

**Discovering the characteristics of top quality employees in sport organizations**

*Paul E. Keiper, Texas A&M University*

*Shane L. Hudson, Texas A&M University*

**Management/leadership**

**May 30, 2009**

**Poster**

**Abstract 2009-197**

**3:00 PM**

**(Lexington/Carolina Prefunction)**

Despite many high profile sport organizations in the global market there are very few jobs for employees. Many college and universities have designated sport related degrees for students that are passionate about the industry. The competition for employment can be fierce and includes just about anyone with an undergraduate or graduate degree with an insatiable work ethic and a passion for sport. In most situations salaries are low due to the fact that many people would love to work for a sport organization and therefore the supply always exceeds the demand (Masteralexis et al., 2009). Emphasizing the social and economic importance of human capital, Becker (1993) quotes the economist Alfred Marshall's dictum that "the most valuable of all capital is that invested in human beings"(Swanson & Holton, 2001, p. 109).

The sport management curriculum at a university in the southwest portion of the United States has specific goals for students including effective communication, comprehensive writing skills, work effectively in a diverse environment, understanding of the major concept and theoretical perspectives of sport management, and research. Understanding and the incorporation of sport industry standards is imperative to the development of future sport industry employees.

The purpose of this study was to survey sport industry professionals in regard to the characteristics needed to be a top quality candidate for employment. Students after completing their degrees in sport management end up with an assortment of jobs in the sport industry. Career opportunities are vast and range from educational institutions to professional sport teams (Chelladurai, 2005). In order to understand the broad perspectives of the sport industry, it is necessary to incorporate as many experts into this study as possible from a wide-range of industry professionals. The theory behind this thought process is that 'n +1' experts are better than one (Rowe et al., 1991; Story et al., 2001). It is also imperative for the experts to come to some sort of consensus; this will allow for the assimilation of the industries needs into the preparation of future employees. The Delphi technique with modifications is the best approach to gaining the information. Clayton (1997) asserts that this method provides the opportunity for experts to participate without traveling and can maintain anonymity.

Data will be collected using a modified Delphi technique. The first round will be to answer one question regarding characteristics of successful employees. The second round will be to view the responses of those involved in the study and take the opportunity to change or add to your answers. The third and final round will be to rank order the characteristics exposed during rounds one and two. This study will need to be comprised of approximately 30 experts committed to all three rounds. The implications of this study will support sport management programs in higher education. The programs will be able to assess goals, objectives, and successful characteristics of the sport industry and with this knowledge prepare students to succeed in the diverse sport industry. The findings of this study should be of interest to industry professionals, faculty, and administrators when determining future employment, curriculum, and program goals.