

Why I Love Summer Camp

Lessons learned from being away from the home base

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I just returned from the [TriState Camp Conference](#) in Atlantic City. The professionals who work in the summer camp industry do not necessarily think of it as an “industry.” It’s more like a life mission. They believe passionately that camp changes lives. Camp directors devote their creativity, time, energy, and heart to creating memorable and safe experiences for kids. What impresses me is the fact that the entire conference is organized and run by a team comprised almost exclusively of volunteers.

To run a camp, a director needs to manage facilities (the camp location itself), transportation, human resources (hiring and training), programming (everything from the simplicity of lanyards to the complexity of color war), marketing and communications, purchasing, risk management, food service, health management, and security. Other than the hospitality industry and the military, not many businesses require that level of responsibility, coordination, and attention to such a wide range of detail. No date slippage can happen either. Camp starts and ends on a certain day. Kids show up and need to be engaged, inspired, and supervised.

So, running a huge 4-day conference is second nature for camp professionals except for the fact that the venue is a convention center rather than bunks amidst nature. Few of the CEOs and teams I’ve worked with over the years could pull that off. They are especially humble too. When I shared my observations with a camp director last week, he simply stated, “It’s just what we do.” I never cease to marvel at the resourcefulness, team spirit, energy level, humor, and resilience of this “non-industry.” So, if you ever feel overwhelmed by the operational aspects of your industry or job, just “go to camp!”

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