

Motivation Paper: Camp Whittier, the place of ever-changing leadership and direction.

YDP 8090: Management of Staff and Volunteers

Dr. Garst

July 15, 2022

C.Sipiora

Camp Whittier is a 90+ acre camp in the mountains 20 miles from Santa Barbara that has been under the umbrella of the United Boys and Girls Club (UBGC) of Santa Barbara since 1987. The camp legend varies on the original construction and inception of the location, either in the 1930s or the 1960s, as a non-denominational Christian camp. Camp Whittier's core is creating a revenue source for the five clubs and two satellite sites operated by the UBGC; two models accomplish this mission. The first is acting as a site for groups to rent the location, accommodations such as room and board are provided, and groups can use onsite facilitators for activities like archery and a high-element challenge course. The second is providing an outdoor school experience targeted at sixth graders in school districts in Central and Southern California; the UBGC employs facilitators and staff.

The summer of 2022 has been an excruciatingly busy time for the camp; a mix of UBGC camps and rentals has occurred since early June, affording a short break between the Outdoor School program and summer programming. There has been a staffing shortage in all departments since the camp's reopening after its shutdown due to the pandemic. Over the past five years, there has been a revolving door of directors; the latest change in leadership occurred at the beginning of July 2022.

This paper will interview four staff, two facilities, and two programming staff to understand their motivations and desires relating to their jobs. The camp does not use volunteers for any of its operations or services, and the idea is discouraged by the more extensive UBGC administration. The selection of four staff, seven in total (not including the director and assistant director), will be half-recent hires and half-staff that have been with the camp for an extended period.

C.Sipiora

Literature Review

Theory X & Y

This paper is worth noting the X & Y theory proposed by Douglas McGregor. Theory X assumes that staff only work for a paycheck and are unmotivated; they need constant supervision to complete their tasks. Theory Y supposes that individuals are intrinsically motivated to complete their work and achieve their jobs. This theory is worth noting as the outgoing camp director followed Theory X while the incoming director took a more Theory Y approach.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation

According to Hertzberg's theory, two elements create and determine motivation, “hygiene factors and motivation factors” (Garst, 2022). Hygiene factors are the basis for the structure of work in our society: pay, company policies, working conditions, tangential benefits, and job security (Bhatt et al., 2022). These factors provide the structure and support for individuals to give their time and labor for a job and lay out what they will receive in exchange for their efforts. Motivation factors relate more to job satisfaction than Hygiene factors, as they relate to the quality of the experience in their position: growth, recognition, quality of work, and authority (Bhatt et al. p 2, 2022).

Hygiene factors are structured to create an exchange between employee and employer, in this case, UBGC, and are agreed upon when hiring the individual. We can see them as the groundwork for creating job satisfaction; they typically do not improve the quality but are necessary for a worker to be satisfied.

Motivational factors relate to the individual and their experience in the job and, as such, must be tailored to meet each worker. The human element plays a part in those motivational factors; a critical aspect to remember is where a person is in their life stage (Mckee & Mckee,

C.Sipiora

2012). A promise of promotion will act as a motivational factor for one person, while another might not want the added responsibility or commitment.

Methodology

Most of the staff at Camp Whittier are facility staff, dining hall, and maintenance workers, but many have worked in various roles beyond what they were hired for; this includes the two-programming staff who have also worked in positions of maintenance, kitchen, and general facilities. Four staff were chosen, two from the kitchen and two programming staff.

Each staff was asked to complete a survey of 10 questions; these were designed to create an understanding of motivation and drive for the individuals who work at the camp, which are listed in the appendix. Two staff who were chosen to participate in work in the dining hall (DH1 & DH2) and the two-programming staff (P1 & P2) were included in the survey.

They were chosen to attempt a reasonable cross-section of the staff and diversity of staff because they vary in life stages; one is still in college, two are in their mid to late 20s, and one has a family. At the same time, the other does not, and the last is in the late 40s or early 50s and has a family with several children with a wide dispersal of ages. Two are female-identifying, two are male-identifying; two are Latinx, one is mixed race, and the fourth is Caucasian. DH1 and P1 have been with the camp since the reopening after the pandemic, and DH2 and P2 were hired at the beginning of the summer season.

Results

A common thread among the responses was an appreciation and love for working with kids; three of the four said they were drawn to the position. The answer that indicated working with youth was not their main draw to the post stated that the job is a temporary (summer job). They would return to college in the fall to pursue a career different from youth work.

C.Sipiora

The staff in the dining hall mentioned the importance of serving food to the youth, expressing the understanding that not all youth can get three hot meals a day at home. They appreciated being able to feed individuals and creating dishes that the child enjoyed as integral to a positive experience in their work. DH1 is the longer-term employee and the subordinate of DH2; they expressed that the change in management of the food service has caused them to feel less satisfied with their job. Menu changes, deviations from the standardized menu, and changes in scheduling have made them feel less than happy in the position.

P1 and P2 are compelling cases for motivation; neither believes that working at Camp Whittier is a long-term position but are both happy and content in their jobs. P1 is an experienced youth educator who came to work for the organization in the outdoor school program and stayed on for the summer. P2 was hired as a 'camp aid' to assist in maintaining and running the camp, filling in where needed; they became primarily programming staff as that was where they were needed, a skill they excelled at.

Both programming staff expressed a disconnect from the larger mission of the UBGC, saying that they only felt connected to the organization during the 'Kids Camp,' which occurred during the summer put on for club kids. P1 noted that they did not initially realize they were hired/working for the UBGC; they only realized it during onboarding.

After administrating the survey and receiving the results, staff discussed thoughts they had developed upon reflection on the survey. They individually mentioned how the recent change in leadership had a positive effect on their motivations and work. P1 expressed how using their camp's name and a lack of micro-management made them feel more at ease and ultimately more motivated in their job.

Recommendations

C.Sipiora

Camp is ever-evolving, meeting the needs of the programs and clients that come and use the facility. With the high staff turnover rate and leadership, motivational factors can change quickly and affect either direction. Currently, the general motivation and temperament are in a positive direction.

The most pressing thing to maintain motivation and proximity morale is continuing the ease of conversation and trust developed in the new administration. There is a change in how the staff has been directed and entrusted with their jobs; they are given more freedom and trust. The staff has been empowered, increasing their motivation factors, leading to higher team motivation.

There are seven employees at this camp, which limits the question pool and creates a situation where there are not enough individuals to cover all the required shifts needed to run the camp. Here is where hygiene factors are impacted as this ultimately affects the working conditions; the solution is more straightforward said than done, but to bring more staff on to ease the stress placed on employees.

The interviewed staff were happy with their jobs and their motivation to achieve the high goals placed on them. Working with youth and seeing the interactions and positive effects of their work playing out in real time was a commonly mentioned reason for liking their job. This asset should be leaned into when staff needs extrinsic motivation.

C.Sipiora

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C.Sipiora

Appendix:

Questions:

What is your job at Camp Whittier?

When did you start working here?

Why did you apply to work here?

Do you feel connected to the United Boys and Girls Club's Mission, "To enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, and responsible citizens?"

Do your contributions at camp make you feel like you are creating a change or a positive place for youth and yourself?

Would you recommend working at Camp Whittier or for the United Boys and Girls Clubs? Why or why not?

What is your favorite part of the job?

Do you feel that management communicates what they need from you to complete your job?

Do you see yourself at Camp Whittier as a long-term employment opportunity?

If you see this as long-term employment, what are your goals here at camp, and if it is short-term, what are your long-term goals?