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Strategies for implementing repositioning of leisure services

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Repositioning is viewed as the key to a viable future for leisure services. After a brief review of the repositioning concept, the paper's focus is on the four strategies that can be used to implement repositioning. First is real repositioning. This requires the development of new services or restructuring existing services so they better contribute to addressing the issue(s) expressed in the position statement which articulates the agency's desired position. Associative repositioning is the second strategy. It includes aligning with other organizations that already possess the desired position and acquiring some of this position from the association. Third is psychological repositioning which focusses on changing stakeholders' beliefs about the outcomes that emanate from the services an agency offers, so they better align with the position statement. The fourth repositioning strategy is competitive repositioning which seeks to alter stakeholders' beliefs about what an agency's competitors do. The paper concludes with a discussion of the pay-off from implementing repositioning strategies.

Keywords: repositioning, leisure services, implementation strategies

In 1974, Gray and Greben produced a seminal paper in the USA. It was commissioned by the National Recreation and Park Association and had more impact on practices in the field than any other paper in the past 35 years. In their treatise, they lamented, 'We are not identified with the major problems which confront our total American Society' which they characterized as a 'deep concern and disappointment' (Gray and Greben, 1974, p. 33). They went on to recommend that the field should 'focus park and recreation services on the great social problems of our time and develop programs designed to contribute to the amelioration of those problems' (p. 52). Fifteen years later, this failing was recognized in the UK when it was noted that advocating the provision of leisure service opportunities for their own sake lacked political clout (Glyptis, 1989). In 2004, a major research study in the USA on

'the language of conservation' designed to identify terminology that resonates positively with voters concluded:

DO NOT *focus on creating new parks for their own sake* [the study's italics]. Instead, connect parks to a broader goal. While the focus groups demonstrated that "neighborhood parks" is better than the generic term 'parks' (neighborhood parks resonates because it implies access and public use), the concept of new parks suffers in the abstract. For example, just 22% say a lack of neighborhood parks is an extremely or very serious problem. However, positioning parks in relation to children improves the concept. Fully 59% say that creating 'parks and other places where children can play safely' is a very important reason for their state or local community to buy and protect land (Fairbank, Maslin, Maulin & Associates, 2004, p. 3).

Linking parks to children's safety reiterates the plea articulated by Gray and Greben 30

years earlier confirming the contention that leisure services have to be shown to contribute to solving community problems before elected officials see them as being a priority at budget time.

An earlier paper in this journal introduced the concept of repositioning and suggested how leisure service agencies could use its principles to reposition themselves as engines of tourism (Crompton 2000). In the decade that has passed since that paper was developed, much experience has been gained in the USA in formulating strategies to implement repositioning effectively. The objective of this paper is to articulate those strategies and to illustrate how they have been implemented.

When an agency thinks in terms of how it can contribute to alleviating, and aligning with, a politically important concern, it is embracing the concept of positioning. Positioning entered the lexicon of the business world in the early 1970s (Ries and Trout, 1972) and has become established as one of the most central and powerful ideas in the marketing field. Indeed, an agency's position is more important to its future viability than what the agency actually does. Understanding and implementing positioning is the key to leisure service agencies securing resources from legislative bodies. In many contexts, it is likely to be the only available inoculation against serious budgetary illness.

Figure 1 illustrates how an agency can orchestrate a shift in its strategic direction and it frames the structure and context of this paper. The starting point is to identify an agency's stakeholders' perceptions of leisure services. It is likely that they will be perceived as having social merit, nice to have if they can be afforded, but as being relatively discretionary when compared with other services for which the jurisdiction is responsible. To change this, an agency has to identify issues that are of paramount concern in the community and select a subset of public benefits that leisure services

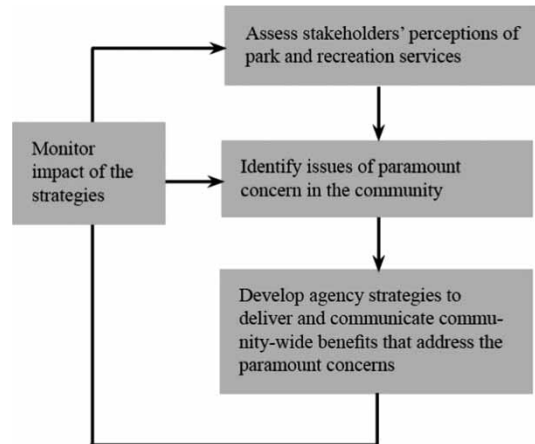


Fig. 1. The process of orchestrating a shift in an Agency's strategic direction

can deliver to address those issues. The challenge then is to use four interrelated strategies to both deliver those benefits and to communicate to stakeholders that they are being effectively and efficiently delivered. The four strategies are real, associative, psychological, and competitive repositioning (these are defined and discussed later in the paper). Periodically, there needs to be a monitoring of the extent to which both stakeholders' existing perceptions and key community issues have changed, and adjustments made to the strategies accordingly.

