

It Works, but We Need to Fix It:

How Ohio State is reviewing and refining their group tour program.

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A Brief Overview: WHO

Predominantly High School Students

4557 total attendance for 2009
2756 high school-aged students

Remaining groups are:

- Middle School, 1331
- "Other", 448
- Adults, 22



A Brief Overview: HOW

Request a Tour 1 of 3 Ways

- Online request form (*preferred*)
- Phone call (*usually because the online date isn't shown as available*)
- E-mail (*grouptours@osu.edu*)



A Brief Overview: WHAT

Original Group Tour Options

- Admissions Overview and Tour (2.5 hrs)
 - *All high school students.*
- Campus Tour (1 hr)
 - *Typically alumni, departments and non-prospective tour groups.*
- Self-Guided Walking Tour
 - *All other requests, including middle school and elementary groups.*



A Brief Overview: WHEN

Original Communication Process

- **Contact 1:** E-mail automatically sent after initial request is received.
- **Contact 2:** Final confirmation e-mail is sent after presenter and location details are finalized.



A Brief Overview: WHY

“Reason for tour request:”

- This is the missing piece.
- While the above is asked of every group, responses typically state, “*To show our students Ohio State,*” which doesn’t get to the heart of the matter.



Why Change?

Feedback

We heard from staff and groups that their experiences could be *better*.



The Preliminaries

Benchmarking

Surveys

Staff Input

Historic Data



Benchmarking

Results: Big 10 in Review

- Overall, OSU is very similar in scope to other Universities in the Big 10.
 - *Differences: some offer student panels or meals.*
- Other universities set better expectations for student behavior on their website.



Group Coordinator Survey

Results

- Perceived delay in our response to their requests.
- Mixed reviews on ease of submitting a request.
- Information about lunch! Food was very important.

Overall, groups have a good experience.



Staff Input

Results

- Many groups had no familiarity with college.
 - *The presentation was inadequate, and in some cases discouraging to students!*
- Groups were disruptive during tour and presentations.
 - *It felt sometimes as though visits were only a way to get out of school, rather than learn about college.*



Historic Data

What are the trends?

- Historic data was hard to come by.
 - *Many pieces of information needed to be pulled from the reservation system and compiled.*
- Results:
 - *Over 4557 individuals utilized the program in 2009.*
 - *Mornings are the most popular start times.*
 - *Our data tracking process could be improved. Little record of cancellations, no shows, frequency of requests.*



The Preliminaries

Conclusion

- Our program was average when compared to others.
- Groups were overall satisfied with their experiences.
- *Staff* had identified targeted areas for improvements.
- Data collection needed to be improved.



4-Step Process: Step 1

Gather Data

Become informed about what actions will best serve your visitors and staff.



4-Step Process: Step 2

Create a Team and Set the Goal(s)

- Determine what changes your area is ready to support.
- Decide what actions will be most effective.
- Prioritize and assign tasks.



4-Step Process: **Step 3**

Implement Changes

- New Presentation
- New Communication/Confirmation Process
- New Data Collection Process
- Preliminary Website Updates



Step 3: New Presentation

TWO presentations are used by the group tour program.

1. Standard Admissions Overview
 - *Focuses on Ohio State and the admissions process.*
2. Early College Outreach Overview
 - *Provides admissions information*
 - *Focuses on introducing HS student to higher education.*



Step 3: New Communication Process

4-Contacts Instead of 2

- **Contact 1:** E-mail automatically sent after initial request is received.
- **Contact 2:** Phone call follow-up.
- **Contact 3:** Confirmation e-mail is sent after presenter and location details are finalized.
- **Contact 4:** Confirmation packet sent through USPS.



Step 3: Improved Data Collection Process

A few modifications...

- Demographic/attendance data is regularly compiled from the online registration system.
- Requests for student contact information/ major interests are sent in ADVANCE of a group's attendance.
- Evaluations are distributed to students after their tour.



Step 3: Preliminary Website Updates

Focus on clarity

- Headings now state grade range.
- Revised and reorganized group descriptions.
- Landing page now clearly outlines expectations.
- The time period for requesting groups has been restricted to 3-months in advance.



4-Step Process: **Step 4**

Assess the results of the changes

- Follow-up phone survey of group coordinators.
- Review student evaluation data.
- Continued meeting of the Group Tour Team, typically once a month.



Step 4: Assess the Results

Results to date

- Confirmation packets are very well received.
- More website updates are needed.
- Student survey data.



Step 4: Assess the Results

Plans for improvement

Focus on the website

- Create announcements area.
- Increase flexibility – ability to receive more than one request per day.
- Improve internal data management.



Lesson 1

Communication is Key

- Nothing makes a large university small like personal contact.
- Clearer posted policies.



Lesson 2

Pick Your Battles

Define the scope of the program

- Research existing programs at other universities.
- Determine what makes sense for your institution.
- Make sure improvements are within the scope of what the program can support.



Lesson 3

Remember Your Audience

Our focus is on ensuring students, staff and group tour coordinators have a great experience, start to finish.



Shared Experience: Question 1

Would anyone like to share what they have done to improve their group tour program?



Shared Experience: Question 2

**If you could change one thing
about your current process, what
would it be?**


