

Top 10 Ways to Make a Good Camp - Great!

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1. Staffing:

- Move year-round professional staff into leadership positions at your camp.
- Staff shirts should be worn everyday. Select a camp logo and camp colors and stick with them. This will help your camp and your staff gain an identity and creates a culture.
- Use your good camp staff to recruit their friends; good staff generally recruit other good staff.
- Design a Staff Development Program: More so than just having a Counselors in Training and Jr. Counselor program. Forecast your staff for two to three summers from now as if they were a college basketball team. Help them learn the skills that they will need to be future trip leaders or lifeguards.

2. Programs:

- Your camp programs should be age specific with more options for campers as they get older. Separate facilities should be designed with these programs in mind.
- Develop “cutting edge” specialty camps. Add new ones each year and evaluate or eliminate older specialty camps that are out dated.
- Develop specialty areas that can run without specialty area staff; Slip and Slide, Superslide, Mountain Boards, DJ Station.
- Conduct an end of the summer evaluation and use this as the basis for your staff meetings throughout the year.

3. Facility:

- First and foremost, keep it neat, clean and well groomed. If you have a full facility camp; make sure you have the appropriate budget, staff and maintenance equipment to maintain it.
- Whenever possible, design, build, and create facilities at your camp that are age specific. Having separate program areas for children and teens is highly suggested.
- Good signage is key! Signage is a great and relatively inexpensive way to enhance your facility. Have some informational signs and some fun signs.
- Paint and woodchips go a long way to cover non-attractive areas.
- Having enough water access is very important during the summer months. Drinking fountains are inexpensive and easy to build.

4. Marketing:

- Have a professional graphic designer develop your camp brochure
- Develop a Website/ web page for your camp:
 - a. On-line registration
 - b. Download medical forms, registration forms, parent handbooks, staff applications
- Send out a minimum of two or three professionally designed newsletters to your campers throughout the year. Email newsletters are great and easy, but be sure not to overdo it.
- Develop a camp logo, slogan, and camp colors and put them everywhere.

5. Staff Training:

- Staff training for your camp should be pre-planned and a minimum of 30 hours, no matter the size of you camp – per YMCA of the USA Day Camp Guidelines and ACA Guidelines.
- There should be a balance of teambuilding activities, fun stuff and serious workshops.
- Every staff training should have a special event; overnight, road trip, special guest.
- There should be a team presentation approach. The leadership staff of the camp should present as much if not more than the Camp Director. The lecture style of presenting is not a must and often not very effective with High School and College aged staff.

6. Customer Service:

- Realize the importance of your relationships with your families
- Examine ways that you can provide exceptional service above your families' expectations. What are the minor annoyances that exist i.e. frustrating voicemail system, waiting in line, having to talk to one specific person who is never available when they call, etc.
- Provide the ability for families to register over the phone, via fax, email or online.
- Spend time talking to customers....and not just a flurry of emails. The old expression "reach out and touch someone" is more relevant now than ever because of the impersonal feel of email.

7. Planning:-

Annual Year Round Planning

- Year round planning should be based off of the parent/camper evaluations. This will set your agenda and objectives for the year.
- Meet with your leadership team a minimum of six times throughout the off season – monthly if possible; there is always plenty to improve on.
- A complete re-evaluation of all areas of your camp should be conducted every three to five years.
- Develop a year-round calendar of events of things that need to get accomplished, discussed, evaluated, or changed.

Long Range Planning:

- Develop a Master Plan that is professionally created for your facility and program. This will help you define who you are and who you want to become. This is important for both facility and non-facility camps.
- All camps should have a vision, long and short term goals, and annual objectives should be created to meet that vision.
- Long-range planning should involve staff, volunteers, parents, and much of the information gathered from your parent/camper evaluations.
- Continue to test and re-evaluate your Master Plan every few years.

8. Fun Enhancements:

- Take a step back and look at how you can make any area of your camp more fun (Fountain of Youth, First Aid, Slidezilla).
- You **MUST** add one or two new and fun enhancements to your camp each season. A camp improvement fee is a great way to do that.
- Develop fun stuff for the staff as well as the campers (High Five Award, staff play days, staff competitions and contests)
- Utilize pictures as much as possible. Hang fun picture in your cabins, offices, and the YMCA of all the fun things camp has to offer. Send a picture to the staff in the off-season to remind them of all the fun they had during the summer.

9. Volunteers:

- Develop a year-round volunteer program that gets people out to your camp in the off season.
- Have pre-determined projects that meet the visions of your Master Plan.
- Utilize local Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and especially Eagle Scouts.
- Recognize and thank your volunteers as often and as publicly as possible.
- Develop and Alumni Associations – great way to recruit volunteers and donors.

10. Road Trips and Resources:

- Get out of your cam /office and visit other camps. See what other camps are doing with their facilities, programs, volunteers and staff.
- Go visit other camps on three different levels: slightly better than your camp, and way better than your camp and way out of your league.
- Go to ACA conferences– tons of ideas!
- www.ultimatecampresource.com and www.ctcampguys.com