WHAT IS REPOSITIONING?

A *position* refers to the place that leisure services occupies in the minds of elected officials and the general public, relative to their perception of other services that are competing for public tax dollars. *Positioning* is the process of establishing and maintaining a distinctive and valued place in the minds of the general public and elected officials for leisure relative to other services, while *repositioning* is a deliberate set of actions designed to change an agency's existing position. The originators of the positioning concept observe: 'Positioning is thinking

in reverse. Instead of starting with yourself, you start with the mind of the prospect. Instead of asking what you are, you ask what position you already own in the mind of the prospect' (Ries and Trout, 2001, p. 219).

The present position of leisure services that has existed in the minds of most stakeholders for several decades is that they are relatively discretionary, non-essential services. They are nice to have if they can be afforded after the important essential services have been funded. Their perceived lack of relevance among elected officials and taxpayers for addressing important issues is manifested in the absence of the field from the political platforms of people contesting elected offices at local, state, and federal levels. Some of the services which leisure agencies offer will always be discretionary and non-essential, 'nice to have if they can be afforded'. They have social merit and a tradition of being offered in communities, but they will continue to struggle for budget allocations.

The key to sustaining or increasing investments in leisure services is for them to be repositioned so they are perceived to contribute to alleviating problems that constitute the prevailing political concerns of policy-makers who are responsible for allocating tax funds. Only when they are so positioned will leisure services be perceived positively as part of the solution to a jurisdiction's problems, rather than as peripheral services that are 'nice to have' but which are a drain on a community's tax resources. An indicator of an agency's success in accomplishing this is to observe how central leisure services are in the narrative of elected officials. Are they frequently quoted or discussed as solutions to issues in 'stump speeches', i.e. the standard speeches elected officials give when campaigning for office?

The 'big idea' associated with repositioning is that funds are invested in solutions to

a community's most pressing problems. The term 'investing' suggests a positive, forward-looking agenda with a return on the investments. Elected officials usually have no mandate to fund programs; their mandate is to invest resources into solutions.

At this time, leisure services typically are not an integral element in the repertoire of strategies used by government entities to address issues of concern, but the field does have the potential to attain this status. The challenge for the next decade will be to attain it. The key question is: 'What can leisure deliver more effectively and efficiently than other agencies or organizations which contributes to resolving important community problems'.

Leisure agencies will always have a need for substantial support from tax dollars. Nevertheless, money is not the field's problem because government entities have substantial budgets at their disposal. Justifying that leisure should receive a greater proportion of budgets is the problem. The challenge for advocates is not to persuade elected officials to raise taxes to enhance leisure services, because in most contexts that is an improbable outcome. Rather, the task is to raise the field's prioritization in the competition for existing tax funds. Thus, repositioning recognizes that the challenge is not economic *per se*; rather, it is political.

Members of legislative bodies who are responsible for an agency's budget decisions are elected on the basis of political platforms comprising issues they perceive to be of concern to community residents. Thus, the mandate and moral obligation of elected officials is to direct resources to address those issues. Unless they are convinced of the agency's potential to do this, resources will not be forthcoming. If leisure services are not perceived to be addressing those issues, then agencies should expect their budgets to be reallocated to other services that do address them. This represents a

logical and honorable action by elected officials.

Other public agencies, such as those responsible for education, police, fire, roads, tourism, economic development, and health, already have established positions. When residents are asked to describe the community benefits these agencies deliver, most are likely to be able to do it. Recognition of how their position(s) influences all (or a large majority of) residents' lives results in these agencies receiving priority budgetary treatment. If leisure fails to attain a similarly relevant position in its publics' minds, it is likely to be marginalized.

There has to be consensus among residents, elected officials, and agency personnel on a position statement that articulates the agency's desired position and resonates with its stakeholders. The selected desired position(s) will sit at the heart of the agency, driving its strategy and its direction. It represents the agency's core purpose; its 'personality', its future *raison d'être*, how the agency is going to be identified in the public eye, and reflects its future desired reputation in the community. It should be expressed in a single line or slogan that is intended to define the agency in the minds of its stakeholders. Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication and an agency must have sufficient confidence in the position to articulate it clearly, emphatically and without qualification.

The position statement should:

- describe the problem/issue that will be ameliorated;
- be worded in terms of benefits to community residents;
- be very simple, instantly understandable, and resonate with stakeholders;
- be supported by staff within the agency because they will be implementing it; and
- be honest in that its claims are scientifically sustainable and the agency has the capacity to deliver the promised benefits.

