

The Business of Aquatics Therapy & Exercise

Would cash flow help you operate your pool?

Is your pool budget in the red or black?

CHANGE for the sake of CHANGE does not a good business plan make! First you have a need, then a plan to address that need. Plan Act Change Evaluate (PACE).

Over 260 pools have closed since January 2009 and every week we hear of more pools being put on the chopping block to save dollars. Many city officials look at the pool as a white elephant. Why can't these pool stay within the budget that is outlined for them? Because many pools are operating the way they did when they were built 20 or 30 years ago. The mind set for most pools is the recreational model rather than a business model. There are adversaries and advocates for the concept that the community pool is something the city owes to their community. Right or wrong this way of thinking is no longer working, and pools are closing at a very alarming rate.

- We believe the first thing that has to happen is to understand why the aquatic environment (the pool) is not financially functional. We have to approach this with an open mind if we want to save the rectangle pool.
- The second thing that has to happen is gain a better understanding of how the business model can work to provide a service for all levels of our community.
- The third thing that has to happen is start changing the image of the rectangle pool and market the benefits of the pool for fitness and wellness, rather than recreation only.

One way for passionate aquatic people to improve their business skills is to look at the Business of Aquatics like you are working on a puzzle. To be able to put a puzzle together you must understand the role of each piece so you know how it fits into the right place. Some of the pieces would include aquatic terminology, aquatic risk management, marketing aquatic exercise and therapy, aquatic programming in the vertical and horizontal plane, mission and vision statements for aquatic business, aquatic customer service and communicating with internal and external clients/customers. All of the pieces of the puzzle must be assessed and worked on throughout the year.

This course will focus on the fact that successful pools and profitable programs revolve around the people that are involved in the business. To show how this works the "5 P's" = the **Professional, Practical, Profitable, Programmed Pool** will be discussed with emphasis on Aquatic Management. The main components of aquatic management are:

- 1) Staff: certification and style
- 2) Participants: satisfaction and goals
- 3) Facility: aesthetics and safety

Another piece of the puzzle that will be discussed is daily programming options. Aquatic programs can be designed to draw the attention of health care providers. Aquatics has an opportunity to make a difference in the health field if people can think outside the box.

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Working with therapy professionals and offering aquatic continuum programs can change the whole health industry. Understanding how to develop the cost of the aquatic programs plus the importance of hiring and training passionate staff will be keys for the success of an Aquatic Center.

Hire the person, teach and train the skill, then market the certifications and experience.

In the past, people mainly thought of pools for learning to swim and for the sport of swimming. It is time to be proactive and develop multicultural and diverse aquatic centers that everyone in the community will be able to access. There is a need for aquatic managers to learn how to overcome the barriers to inclusion so the aquatic center can be a successful business. We are desperately in need of programs that fulfill the needs of all ages and stages.

This course has been developed by two professionals who have actually experienced the success of an Aquatic Business. For over 38 years they managed and created and marketed the 4 pillars of aquatics and now share the plan for success.