

Blanchard, J., Strong, M., & Ford, P. (2007). *Leadership and administration of outdoor pursuits* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). State College, PA: Venture.

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Now in its third edition, this text is a seminal work in the field of outdoor education and recreation, and the authors did a great job with this edition. The text has undergone several significant modifications that will benefit readers; most notably, the chapters have been sub-divided by sections. From an instructional standpoint, this was a very logical sequence to follow (with few exceptions) when using the book to deliver an outdoor leadership outdoor education curriculum. I will proceed with an examination of the chapters and sections.

The Blanchard, Strong and Ford began appropriately by defining some common terminology and the benefits (e.g., personal, social, developmental) that can be derived from participation in outdoor pursuits. Following these definitions, the authors provided a somewhat limited, but useful, chapter on the resources for outdoor pursuits. Chapter Three on the natural environment provided what one would expect about nature awareness and environmental behavior, but went into surprising depth regarding “nature comfort,” which includes recognition of shapes, forms and color in the outdoors. Consistent with the environmental behavior theme, the authors provided a detailed overview of the Leave No Trace principles—one that no book like this is complete without! Rounding out Part One was an analysis of “understanding human needs.” Especially insightful was the section on “psychological needs” and in particular here the “mood differences” information.

Research by Johnson and Tversky (1982) “reveals that people tend to make judgments that are compatible with their current mood. While this does not mean that someone may make bad judgments when in a bad mood, it implies that being in a bad mood may affect judgments (and ultimately feedback and input to the rest of the group) differently than when the person is in a good mood, and that individual will be unaware of the contribution of mood state to the decision making process.” (p. 69).

Such passages provided concrete and useful information for the fledgling outdoor leader.

Administration touched upon many important topics, including risk management. Blanchard, Strong, and Ford did a good job of defining and explaining some common legal terms, but the most interesting part of this chapter was the section on “Participant Agreements.” This section takes the reader through what is necessary for release and assumption of risk forms. A shortcoming of this chapter

was the section on “Insurance,” where the topic deserves a little more discussion than the four paragraphs the authors provided.

The authors did provide a good deal of helpful information in Chapter Seven dealing with “Strategic Planning.” This chapter was full of good, solid planning information and included several example figures to aid in the planning process. Similarly, Chapter Eight on “Tactical Planning” was a very detailed analysis of what elements need to be considered when undertaking the logistics and related planning for an outdoor program. The authors obviously spent some time here, addressing aspects from permitting to personal preparedness and establishing the importance of many subtopics.

Arguably one of the most important issues that the outdoor industry has addressed in the past ten years is transportation. To that end, the authors crafted a detailed chapter that can best be summarized by the authors’ explanation that “those that sit behind the wheel of a program vehicle are called upon to drive more defensively than ever before...” (p. 170).

Rounding out the “Administration” part of the book was the chapter on “Marketing”. Although it was one of the shorter chapters, its no-nonsense and straight-forward style made it very helpful. Marketing is particularly important, as many professionals in the outdoor industry would prefer to spend more of their time in the field and less time “drumming up business.”

This section of the book was surely a labor of love for the authors. Comprehensive and written well, the chapters included sections on “Group Dynamics,” “Outdoor Pursuits Leadership,” “Critical Leadership Responsibilities,” “Leadership in the Field,” “Responding to Emergencies,” and “Teaching and Facilitation.” The authors put a great deal of emphasis on the “how tos” such as debriefing and troubleshooting during the debriefing. They left no stone unturned in the leadership part of the book!

The final four chapters were, as was the rest of the book, well-written and richly detailed. Divided by activity type (land-based, snow-based, water-based, and navigation), this part of the book gave descriptions, hazards and risks, environmental and social impacts as well as resource requirements, (e.g., clothing and equipment requirements) for each of the activity types. The chapter regarding land navigation was oddly placed. It would have made more sense to have placed this chapter at the beginning of Part Four, rather than the end. Knowing how to navigate in the field is paramount, no matter what activity you undertake.

This book is a must have for all outdoor educators! Blanchard, Strong, and Ford made the book easy to understand while providing some keen insights into successful leadership and administrative practices for outdoor pursuits. Whether you are an instructor using this as a textbook, or a field professional in need of a handy reference, professionals should get their hands on a copy of this great text.