Identifying and establishing a strong desired position is the most important strategic decision that leisure managers make. It is likely to determine the agency's future. Once it has been made, all subsequent actions should be geared to implementing it. The goal should be to reinforce the desired position by integrating as many of the agency's actions as possible, so each component action fulfills a role in helping to establish the position in the minds of stakeholders. An established position that reflects responsiveness to a community's central concerns is key to an agency developing and nurturing a broader constituency, securing additional resources, guiding programmatic and facility priorities made by staff and stakeholders, and improving the morale of staff by raising their perceived status in the community.

Effective positioning requires an understanding of which benefits are important to stakeholders, and then a focus on delivering those benefits and communicating the effectiveness of their impacts. This is consistent with the political aphorism that the politics of seduction (via repositioning) is more effective than the politics of confrontation (constituent groups lobbying or harassing elected officials). It has been emphasized that 'You have to select the material that has the best chance of getting through...concentrate on the perceptions of the prospect' (Ries and Trout, 2001, p. 8).

A position statement is a long-term objective of what the agency is striving to become in (say) 5 or 10 years time. It articulates what makes the agency's contributions valuable and answers the questions, 'What is our business?' and 'What should it be?' (i.e. 'What business do our residents and elected officials want us to be in?') It should be sufficiently specific to give guidance to the agency in determining what strategies and actions need to be taken to achieve the desired position. It becomes a powerful

organizing principle for the agency. In effect, it becomes the agency's brand. It has to provide a compelling vision of a desired position to which all stakeholders – residents, elected officials and employees – can commit to and get excited about.

Generic position statements which have been traditionally used by many leisure agencies in the USA such as 'The Benefits are Endless', 'Discover the Benefits', 'We are the fun experts' or 'We provide the good things in life', may sound terrific but they are not likely to be effective in repositioning leisure services because (i) the benefits and their role in alleviating a community's problems are not specified and (ii) if they were all specified, there would be no focus and this is needed to create the 'mental fix' of what the contribution is in the minds of residents and elected officials. 'The Benefits are Endless', for example, could equally well be adopted by those advocating transportation, education, health, or public works.

'The Benefits are Endless' and 'Discover the Benefits' position statements were developed in the USA to promote the field nationally, which explains why they were so vague and generic. While the intent is laudatory, the rationale undergirding such an effort is muddled. It is widely recognized that in the USA, 'All politics are local'. The primary concerns of communities are different. Thus, any position which the field attempts to launch nationally that is specific enough to be useful is likely to be irrelevant to a large number of communities.

Compare those generic position statements with the more specific:

Economic Prosperity
 Lifelong Learning
 Investing in Youth: Our Greatest Asset
 Step Up to Health: Healthy Communities
 Start in Parks
 Healthy by Nature
 Greener, Cleaner, Safer, Stronger

Healthy Lifestyles, Liveable Communities:
 It Starts in Parks

Consider the position established by the State of Victoria parks agency in Australia 'Healthy Parks, Healthy People'. Their position statement is described in Figure 2. It clearly communicates and connects two principal health themes: environmental health and residents' physical and mental health. The message is obvious. The position

"Healthy Parks, Healthy People" is the position statement developed by Parks Victoria in Australia. The state park agency's starting point was: "A sustainable future for Parks Victoria is dependent on the organization's relevance to community needs and expectations." The position statement's intent was to establish a link between a healthy park system and a healthy community, and by so doing heighten people's sense of the value of parks. The position communicates two principal health themes:

- The role of Parks Victoria in keeping the environment healthy by addressing such core public concerns as enhancing air quality, enhancing water quality, and alleviating flooding.
- The physical and mental health benefits accruing to state residents using the parks. To strengthen the position, the agency's "associative strategy" has resulted in partnerships with respected health organizations in the state including:
 - Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
 - Asthma Victoria
 - Arthritis Victoria
 - National Heart Foundation

The endorsement, active involvement, and cooperation of these organizations have enhanced the health linkage in people's minds. The "Healthy Parks, Healthy People" position appears on all the agency's literature, notepaper, signs, vehicles, etc.

Source: John Senior and Mardie Townsend (2004). "Healthy Parks, Healthy People" and other social capital initiatives of Parks Victoria, Australia. In *The Urban Imperative*, ed. Ted Trzyna. California Institute of Public Affairs, Sacramento, California.

Fig. 2. The Parks Victoria Position Statement

statement is used on all Parks Victoria literature. It embraces a variety of constituencies which all can identify with the slogan and say 'yes, that's me', e.g. dog owners, joggers/walkers, biophiliacs, and advocates of stress relief, tree and environmental protection advocates, those concerned with air and water quality, community garden supporters, etc.

