

1.1: DESCRIBE, ANALYZE AND IMPROVE THE PRESENT AQUATIC SITUATION

OVERVIEW. The present facility and each activity in the program (i.e. age-group swim team, learn to swim classes for youth, adult exercise class, masters swim team), should be examined for its strengths and weaknesses.

_____ **DESCRIBE HOW THE PROGRAM USES THE FACILITY.** Prepare a short narrative description of how the group uses the facility (number of participants, hours of regular use, availability of use for special events, cost to use the pool, etc.)

_____ **ANALYZE THE PROGRAM.** Using the SWOT technique advocated by Moler*, describe the program further by listing its *Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats*. Example of items that could be found in each category is presented below.

STRENGTHS (check all that apply)

- _____ The program is growing.
 - _____ Leadership is good or excellent.
 - _____ The results (attendance, records in competition, etc.) are satisfactory or above.
 - _____ Financially, the program is solvent.
 - _____ The facilities are adequate or better.
 - _____ The community support is adequate or better.
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WEAKNESSES (check all that apply)

THERE IS, OR SOON WILL BE, NO FACILITY

- _____ There is no pool to use.
 - _____ The sponsor has announced they are closing the pool.
 - _____ Operational costs are so high that the present facility is in financial trouble.
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*Moler, C. Minding your business. *Aquatics Intl*, June 2001, p. 21+

WEAKNESSES (continued)

WE OWN A FACILITY, BUT IT IS INADEQUATE FOR OUR USE BECAUSE...

_____ Temperature, access and/or depth are not appropriate for our group (i.e. team, parent-tot, synchro, school district, adults in our fitness club, etc.)

_____ We cannot increase our membership because there is no additional space.

_____ Our operating expenses are so high that our budget cannot be met.

_____ We have had to reduce pool hours, maintenance, etc. because of limited finances.

_____ The situation now is adequate, but there is no room for if we grow in number.

_____ Pool upkeep and operation expenses keep increasing.

WE RENT SPACE IN A FACILITY, BUT...

_____ Overemphasis on one program restricts other desirable programs.

_____ We are not being accommodated at reasonable times or costs.

_____ We have an adversarial relationship with the facility manager (probably because we are always asking for more pool time, reduced costs, etc.!)

_____ Our request for more space is not even considered.

_____ Other aquatic groups seem to have more clout than we have.

_____ We have personality conflicts that seem unsolvable.

_____ We cannot get pool time for any, or very few, special events.

_____ The location is undesirable.

OPPORTUNITIES

_____ New leadership (i.e. parents, elected officials, etc.) would like to see an improved program.

_____ Increased interest in our specialty (i.e. high school wants to start a swim team).

_____ The Recreation Department (or school district) is planning a new activity center.

THREATS

_____ Other groups might want to use the facility, and we would have reduced time.

_____ We will not be able to attract competent leaders to our program.

_____ A waterpark or major competitor is opening only 20 miles away.

_____ There is a rumor that another team is starting up.

_____ The hospital is going to build a rehab pool.

_____ **EXAMINE EACH ACTIVITY IN THE PROGRAM.** Using the form on the next page, examine each activity that is part of the program.

1.2: IMPROVE THE PRESENT SITUATION

OVERVIEW. After evaluating its situation, an aquatic group might be convinced that a new facility, operated by them, will be a logical long-term goal. However, in the meantime, there is need to keep the present program going. This time is best used to make an effort to improve the present situation and to use the time to gather information from the owner's point of view.

_____ **BEGIN A POSITIVE DIALOG WITH THE PRESENT FACILITY MANAGER.**

The results of the activity analysis have revealed as groups' view of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to its activity. Focusing on the weaknesses (which are seen as problems), the administrator should attempt at least a short-term improvement by seeking a face-to-face meeting with the pool manager.

The group needs to realize that from the manager's point of view, the conversation will be with a group of complainers who want a "better deal". The group needs to realize that manager has similar conversations with other groups, to wit:

- The parent-tot instructor wants 84°F water but the swim coach wants 81°F and the senior exercise group wants 86°F. At the same time, the sponsor wants to reduce heating costs by lowering the water temperature!
- The synchro team of 10 persons wants more water time after school, as does the age group team of 90 swimmers.
- The adapted aquatics group wants another way to enter the water beside the poolside lift, but the equipment budget is already spent for the year.

- The local youth club wants a reduced admission price for their members, while the city administrator is wondering how income can be raised.

In short, seeing the problem from the other person's perspective is helpful in such a situation. Not only will knowledge be gained, but also the complaining group will realize that owning and managing a facility brings managerial problems that are not easy to solve.

There is a danger that the conversation will reveal, or cause, personality conflicts between the participants. The manager might feel that the complaining group can never be mollified, while the group might think that further conversation will hurt their efforts. If so, changing representatives of the "complaining" group might be necessary.

 INVESTIGATE THE POSSIBILITY OF SHORT TERM IMPROVEMENT BY RENTING ADDITIONAL WATER TIME. Swim teams, especially, have need for more water time at the beginning of the fall season. It is customary to have a "try it to see if you like it" period, which is great recruiting tool—but adds to an already crowded situation in the usual rental space. A short-term solution would be to rent a seasonal (outdoor) pool for the Sept 1-October 15 periods. In most sections of the country, the weather is acceptable for a 3-6pm workout. If the returning team members utilized that time period, the usual rental space could be used for the potential new members.

If space is needed in the springtime, the April 15-May 30 time period might be rented in a seasonal pool. The weather is adequate, and the pool is going to open on May 31 anyway.

This idea also applies to aquatic fitness instructors, or perhaps parent-tot classes (depending upon the weather). Coaches and instructors might question why a seasonal pool would consider short-term rentals. The answer is simple—pool owners can always use extra income if it does not impinge on their regular program.

 STRIVE FOR A WIN-WIN SITUATION. It is obvious to the pool manager that the group is unhappy. He or she has probably heard rumors about the group wanting their own facility, and the last thing that the manager wants is to antagonize the group further. Your aquatic group has one advantage—it has money to spend—and the pool manager can always use income! If the dialog is to be fruitful, there must be recognition that both sides have legitimate issues, and that there might have to be compromises. In short, seeing the problem from the other person's perspective is helpful in all situations. A dramatic improvement in the present situation will be only a temporary solution if the facility is truly sub-standard. However, depending on the give and take of the persons involved, then a dramatic turn-around could result.

FORM 1.1

ANALYSIS OF _____
(program—age-group team, learn to swim, etc.)

STRENGTHS

WEAKNESSES

OPPORTUNITIES

THREATS