

Big Lake BR&E Visitation Program Case Study

Project: Big Lake High School Career Day

Background

In 2006, the Big Lake BR&E Task Force interviewed 40 local businesses to survey their perception on the community's strength and weaknesses. Four priority projects were identified to address the issues learned during the interviews:

1. Pursue workforce development strategies that a) retain and motivate young potential employees in Big Lake, and b) inform businesses of workforce attributes to aid recruitment (later termed "Big Lake High School Career Day")
2. Form a Business Roundtable
3. Improve cultural and recreational opportunities by creating a "Passport" program for area residents and visitors
4. Strive to serve as a resource to the City of Big Lake Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Committee

Each project had a team of individuals that worked together to develop and accomplish that project. This case study focuses on priority project #1: Big Lake High School Career Day.

The Project

The goal of the chosen project was to "strengthen Big Lake's workforce through retaining young people in the area and making sure young people are well informed about local workforce options". The team brainstormed many options to accomplish this goal. One suggestion was to hold a job fair as local businesses reported in the survey that they had problems recruiting employees with specific skill sets. However, it was decided not to pursue this option as Monticello already

holds a job fair in which people from all neighboring communities are invited to attend.

Another option was to work with the Big Lake High School and hold a Career Day, inviting as many Big Lake businesses as possible to speak to the students. Given the time and money constraints, the team decided it was more manageable to put together a Career Day versus a Job Fair.

The format for the day consisted of students having the opportunity to pick three career fields they wanted to learn more about and then an opportunity to talk one on one with the businesses in a “job fair” atmosphere.



(Career Day April 30, 2008)

The first hour and a half of the day consisted of three, thirty minute sessions in which students were able to hear from a panel of various businesses within each specific career field. During the next two hours, businesses were invited into the Common Areas of the School and students were given an opportunity to speak to individual businesses or industries they were interested in and to make related contacts. Businesses were invited to bring brochures and other items to display during this period.

Challenges

The team ran into various challenges as it worked on developing a format for the day and getting speakers lined up to talk to the students. Initially, it was a challenge to get the School staff to see the benefit of a Career Day as they had limited time to participate with their busy schedules and other commitments. It was equally challenging to inform the business community of the opportunities participating in Career Day had for them, such as the chance to recruit future workers, informing students of the types of jobs that are here in Big Lake, etc... Because this was the first ever Career Day, there were minor communication

issues encountered between the school and the business representatives on the format of the day. The school staff was provided detailed information about the day's schedule whereas business representatives were only provided vague information on how the day was going to unfold. The Career Day was held in the spring and conflicted somewhat with other events that were happening in the school. Logistics in itself was a challenge; moving kids, staff, business speakers, and the BR&E project team throughout the facility, determining the logistics of the day and of course, the space to hold the Career Day.

Resources

Holding a Career Day at the High School required more volunteer time resources than monetary resources. The Big Lake High School provided Staff time in determining the logistics of the day and of course, the space to hold the Career Day.

School Staff members were assigned different tasks such as monitoring some of the rooms in which the industry panelists were speaking; helping direct students to various rooms, etc... Connexus Energy provided \$200 to purchase food and



(Career Day April 30, 2008)

refreshments for the business representatives who volunteered to speak. Each business donated approximately four to five hours, allowing the respective representatives to participate in the day's events.

Results

Despite the challenges, the BR&E Project team viewed the first Big Lake High School Career Day as a success. Businesses representatives were asked to fill out a feedback form and comment on the day's events. Although they identified some of the same challenges the BR&E project team encountered, the majority stated they saw value in the day and would be willing to come back in the future. The School staff also saw the benefits of the Career Day. A few staff members

requested they be more involved in the planning for the next Career Day as they gained more insight after hearing from some of the students themselves.

Additional Information

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