There are multiple community issues with which leisure services could align. Even if elected officials care about, and are impressed by, leisure's potential to address (say) six of them, they will not prioritize budget decisions based on all six. Hence, the challenge is to identify those which are *determinate* in a community, i.e. those which determine elected officials' and residents' decisions when prioritizing public expenditures. The selected positions should be the optimum 'selling ideas' for motivating residents and elected officials to allocate resources to leisure services.

In addition to aligning with determinate community issues, an agency has to be confident that it can develop the capacity to deliver the benefits it promises and that the benefits resonate and connect with stakeholders. It is futile to waste time and energy developing a position that the agency cannot realistically deliver to the community.

An agency must be realistic from the outset as to what can and cannot be changed. If a position is superficial and not reasonable or credible in the eyes of employees or stakeholders, it will not survive and will adversely, rather than positively, impact the agency. To test the robustness of a potential position statement before it is officially adopted, it may be useful to invite agency staff to play the role of taxpayers and elected officials who are skeptical and cynical about claims implied by the position, by attacking its vulnerabilities, identifying weaknesses, and trying to ridicule it. This may provide insights into how to strengthen

it and enable the agency to develop thoughtful rebuttals to future skeptics.

The average mind is likely to reject benefits and positions with which it is not familiar or which are counter-intuitive. Thus, it is often obvious, or long standing, beliefs that resonate with stakeholders. If a selected position leads some to exclaim 'Why didn't we think of that sooner?' or 'It is obvious', then it is likely to connect with stakeholders and be a viable position. In such cases, since they already believe in it, the challenge is to reinforce those dormant beliefs. This is much easier than having to establish a belief to which stakeholders do not have any positive predisposition.

THE SET OF REPOSITIONING STRATEGIES

There are four strategies agencies can pursue to attain a revised position. They are summarized in Figure 3.

- *Real repositioning*: development of new services or restructuring existing services so they better contribute to addressing the issue expressed in the desired position.
- *Associative repositioning*: aligning with other organizations that already possess the desired position and acquiring some of this position from the association.
- *Psychological repositioning*: changing stakeholders' beliefs about the outcomes which emanate from the services an agency



Fig. 3. How to get from position A to position B

offers, so they better align with the desired position.

- *Competitive repositioning*: altering stakeholders' beliefs about what an agency's competitors do.

These four strategies are complementary, not mutually exclusive. To accomplish a revised position, all four of them should be considered and it is likely that some combination of them will be pursued simultaneously.

Real Repositioning

Real repositioning means an agency makes changes in the services that it offers. This requires starting with the desired position and identifying existing services that could be restructured or new services that could be developed which would contribute to accomplishing the position (Crompton 2000). Thus, if the position is 'Enhancing Community Prosperity' or 'Reducing Crime and Disorder Among Young People', then the real repositioning task is to offer a set of programs specifically designed to contribute to these goals.

The extent to which a proposed new service will contribute to accomplishing an agency's desired position should be the primary criterion in evaluating whether agency resources should be invested in it. Real services are the bedrock upon which all repositioning actions rest. The position must exemplify and amplify what is actually offered and not be a hollow fabrication. There must be substance so the communicated benefits are rooted in reality and the promised outcomes are delivered. To fabricate a false promise and pretend that a service delivers something that it does not, simply defeats the goal of establishing credibility for the field among a wider spectrum of the community.

Sometimes there is a tendency to ignore real repositioning and to focus exclusively on psychological repositioning (discussed

below) because the latter can be interpreted to mean only that existing services be communicated differently, which is much easier than changing the existing set of services being offered. However, such an approach is generally too limiting to be effective and invariably there needs to be some real repositioning.

Associative Repositioning

This strategy recognizes that by associating with organizations that have a firm well-crystallized position in stakeholders' minds as leaders in addressing a given community issue, it may be possible to 'transfer' that position to the agency. Associating with this established position may provide an agency with an explicit or implicit frame of reference that can be used to frame its own contribution to an issue. It can serve as a bridging point whereby at some cognitive level stakeholders believe that the agency also contributes to that issue. In essence, an agency is seeking to enhance the believability, trust, and credibility of its role in delivering a given benefit by acquiring some of the associative organization's established position in that context.

Figure 2 illustrated Parks Victoria's approach to repositioning. The credibility of their position statement, 'Healthy Parks, Healthy People', was enhanced by partnering with respected health organizations in the state: Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Asthma Victoria, Arthritis Victoria, and National Heart Foundation. The endorsement, active involvement, and cooperation of these organizations are likely to enhance the health contributions of parks in people's minds. The inference is that if they are prepared to endorse and partner with parks, then parks must be part of the solution to physical and mental health issues.

The following examples further illustrate associative repositioning.

