



Assiniboia Downs

Workplace Literacy Mini Case Study

Overview

Assiniboia Downs is Winnipeg's premier racetrack and entertainment centre, with live thoroughbred horseracing in the summer and year-round trade shows, exhibitions, banquets and simultaneous broadcasts of international races. The employees at this small racetrack tend to be seasonal and transient with unpredictable and demanding schedules, making long-term planning quite difficult. The learning program team at Assiniboia Downs has gone to great lengths to develop a learning resource centre with schedules and delivery models that meet the particular needs of its employees.

Focus groups and one-on-one interviews were conducted with all employees in the food and beverage services, barns and on the grounds. This research revealed that basic skills and academic upgrading were the employees' top picks for training. The learning centre has become an important resource at the racetrack by providing curriculum materials for academic upgrading and personal development, as well as computer facilities.

Objectives

The main objectives of the centre are to:

- ⇒ establish a learning culture by promoting the importance of basic skills training;
- ⇒ improve employees' literacy, numeracy and computer skills;
- ⇒ provide flexible schedules and delivery models to best suit employees; and
- ⇒ maintain participant confidentiality.

Activities

In partnership with the Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association (HBPA), the Winners Foundation and Jockey Club, the racetrack provides employees with an on-site learning

centre that meets their training and personal needs. The learning centre's computers have become a great asset to the workplace by providing easy Internet access to suppliers and The Racing Commission's database for licensing, as well as word processing for administrative staff. To best equip employees with the necessary workplace skills, the learning centre offers computer training, basic skills programs in reading, writing and math, as well as academic upgrading. In addition, riders from Mexico and Latin America benefit from English as a Second Language courses developed at the employees' request. The centre also conducts workshops in budgeting, bookkeeping, listening and communication skills.

Achievements

The program helps employees:

- ⇒ improve basic and computer skills;
- ⇒ develop the necessary skills to access further training; and
- ⇒ improve their employability within the company.

Benefits

Benefits of basic skills training at Assiniboia Downs include:

- ⇒ increased employee confidence, translating into better workplace performance;
- ⇒ improved employee loyalty and job satisfaction; and
- ⇒ increased use of computer facilities by all staff.

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