

BOOK REVIEW

Recreation, Event, and Tourism Businesses, Start-up and Sustainable Operations. Robert E. Pfister and Patrick T. Tierney. Human Kinetics, Champaign, IL, (2009).

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Authors Robert Pfister and Patrick Tierney provide an additional choice of books for use in commercial recreation courses. As such their volume would likely be considered for adoption and compared with *Financial Resource Management* by Brayley and McLean and *Introduction to Commercial Recreation and Tourism* by Crossley, Jamieson, and Brayley. The new book definitely offers a choice of approach for a commercial recreation course.

In the preface the authors' stake out their intended goal for the book: "We believe there is a need for a more comprehensive, advanced textbook on commercial recreation, event, and tourism businesses; how this industry works; and how companies in it are started, operated, and managed." The book opens with an interesting anecdote about a trip that illustrates the seamless integration, from a consumer's standpoint, of all three types of leisure service providers--government, not-for-profit, and commercial. Throughout the opening chapter the authors discuss and illustrate how these three service providers are integrated and provide a model of the recreation, event, and tourism industry.

An acronym introduced early in the book is the notion of a RET, a recreation, event or tourism focused business. It is also made clear that the instruction provided in the text is intended to help students develop a business plan for beginning a RET business that will be sustainable within the first three to five years of operation. The authors have focused the book on preparing entrepreneurs and managers for small and medium companies of one to fifty employees. There is no pretense about preparing CEOs for Disney. I believe the writing level and concepts discussed in the book make it most appropriate for upper division courses. Throughout the book the authors do a good job of discussing theory, following this with clear explanations about why the theory is useful to starting and sustaining a RET business, providing "how to" information about its practical use, and writing in a manner that supports and encourages students in using the knowledge to start, operate, and manage a RET business.

In my view, the chapter on management, Chapter 7, is the weakest in the book. Unlike other chapters, it is conceptual and definitional; lacking an application perspective and active learning modality that is typical of the majority of the rest of the book. Chapters 4, 5, and 6, include material about the various revenue streams used by RET enterprises to earn their income and how these small organizations market and advertise; all excellent, instructive chapters that will motivate and prepare your students well. I believe Chapter 8, where service quality and developing customer loyalty are discussed, is the best chapter in the book. In this

chapter, differences about making goods, delivering services, and staging experiences are made clear along with how operations for producing each of these differ. Environmental management, i.e. operating a “green” company, and risk management are discussed in Chapters 9 and 10, both are also excellent chapters.

The two hundred and eighty-five page book contains thirteen chapters organized into five sections. Part I, Preparation, includes chapters on the overall organization and relationship of RETs to the leisure service industry as well as a chapter on entrepreneurship and the business planning process. Part II, Planning Basics, includes four chapters on developing a business concept complete with a mission and vision, a chapter which details major revenue streams of typical RETs, and two chapters on marketing and promotions. Part III, Management Principles and Practices, also includes four chapters. Management, leadership, and team-building are included in Chapter 7. The other three include a chapter on developing and managing service quality, managing ethically to achieve environmental sustainability, and protecting your enterprise with thorough risk management practices. Part IV, Pulling the Plan Together, includes three chapters. Two of these are dedicated to financial planning and analysis and the third covers completing a business plan. The final chapter provides an overview of and encouragement to pursue a career in commercial recreation, event management or tourism.

Appurtenances include appendixes identifying how the authors believe the text meets the NRPA Council on Accreditation Standards and Resort and Commercial Recreation Association Certified Commercial Recreation Professional Competencies. A glossary of terms, a bibliography, an index, and a brief biography of each author are also included.

The book is learner friendly. Each chapter begins with a list of learning objectives and key terms. Students immediately know what should have their attention in a chapter. Each chapter includes one or more case studies of typical RETs. The cases are insightful and motivating to students. After reading them, students can vision themselves developing a RET business.

The authors provide faculty who may use the text with excellent pedagogical support including a web based instructors guide, test package, and Power Point lecture presentations. Additionally, there are web based student assignments and notes to supplement classroom instruction. One note about this, students who purchase a new text receive access to the student web site as part of their purchase price. Students who purchase a used text must call the publisher and purchase access to the web site.

Preparing students to operate a small business with one book and course is an ambitious goal. I appreciated the authors’ cautions in several areas of the book where they acknowledge they cannot fully prepare a student to manager specific issues or functions. For example, in addition to briefly reviewing the various legal forms of doing business, the authors advise students to seek legal counsel for help in making this important decision. Similar cautions appear at appropriate places in the book.

Here is my wish list for future editions. First, I hope there are some; the book is a useful alternative to other options in the market. Second, I hope the business management chapter is altered to be more aligned with the tone of the rest of the

book. Third, I hope future editions include an investment budget to complement the cash flow budget presented as Exhibit 11.4. Finally, I believe there needs to be a bit more tutoring of students about preparing a business plan.

Small businesses make up a large part of the U.S. economy and include recreation, event, and tourism enterprises. Why no one developed a commercial recreation text from this perspective previously is somewhat of a mystery. Nevertheless, with the publication of this volume, the area is now well covered.