- Alleviating juvenile crime was a primary community issue. Instead of developing its own set of programs to address this, the leisure services agency contracted with the community's Boys and Girls Club (a national non-profit organization in the USA) to deliver programs in the city's recreation centers. The club had a high profile in the community; its board was composed of respected business, philanthropic, and civic leaders; and it was perceived to be effective in addressing this issue. Because the programs were funded by the leisure agency and took place in its facilities, it is likely that in many people's minds the agency was positioned as contributing to alleviating the problem.
- If economic prosperity is a primary community issue, then linking with the community tourism organization may help a leisure services agency establish a position relating to this issue (Crompton 2000). This may be done by partnering with the tourism organization to create new events designed to attract outside visitors to stay in the jurisdiction for multiple days. Such linkages make pragmatic sense because the two organizations often have complementary assets. Tourism agencies typically have funds available for promotion, but rarely become involved in directly producing programs and services. Thus, for example, a leisure services agency may join with a tourism organization to jointly fund special-event coordinators who are responsible for organizing, and soliciting sponsorship for, special events in the community. In doing this, the tourism organization recognizes that leisure agencies have the expertise and a mandate to organize special events, but frequently lack the funds to launch and promote them.

This associative strategy is likely to be most effective when there is no obvious linkage between an agency and its desired

position in stakeholders' minds when the repositioning effort is launched. For example, if the desired position is 'Contributes to Economic Development', the link between it and leisure may not be intuitively apparent to many. Partnerships with the community's economic development or tourism agency may expedite establishment of the connection. If there is already a strong connection, then the goal of the associative strategy is to reinforce it.

Once a leisure services agency commits to repositioning to address selected community issues, there will be a quick realization that these issues can only be resolved by working with others. Thus, associative repositioning embraces partnerships that have become the foundation stones upon which leisure agencies build and develop their services. A holistic approach is inherent in addressing neighborhood rejuvenation, economic prosperity, lifelong learning, alleviating juvenile crime, or whatever other issue with which an agency seeks to align. The 'joined-up thinking' this requires is likely to expedite associative repositioning, which elected officials frequently encourage in order to produce holistic solutions that transcend departmental boundaries.

Psychological Repositioning

This strategy is intended to alter stakeholders' beliefs about what an agency currently does (Crompton, 2000). It has been suggested that leisure agencies have a labeling problem in that they are evaluated based on the means used, i.e. leisure services, rather than on the ends that they aspire to achieve, i.e. the benefits espoused in their desired position (Godbey, 1993). Psychological repositioning focusses on bringing the desired end outcomes to the forefront.

The methods for accomplishing psychological repositioning are summarized in Figure 4. The figure suggests that people's perceptions of an issue are molded by their

