of desired service. Personal needs can fall into many categories including physical, social, psychological, and functional. A customer with high social and dependency needs may have relatively high expectations.

Image

Beyond impression from the immediate service encounter and evaluations of service evidence, customer perceptions can be influenced by the image or reputation of the masseur. Here we define masseur image as perceptions of a masseur reflected in the associations held in the customer memory. These association can be very concrete, such as who is he, and can be less concrete and even emotional. The association can relate to the service experiences itself, the company, or the user of the service. This image is built

up in the customer's mind through communication, e.g., advertising, public relations, physical image, word of mouth combined with actual experiences.

Masseur image serves as a filter that influences customer perceptions of the service operations. A very positive image will serve as a buffer against incidents of poor service. In other words, if customer has an overall very positive image of the masseur, one bad experience will likely not be fatal. However, further bad experiences will erode the positive image, removing its protection. And it will likely take multiple good experiences to begin changing the overall poor image.

Strategies for Influencing Customer Perception

The customer satisfaction is the aim of every service encounter, because every service encounter is potentially critical to customer retention. To achieve a “zero defects”, first, clear documentation of all of the points of contact between the masseur and its customers. Development of understanding of customer expectations for each of these encounters is the next step, so that strategies can be built around meeting those expectations.

Customer perception of masseurs adaptability and flexibility also create feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction in service encounters. The existence of this encounter them suggest a need to know when and how the system can be flexed, and when and how to explain to customer why a particular request cannot be granted. Knowledge of the service concept, the service delivery system and its operation, and the system standards enables employees to inform customers about what happened, what can be done, and why their needs or request can or cannot be accommodated. Such knowledge and willingness

to explain can leave a lasting positive impression on customers even when their specific request cannot be met.

The evidence of service: people, process, physical evidence provide a framework for planning marketing strategies that address the expanded marketing-mix elements for services. These new elements, or a subset of them, essentially tangibilize the service for the customer and thus represent important means for creating positive perceptions. Because of their importance, the new elements need to be treated as strategic marketing variables, as are product, price, place, and promotion, the traditional mix elements.

Service prices are powerful cues that aid customers informing expectations of service levels and later help them to evaluate actual quality and value received. Pricing strategies therefore need to be developed in conjunction with service positioning and communication strategies, they cannot be based on cost consideration alone. Because pricing is so important and such a powerful influence on customers expectation and perceptions.

Service Design and Positioning

Because service are intangible, cannot be touched, examined, and service are produced and consumed simultaneously and often involve interaction between employees and customers, it is also critical that the new service development process involve both employees and customers. Contact employees are psychologically and physically close to customers and can be very helpful in identifying customer need for which new services can be offered. Because customers are often active participators in service delivery, they too should be involved in the new service development process. Beyond just providing

input on their own needs, customers can help design the service concept and the delivery process, particularly in cases where the customer personally carries out part of the service process.

Customer input can affect masseurs productivity through both quality of what they contribute and the resulting quality and quantity of output generated. Another role customers can play in service delivery is that of contributor to their own satisfaction and the ultimate quality of the service they receive. Customers may care little that they have increased the productivity of masseur through their participation, but they likely care a great deal about whether their needs are fulfilled. Effective customer participation can increase the likelihood that needs are met and that the benefits the customer seeks are actually attained.

A final role played by service customers is that of potential competitors. In many cases the organization may decide to increase the level of customer involvement in service delivery through active participation. Finally the masseur may decide it wants to reduce customer participation due to all the uncertainties it causes. In such situations the strategy may be to isolate all but the essential tasks, keeping customers away from the service facility. Customers are in contact with the masseur by telephone.

Positioning the sport massage means to place the image of the sport organization, sport massage service in the mind of its customer and to influence the perception they have of the organization and its products. Sport organizations should understand that they are satisfying human needs rather than their own. The needs will actually grow indirect proportion to the number and intensity of activities undertaken to meet the human needs. How strong an individuals need for a given sport massage is will determine the type of

strategic actions that sport massage organizations should undertake to satisfy effectively that need.

Whatever the priority of their needs, individuals do not actually wish to satisfy such needs and, least of all, to satisfy them with a particular satisfying agent, which will be chosen according to their culture, biological constitution, and impulses. Such individuals might feel compelled to satisfy one need rather than another according to their economic, social, ethical, or religious condition. Three phases make up the marketing process: the analysis of marketing opportunities, the selection of target groups, and the marketing mix. These phases must be implemented in that order.