THE CENTER FOR EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT AND MY EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT: Since there is an increasing need for learning and relearning on the part of managers and executives, several business schools around the country have developed a program for offering seminars and workshops to the adult community for improving their level of supervisory, managerial, and executive performance. The purpose of this article is to lend assistance to those who are planning to embark upon this alternative higher education endeavor by sharing experiences from one institution.

In January 1976, the School of Business at the University of Southern Colorado began developing continuing education opportunities. The growing demand for executive talent, combined with new technological advances and an increasingly complex and dynamic environment, necessitates the preparation and renewal of human resources. Recognizing this need, the Center for Executive Development (C.E.D.) was conceptualized. The C.E.D. provides a continuing program of education for business, government and other professional areas. Accordingly, a director was appointed to work toward building this part of the School of Business activities. The director, who works closely with faculty as well as external organizations, identifies their interests and needs to formulate a strategy for executive and management programs.

Before any institution embarks upon a management development program, several tasks must be accomplished. First you should determine if your market is going to be local, state-wide, and/or national. For example, if the target market is the local community, then you...
must decide whether or not there is a sufficient industrial base to support offerings. Are there governmental agencies located in your community? Will they support in-service programs for their employees? Will you have any competition in your market area? After deciding upon a target market, the next step is to survey your market in order to determine educational needs, commitment, and market potential.

Internally, you will have to decide whether your program will be centralized or decentralized. This issue can cause conflict within the institution. Many institutions have some form of a continuing education operation and traditionally they will favor a centralized administrative structure for all nontraditional program offerings whether it be credit courses or non-credit workshops and seminars. There are advantages to a centralized structure, the main advantage being financial synergism. Synergism means the sum of the whole (centralized) is greater than the sum of the parts (decentralized) taken independently. A centralized structure can spread potential revenues from successful operations to a growing operation. Like the conglomerate merger, the centralized structure has the ability to spread risks. The main disadvantage to a centralized structure is the possible loss of expertise in program design and facilitation. With the decentralized structure, you will have a specialist designing, staffing, marketing, and implementing conferences and seminars in the management sciences areas.

Whether or not you select a decentralized structure, an issue which must be resolved before a program can be initiated, is financing. You must decide how to cover all costs. The ideal situation is having institutional commitment and support to get the program started; in other words, the institution will provide a certain amount of seed money. Executive development programs are typically self-maintaining operations, because revenues that are generated from client fees can cover operational expenses. It is important that break-even analysis is based upon a constant demand for what is supplied. Thus like introducing any new product on the market, it is very important that you determine the needs of your consumers.

Staffing seminars is an important task. There are several sources for acquiring instructors. One obvious source is faculty at your institution. A point to remember, however, is not all faculty are good teachers of nontraditional students. Thus you will have to carefully select and possibly train program faculty. Other sources of instructional staff are consultants and faculty from other institutions. Also remember that you have business leaders in the community who have expertise and experience. They too can be used as instructors for certain programs.