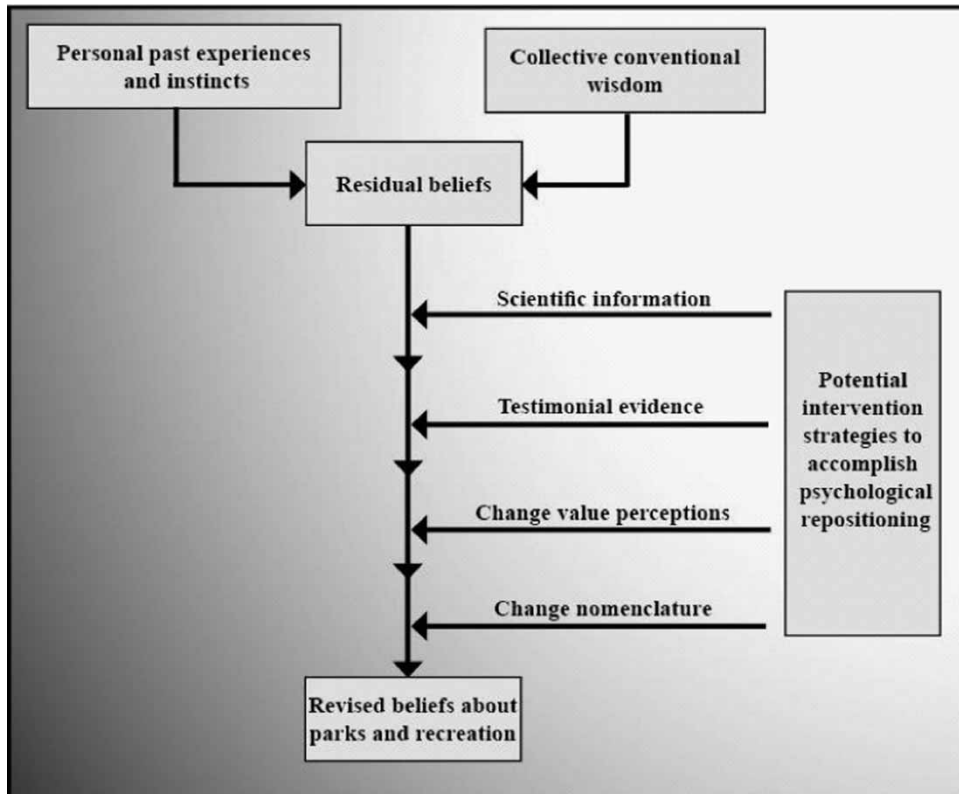


Fig. 4. The process of psychological repositioning

personal past experiences and instincts and by their exposure to the collective conventional wisdom of others. These two sources of information establish an individual's residual beliefs about leisure services. There are four potential intervention strategies that can be used to change those residual beliefs: provide scientific information which demonstrates the beliefs are ill-considered; offer testimonial evidence by individuals who are credible experts or opinion leaders in the field; offer evidence of value in benefit/cost terms which the individual has not previously considered; and change the nomenclature and semantic context used to frame the issue.

It was noted earlier in this paper that residual beliefs are resistant to change and

that repositioning them is likely to take a relatively long period of time. The effectiveness of these four strategies in changing residual beliefs will be a function of: (i) the susceptibility of individuals to be influenced by them, (ii) the power of each strategy, and (iii) how many of the four strategies can be implemented.

Scientific evidence

The primary strategy for changing residual beliefs is scientific evidence which is sufficiently convincing to individuals that they are prepared to amend these entrenched beliefs. Accordingly, leisure agencies have demonstrated a willingness to engage in evaluative activities such as undertaking economic impact studies (Crompton, 1999),

measuring the positive impact of parks on the property tax base (Crompton, 2004), assessing the impact of recreation programs on alleviating undesirable youth behavior (Witt and Crompton, 2002) and calculating the economic value of trees in alleviating pollution (U.S. Forest Service, n.d.) and reducing energy costs (Heisler, 1986).

During the past three or four decades, the field's scientific knowledge base has expanded exponentially. In reviewing it one leading researcher concluded, 'I believe we have come a long way in essentially less than a half-century and have much to be proud of' (Driver, 1999, p. 524). He goes on to argue: 'In fact, few areas of scientific inquiry have realized such advancements in so short a time' (p. 529). He concludes by writing:

We now have good documentation that the benefits of leisure are tremendous – so much so that I now firmly believe that leisure, broadly conceived, provides as much or more total benefits to the citizens of most industrialized countries (i.e. ones in which basic needs for food, shelter, health services, and sanitation have been taken care of reasonably well) than any other social service, including health and educational services. This conclusion about the great social significance of leisure is based in part on the pervasiveness of leisure services to all domains of human endeavor ... and in part on the great size of the 'leisure economic sector' of many if not most, countries (p. 531).

It is this body of evaluation research on which the credibility of psychological repositioning is dependent. The effectiveness of these research findings is enhanced in communities where there is widespread general support for the field so the community is predisposed to be receptive to the findings.

In addition to changing residual beliefs, credible scientific evidence also serves to reassure stakeholders that the outcomes expressed in a position are not merely

'spin', that is, twisted and misleading claims. This is why they have to be measured and documented. Even in situations where elected officials intuitively and emotionally believe in leisure's contributions, they need credible supportive data and evidence to protect them from political attacks by skeptics.

Testimonial evidence

Repositioning is expedited if there is an emotional as well as a rational dimension to it. Elected officials and taxpayers respond to passion, excitement and enthusiasm. They value commitment, intensity, and conviction. This emotional dimension emerges from testimonial evidence. This is different from scientific evidence in that it is anecdotal and not necessarily science based.

Testimonials may emanate from three sources. First, they may be offered by influential opinion leaders from within the community. Their influence may stem from a formal position they hold or from their widely respected reputation. But they may also be individuals who are passionate about a particular issue and the strength of their conviction is sufficient to influence the views of others.

A second source is leaders from other communities relating their experiences. These may be direct testimonials given in the community by those individuals or they may be vicariously delivered by the media through news stories, interviews, etc. Testimony regarding the effectiveness of leisure services elsewhere in addressing an issue may resonate with decision-makers.

Independent experts are a third source of testimonials. They resemble expert witnesses in a court case in that their views are solicited based on perceived expertise and insight. Such consultants may, or may not, use good science in their testimony. Independent experts are valued because they are perceived to offer a knowledgeable and impartial perspective.

Change value perceptions

The third strategy for psychological repositioning is to change perceptions of value by using benefit/cost frameworks which may not have been previously considered. By changing the context and conceptualizing the notion of value differently, it may lead to the issue being perceived differently.

The framing in Tables 1–4 illustrates ways of changing the context in which budget information is presented. It is intended to reduce perspectives of the cost of leisure services and, thus, to enhance the position that they are good value for money.

