

FUNCTIONS, TASKS AND PROFESSIONAL PROFILE OF SPORT PSYCHOLOGY IN SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS

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Gradually, the psychology of physical activity and sport has become an interesting career opportunity for psychology professionals. To traditional fields of intervention (high-performance sports, initiation, psychological training), others have been added in recent years, such as those linked to health and quality of life, intervention in individuals with special needs and collaboration with companies and sports organizations. Our objective is to analyze the potential market for sport psychologists in sports organizations and their areas of intervention, illustrating this with an applied example and a short description that, from our point of view, should be the training and competences of sport psychologists interested in working in organizations and sports businesses.

Keywords: Sport psychologist; Sports organizations; Project management.

Poco a poco, la psicología de la actividad física y el deporte se ha convertido en una salida interesante para los profesionales de la psicología. A los campos tradicionales de intervención (alto rendimiento, iniciación deportiva, entrenamiento psicológico), se han añadido en los últimos años otros, como el vinculado a la salud y calidad de vida, intervención en poblaciones con necesidades especiales y colaboración con empresas y organizaciones deportivas.

Nuestro objetivo es analizar el mercado potencial de un psicólogo del deporte en las organizaciones deportivas y cuál es su campo de intervención, ilustrándolo con un ejemplo aplicado y una pequeña descripción de lo que, desde nuestro punto de vista, tendría que ser la formación y competencias de los psicólogos del deporte interesados en trabajar en organizaciones y empresas deportivas.

Palabras clave: Psicólogo del deporte, Organizaciones deportivas, Gestión de proyectos

LINES OF ACTION OF SPORT PSYCHOLOGISTS WITHIN A PUBLIC OR PRIVATE SPORTS ORGANIZATION

The sport psychologist working in the area of a Sports organization, either public or private, develops a series of tasks aimed at achieving objectives related to performance and social, economic and sports development. In principle, the entity's public or private character will determine the prevalence of a certain type of objective, although not exclusively.

Our work as sport psychologists will be focused on the management of events and sports projects arranged by the organization with which we collaborate. On the other hand, as long as the professional has the necessary competence in human resources as well as in marketing and other essential skills, he/she will be able to help to improve the quality and efficiency of the sports organization.

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Potential market

The first question which must be posed by a psychologist who wants to link his/her professional life to public or private sports organizations is: Who is my potential market? This can be understood to be the sum of participants or potential clients who enjoy common characteristics, and those to whom we can make a certain offer. Said concept also includes actual or possible competitors within the same range of services.

Our market as psychologists is comprised of the sum of participants or clients (demand), and the sum of Sports Centers, facilities, clubs, etc. (offer). More exactly:

- ✓ People who practise sports activities as recreation
- ✓ People who practise physical sports activities for their health
- ✓ People who are looking for an association to join
- ✓ Consumers of sports spectacles
- ✓ Professional athletes and their multi-disciplined teams
- ✓ Sports event managers

Public organizations or entities that use physical sports activities as a tool

In order to know our market more precisely, and depending on our place of work, we must always keep the following questions in mind:

- ✓ Who are our potential clients?
- ✓ Where can we find them?
- ✓ What are they going to ask from us?
- ✓ What can we offer them?
- ✓ How are we going to offer it?

Management of sports projects

On most occasions, a sport psychologist will work within a MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAM along with other professionals and the work strategy will be PROJECT MANAGEMENT.

When we collaborate in the management of sports projects, we should always take the following premises into account:

- ✓ The client/user is the origin and main objective of all the needs of the company/organization.
- ✓ Companies/organizations only subsist when they are capable of creating activities and services that are preferred by their clients/users.
- ✓ Profitability is one of the main responsibilities of a good manager, who must not forget that profits are obtained from the clients/users.
- ✓ The facilities as well as the area of activities and services are only useful and profitable if the market accepts what is being offered.
- ✓ There is nothing in a company offering sports activities and services more important than the users or clients.
- ✓ Nothing has happened until a new client has been registered!
- ✓ The client is always right; no one has ever won an argument with a client - arguments are won with ex-clients!

Although these principles seem logical, most sports companies and organizations act and make decisions prioritizing other areas: costs, internal efficiency, reduction of personnel, precarious financing, etc.

