



What does roller skating needs most? New skaters!!!

good one and the individual can navigate the rink without great difficulty and risk of fear prominent in the experience. What an accomplishment for a beginner skater to think, "I can roller skate the first time

"We can get people to do whatever we want them to do as long as we are committed to get them to do it."

The FREE program may be viewed as a loss leader. Yes it is; the return on investment comes when the new skater comes back with his or her friends and the many that will become regular skaters going forward. The value to the rink owner is many times the investment. Think of the impact on the industry if every rink in America offered such a FREE program on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Nationally, thousands of new participants would enjoy their introduction to roller skating.

If every skating rink in the country gave a free lesson to twenty (20) first time skaters per week the stunning results would be as follows; 1200 (RSAI member and non-member rinks) X 20 = 24,000 (skaters per week) X 52 (weeks per year) = 1,248,000 first time skaters that would be introduced to roller skating via a FREE group lesson per year. Think of the impact to the industry not only for open skating, but the number of skaters that would pursue a structured fun lesson program (a subject to be covered in a future Rinksider article) so they can really become accomplished skaters.

The FREE group lesson program in simple form should teach participants about safety, falling, getting up, balance, marching before stroking (if needed), stopping, going Gorilla if losing balance, entering and exiting the skating floor. The program can be initiated by training your staff to teach. Choose the right-fit employ-

ees, train them properly, and you will be amazed what it will do for your business over time. If you do not have someone on your staff now that can train employees to teach basic fundamentals of skating, hire someone that can.

Let's face it, other industries are gaining market share with branded programs introducing kids 12 years of age and under to their lifetime sport. Tennis has a great innovative program titled Quick Start, bowling has computerized bumpers and an incredible interactive program Bowlopolis™, golf has the First Tee program, ice skating has the well established ISI recreational program, all have gained favor with kids.

The challenge for the roller skating industry will continue to be how to increase the number of skaters and grow the brand and image of roller skating. If I am in the roller skating business, at any level, I like the prospect of 1,248,000 potential new skaters per year having a really great first experience on wheels. The potential of future sales of products and services should move the first time skater program to the top of everyone's priority list.

There is no one that can sprinkle pixie dust on rink operators to insure a steady stream of skaters. New skaters can be generated through innovative new programs and creative community outreach opportunities. The first time skater program makes sense and is a way to increase participation and profits for rink operators. Give it a try! You will be glad that you did.

It was great to see many of you at the recent RSAI Convention and Trade Show in Las Vegas. However, I, like many others in attendance, lamented about the number of people attending and current membership in the RSAI. There were many private discussions about what ails the industry and what can turn a declining trend into a robust future that will fulfill many dreams of roller skaters and business entrepreneurs.

Why not look at the industry in its simplest form, the highest degree of success will only be achieved when the greatest number of people want to buy the product and services at fair market rates. This is not difficult to understand. However, most rink operators face the problem of increasing the number of skaters and keeping them coming to their rinks without paying attention to building the foundation of the industry. The entry level recreational skater is the key to future success.

I cannot understand why an industry that thrives on an activity that requires participants to learn skills, that must be repeated to become a good skater, pays such little attention to the beginning skater. Why doesn't the industry have a massive, fun, learn-to-skate program for first time skaters? Better yet why not teach the first timers to skate for FREE. The added value in the mind of the consumer is outrageously over the top and individual perceptions about roller skating literally going off the chart.

It is easy to teach new skaters basic fundamentals and safety so they can get around the rink without fear. I have interviewed enough parents and skaters in the last five years to know if a beginning skater exits the skating floor in fear they are more likely lost as potential new skaters. They will only return to the rink for a friend's birthday party or their school party, if they have one. The exact opposite is true if the first experience is a

HOT TRENDS

by Bill Carlson

bill@bill-carlson.net

I tried." The probability of returning to do it again increases with the quality of the experience.

There are some operators around the country that are currently teaching kids to skate for free with great results. Corey and Becky Hundley, Incredi-Roll, West Allis, Wisc., initiated a FREE group lesson program and have been doing it for years. As I interviewed parents at their rink, their respondents recognized the value, safe skating, and the confidence their children gain by joining the group lesson. The group lessons can be taught in the center of the floor, an end or a corner of the floor, or even starting the kids on a carpeted area of the rink. The return on investment is amazing.

One of the principles we teach in our Profit Mentor Program fits amazingly well when considering what teaching first timers how to skate can do for your business.



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