Table 1 uses the frameworks of ‘net budget’, ‘per resident investment’, and ‘per week’ to change value perceptions. The data used in the exhibit to calculate the ratio of capital, operating, and self-generated revenues and the net per resident investment are average proportions for local park and recreation agencies in the USA (Crompton and Kaczynski, 2003). The term *net budget* focusses on the primary concern of elected officials in that it refers to the proportion of the budget subsidized by local taxpayers and omits self-generated revenue (which typically approximates one-third of an agency’s operating budget) (Crompton and Kaczynski, 2003). A net operating budget of \$9.975 million may be perceived

as being substantially smaller than a budget of \$20.989 million. However, once the principle of net budget has been successfully positioned as the central budget issue, the real pay-off may be in future self-generated revenue being disregarded in the political decision calculus. Thus, if revenue in the following year increases by \$1 million and the budget request is for \$21.989 million, the agency director is able to declare the department ‘is seeking no increase in the net budget’.

The intent of reframing the budget in terms of *per resident* investment and *per week* is to reposition the expenditure as a nominal, relatively inconsequential amount. Thus, it is anticipated that a position of ‘68 cents per resident, per week’ will be perceived more favorably than a budget of \$20.989 million per year.

The per capita framework is used again in Table 2, but it is augmented with a framework that compares the costs and benefits of the park district with those of a local club. In this illustration, all the opportunities created by the \$2.00 per week investment are given. Most residents will not be aware of many of the opportunities listed. Their perception of value for money presumably is based on their existing knowledge of available opportunities. Expanding this

Table 1 Psychologically repositioning the budget by changing the perceived cost

Total annual budget for parks and recreation	\$20.989 million
Capital budget	5.872
Operating budget	15.117
Self-generated revenue	5.142
Annual net operating budget	9.975 million
Number of residents in the community	281.382
Net per resident investment	\$35.45
OR 68 cents per week	

Table 2 A high return on your park district tax dollar investment

What would you do if for less than \$2 per week you could get a membership to a local club which makes available to its members the following recreation facilities and activities?

- Over 300 acres of well designed open space for both organized and spontaneous recreational pursuits;
- Two Olympic size swimming facilities, including bathhouse, sundeck areas, and snack areas;
- 24 outdoor tennis courts, located throughout the community. For your convenience, 12 courts are supervised and operated on a reservation system with the remaining 12 courts available on the rack-up system.
- An 18-hole championship golf course, driving range, putting green and pro shop;
- A recreation center housing recreation activities in art, performing arts, crafts, and a variety of programs for preschoolers through adults;
- A Senior Citizens Center designed to meet the specialized leisure and social needs for those 55 years and older;
- Sports Center including 2 major indoor artificial ice surfaces, pro shop, dressing areas, snack shops, instructional staff and recreation programs for the entire family;
- Opportunity to participate in over 200 recreation figure skating lessons, hockey, speed skating, and over 170 recreation programs operated under professional leadership;
- A variety of playground equipment available to youngsters located in neighborhood parks throughout the community;
- Lighted softball, baseball, football and soccer fields, 23 unlighted baseball/softball diamonds, 14 soccer field and 3 football fields for organized play;
- A 30 acre lake available for fishing, paddle craft, sailboats and canoes;
- Two natural ice rinks, 2 sled hills, and two natural outdoor hockey rinks available for free use;
- 15 miles of hike and bike trails
- 12 outdoor basketball courts.

And what if this membership would increase the value and marketability of your home? And what if the \$2.00 paid in membership fees was deductible from your federal income tax?

WOULD YOU JOIN?

The Park District offers you all this and much more for the dollars you invest in it.

Table 3 Psychologically repositioning a bond proposal for a new natatorium

The median home value in the community is	\$150,000	
Construction cost of the natatorium	\$2 million	
Annual property tax payment by an average home owner:		\$12
Annual operation and maintenance cost	\$100,000	
Annual property tax payment by an average home owner:		\$6
Total annual property tax payment by an average homeowner which is \$1.50 per month		\$18

In most years, there are heartbreaking stories in the local news media of children from this community who have drowned in area lakes. An agreement with the ISD means that every fourth grader in the community will be taught to swim, so lives will be saved

Invest \$1.50 a month and save a child's life!