A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE: THE ROLE OF A SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST IN A MUNICIPAL SPORTS INSTITUTE

We would like to give as an illustrative example, the functions and tasks that the Town Hall of Palma de Mallorca requested. The institutional management of physical activity and sports in Mallorca is structured around three institutions: the Balear Government whose area of intervention is focused on the athletes, especially

in high-performance sports; the Consell of Mallorca who, together with different town halls, collaborates in the physical sports activities of said towns; and the Town Hall of Palma de Mallorca whose main objective is the promotion of exercise in Palma de Mallorca. Depending on the demands of the moment, it organizes and manages some sailing regattas. All sports are managed through the Intitut Municipal de L'Esport (IME).

Projects linked to improving the quality and efficiency of sports organization

The aim of the IME is the promotion in its citizens of a high level of well-being based on incorporating sports practice into their lifestyle thus obtaining better health habits achieved through daily exercise. For this purpose, the IME boasts the following sports centers:

- ✓ Municipal Sports Palace Son Moix
- ✓ Son Hugo Sports Center
- ✓ Germans Escalas Sports Center
- ✓ Municipal s'Estel Sports Center
- ✓ Exterior facilities (schoolyards, public parks with sports facilities, sports spaces assigned to sports clubs)
- ✓ 36 artificial grass football pitches (new remodeling)

A mixed management model is used throughout the organization, which has its own personnel (99 people) in the different facilities, and subcontracts in certain areas: cleaning, sports services, and some of the maintenance of the facilities.

The collaboration initiated in 2005 with a request on the part of the President of the IME and the Sports Councilor to restructure the permanent staff before the end of 2006 due to the opening of new facilities before May, 2007. As a basic premise, work was carried out with the idea that the IME could not increase in number of permanent staff members,

There were two general objectives: to direct the IME toward excellence in attention to its citizens, adapting to the new public services modernization act, and to provide the personnel with the skills and competences necessary for the optimum performance of their jobs. Different matters were proposed as specific objectives: restructuring procedures and jobs, orienting them to quality in services for citizens; directing the IME personnel toward teamwork; and elevating and consolidating the permanent staff's level of training.

Once the job was completed and various needs were detected, other lines of work in relation to human resources were:

- ✓ Assessment with regard to psychological and social risks (stress, mobbing, etc.)
- ✓ Selection and socialization of newly incorporated personnel
- ✓ The carrying out of an analysis of training necessities
- ✓ Implantation of a system of performance assessment
- ✓ Implantation of an internal communications system
- ✓ Analysis of user satisfaction of sports facilities

Projects linked to the management of events and sports projects

At the same time and connected to sport psychology training, we collaborated in other lines of work linked to the management of sports projects. Specifically, we took part in the Tourism-Sports Project sponsored by the Palma Town Hall along with IBATUR (Balear Institute of Tourism), in the organization of the Sailing King’s Cup Regatta and in the carrying-out of Madrid’s 2016 Olympic Bid and its later development.

Work also specified participation in strategic projects adapted to the objectives of the IME:

1. Projects directed at psychologically mediated sports services:
 - ✓ Creation and development of a physical activity program directed at women with breast cancer
 - ✓ Creation and development of an aquatic psychomotricity program for children aged 2 to 3
 - ✓ Creation and development of a program for the prevention of child obesity
 - ✓ Creation and development of a physical activity program directed at women with osteoporosis.
2. Projects directed at management:
 - ✓ Implantation of ISO 9001 Quality Management System
 - ✓ Adapt the management of the IME to the new public services modernization act and the capital status act of the Town Hall of Palma de Mallorca
3. Projects aimed at relating to users and athletes and building loyalty:
 - ✓ Perceived satisfaction survey of the users of sports facilities
 - ✓ Perceived satisfaction survey of the users of the artificial grass football pitches
 - ✓ Improvement of on-line services

To sum up, from the professional point of view of the sport psychologist, and always depending on the skills level of the professional to be intervened (human resources, marketing,

strategic planning, event management, etc.), the basic tasks involved in the attainment of the general objectives of sports organizations are:

1. Establish and/or adapt the philosophy, objectives and image of the entity.
2. Organize the procedures necessary for the attainment of the specified objectives.
3. Assess the members’ specific aims, their fluctuation, the use of services, etc., and thus develop objective criteria in order to achieve better performance.
4. Establish and organize a participation system for the different members of the organization.
5. Plan and organize coherently the tasks to be carried out by each member or group.
6. Define and organize the conditions for carrying out tasks and their consequences.
7. Plan the timetables and activities of all the components.
8. Plan the selection, training and motivation of the athletes or exercisers.
9. Improve the training of the different technicians – sport, psychopedagogue and administration – according to their specific qualifications.
10. Train the managers in management skills.
11. Increase the integration and cohesion of the members, users, families, athletes and technicians.
12. Optimize resource/output ratio and increase and consolidate the income of the entity.
13. Improve the social skills of the group members. Promote an improved atmosphere and social climate.
14. Improve the attention received by members and users.
15. Collaborate in the management of sports events.
16. Take care of the public image and social objectives of the entity.

Training of the psychologist specializing in sports organizations: knowledge, skills and competences

If we are going to collaborate in the integral management of a sports organization, the objectives set out will establish our training needs:

- ✓ Design of sports programs
- ✓ Creation of management strategies for new infrastructures
- ✓ Management and its modes
- ✓ Sport subsidies and sponsorships
- ✓ Divulcation, publicity and publications

To this end, as psychologists we must be able to:

- ✓ Help to define the mission of public service.
- ✓ Collaborate in setting the standards for user/client attention: programs, customer loyalty, etc.
- ✓ Assess for the attainment of economic and financial optimization.
- ✓ Collaborate with Management in the elaboration of Human Resource policies.
- ✓ Assess for the application of marketing, image and communications techniques.
- ✓ Collaborate in the elaboration of management policies for quality, corporate communications, public relations, etc.

Collaboration in the ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SPORTS EVENTS is linked to:

- ✓ Planning different sports competitions
- ✓ Assessment of different sports events (groups of continuous improvement)
- ✓ Sports events protocol
- ✓ Management of volunteers
- ✓ Communication and divulgation of sports events
- ✓ Attainment of financial resources: sports patronage and sponsorship

From the point of view of the OPTIMIZATION OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONNEL, we must be capable, on the one hand, of designing strategies which direct personnel toward quality of service, and on the other, of elaborating and implanting personnel policies which assure that the company's "human" team is adequate and feels motivated and committed to the corporate objectives, that it is professional and capable of contributing both individually and as a team to the general results of the organization. In order to achieve these STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES, we suggest the following tasks:

- ✓ Collaborate in annual staff planning
- ✓ Assess the design of guidelines to be followed in the selection, training, development and promotion of personnel in order to guarantee their suitability to the needs of the company.
- ✓ Establish and supervise an adequate performance management system.
- ✓ Establish and supervise an internal communications system that optimizes the functioning of the company.
- ✓ Collaborate in the delineation of business culture controlling communications at an internal level and

facilitating the creation of values appropriate for each moment.

- ✓ Coordinate labor relations in representation of the company.
- ✓ Supervise the administration of personnel.

Thus, and after careful consideration, we propose as a first PROFILE for the training and competences of a psychologist working from an integral perspective in a sports organization:

- ✓ Degree in Psychology
- ✓ Specialization in sport psychology
- ✓ Specialization in Human Resources and Job Safety
- ✓ Advanced knowledge in relationship marketing
- ✓ Broad knowledge in sports management
- ✓ Knowledge of public administration and its governing laws
- ✓ Experience in research (especially if it is a municipal organization)

With respect to the COMPETENCES, we suggest the following:

- ✓ Teamwork
- ✓ Planning of objectives
- ✓ Negotiation and decision making skills
- ✓ Conflict management
- ✓ Mental flexibility of criteria
- ✓ Client orientation (internal)
- ✓ Capacity for synthesis
- ✓ Strategic perspective
- ✓ Persuasion skills
- ✓ Social skills
- ✓ Stress tolerance

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize that a new, interesting and profitable field is opening up for sport psychologists which requires specific training in the management of sports organizations and projects and which offers new challenges in the objective shared by all professionals of promulgating sport psychology and its applications to society.

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