

Wisconsin Park & Recreation Association

Career Center Tips: **Ten Ways to Hurt Your Career**



All workers share the common fear of getting fired. Today, park and recreation professionals are not only scared of being fired; they fear getting laid off from their jobs. Neither is a situation any worker wants to face. What's worse, many factors that play a huge role in making these decisions are out of your control, such as the economy, performance and longevity in the park and recreation agency. To best avoid being faced with a pink slip of any kind, employees should make sure they aren't doing anything to themselves that might affect this decision.

Avoiding self-destructive habits at work seems like common sense, but reasonable thinking is sometimes forgotten when employees try to stand out or learn new habits, styles and techniques in order to stay afloat in their lines of business.

To avoid your own career self-destruction, avoid these 10 habits:

1. Not keeping track of your accomplishments

Let's say the boss is deciding whether to keep you or your co-worker on board. He sits you down and asks, "Why should I keep you?" If you have nothing to show or tell to prove your case, chances are, you'll be the one getting the boot. Additionally, it's good to keep a running list of awards, promotions and accomplishments to showcase when it comes time for annual performance reviews or when asking for a pay increase. Plus, you never know when you'll end up looking for new work. If you don't keep track of all the good you've done, you might not remember them when it's time to update your résumé.

2. Not keeping your skill set current

The business landscape is ever-changing, as exemplified by this tough economy. Right now, you're just trying to keep your job and the best way to do that is to show your employer they are getting the maximum return on their investment: you. Keeping your skill set current, along with expanding it, will show your employer you're worth their money, especially when park and recreation organizations are looking for ways to reduce expenses.

3. Not delivering results

Common sense will tell you that the park and recreation field is now considered a business that has accountability. If you don't contribute to the bottom line, if you cost money instead of make money or if you harbor a sense of entitlement for simply having put forth effort, you are guaranteed to fall by the wayside.

4. Efficient does not equal effective

Those who think that communicating via e-mail, because it's faster than actually talking with people, fail to recognize the importance of personally connecting with others in today's highly automated, technological and competitive environment. One thing that will keep you afloat in this economy is your relationships with people, and those relations can't be grown through e-mails, text messages or BlackBerry chats.

5. Thinking you're irreplaceable

There is no room for "divas" in the workplace. There are millions of people looking for work right now and, chances are, more than a few of them could do your job. As soon as you convince yourself that you and only you can do the job "right," your star will surely start to fall.

6. Knowing all the answers

Knowledge is power. Professing to know it all, however, will stall your career as it shows that you're uninterested in learning about new ideas and approaches. To stay afloat in today's job market, workers need to ask questions, stay current and listen to new ideas. Attending WPRA workshops, the annual conference and the new webinars are critical for your continued success.

7. Surrounding yourself with "brownosers"

The old adage remains true: You are the company you keep. If you associate with brownosers, it's most likely because you like having others boost your confidence. This fact will not be lost on those around you. Managers and other professionals will have no problem replacing you with someone who accepts and encourages intelligence and creativity in others.

8. Taking all the credit

Give credit where credit is due. Most park and recreation managers are smart enough to realize when you inappropriately take full credit for positive outcomes despite the help or input received by others. If you credit other people where they deserve it, you'll be seen as team player, a key element to any successful group. Plus, you'll probably find that you start seeing the same acknowledgement from your co-workers.

9. Not tooting your own horn

Chances are your boss doesn't have time to keep a running tab on each of his employees, so how else will your boss know how valuable you are to the park and recreation department unless you tell him or her? Bragging is one thing, but letting colleagues in our industry know of your success through brief reports, promotion bulletins or other such tools is another. It's important to recognize the value of letting others know about your accomplishments as long as you go about it in the right way.

10. Losing perspective

Those who fail to recognize their shortcomings are destined for the unemployment line.

Intuitive business people recognize that, despite their best attempts to do everything right, they may sometimes approach roadblocks and need to seek the advice and perspective of a respected friend, colleague or even a business coach. Acknowledging that you aren't perfect will earn you respect in the park and recreation department.