Table 4 Seeking enhanced financial support for Texas state parks by psychological repositioning

<p>Texans' per capita annual investment in state parks was \$2.43, which ranked Texas 49th among the 50 states. The comparative figures for Texas' neighbors were Arkansas \$11.00, Louisiana \$3.40, New Mexico \$10.59, and Oklahoma \$11.89</p> <p>In 1990, Texas investment in state parks was 0.31% of the state's total budget; in 2002, it was 0.08%. The percentage declined every year from 1990 to 2002</p> <p>If the 0.31% share of the budget in FY 1990 had been retained in FY 2002, then the state's investment in parks and recreation would have been \$217.85 million, rather than its actual budget of \$53.2 million</p> <p>In FY 2002, Texas state parks generated \$32.6 million from their operations. This represented 61.25% of total operating expenses and ranked Texas #6 among all states on this ratio</p> <p>If the self-generating revenue is deducted from the total operating expenses then the state's <i>net investment</i> in operating its park and recreation facilities is 0.03% (three hundredths of one percent) of the state's total annual budget and <i>less than \$1 per state resident per year</i></p>	<hr/>
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awareness set may change the context in which they make judgments on value for money and lead to a more favorable position.

Any local club is unlikely to have the capacity to offer more than (say) 10% of the opportunities listed by the park district in Table 2, but it is likely to be much more expensive than \$2.00 per week. Again, framing the agency's offerings in this context is likely to result in a more favorable position.

The framework in Table 3 uses 'annual investment for an average homeowner' and an affective appeal aimed at the emotions (but based on reality) to position the cost of a new natatorium to be a sound community investment. It seems likely that there will be a better community response when the proposal is positioned as 'Invest \$1.50 a month and save a child's life' than if it is baldly presented as a request to support a new natatorium at a capital cost of \$2 million and an annual operating subsidy of \$100,000.

There is a substantial body of scientific evidence suggesting that people are more likely to respond positively to communications which are framed to emphasize that an investment will prevent loss and a lowering of existing service expectations, than those suggesting that the investment will create additional increments of benefits

(Rothman and Salovey, 1997; Tversky and Kahneman, 1981). Thus, in addition to using per capita and net budget, Table 4 frames the funding issue in terms of the budget losses sustained by the Texas state parks system from 1990 to 2002 and the state's low ranking among all the other states. The data are intended to communicate the message that Texas state parks are grossly underfunded and the associated implication that they are being allowed to deteriorate. Data reporting expenditures on parks and recreation, and all other public services, by all local and state governmental jurisdictions in the USA are published annually by the Census Bureau, so the types of contexts or frameworks exemplified in Table 4 are relatively easy for park and recreation agencies to construct (Census Bureau, 2007).

Parks 2001 was a coalition of parks advocates from over 700 community organizations and groups in New York City whose goal was to arrest the long-term and ongoing decline in the budget of the city's Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). The DPR budget had declined from 0.8% to 0.4% of the city's budget between 1986 and 2000. Its status vis-à-vis the budgets of other city departments over the past three decades is shown in Figure 5. Parks 2001's goal was for DPR to receive 1% of the city's budget.

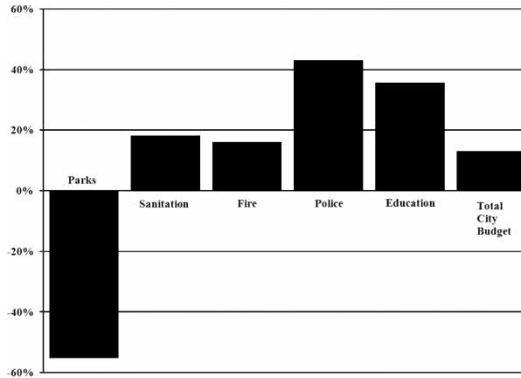


Fig. 5. Decline in New York City parks and recreation budget relative to budget changes in other departments

Instead of focussing on the budget numbers *per se* which are arcane and boring to most people, the parks' losses were framed in terms of specific consequences emanating from the reduced budget. A series of graphics, each accompanied by an arresting statistic, was developed and they were effective in psychologically repositioning parks as a pressing issue in the public's mind. Samples of these graphics are shown in Figure 6.

Almost every print and broadcast medium in New York City provided editorial support for the 1% campaign. It culminated in the months preceding city elections with all city council and mayoral candidates being asked in public forums to sign a written pledge which asked 'If elected would you work to commit 1% of the city's annual budget to maintaining city parks?' Their responses were then widely disseminated by Parks 2001. Samples of the political advertisements produced are shown in Figures 7 and 8.

Change nomenclature

A fourth psychological repositioning strategy that may effectively complement the strategies of using scientific evidence to document the benefits, soliciting testimonial evidence, and changing perceptions of value

is to change stakeholders' contexts and, hence, their perceptions is by using different terminology and nomenclature (Figure 4). This strategy recognizes that names are important because they are the hooks that position an idea in stakeholders' minds. The originators of the positioning concept stated:

The name is the hook that hangs the brand on the product ladder in the prospects' minds... the single most important marketing decision you can make is what to name the product. Shakespeare was wrong. A rose by any other name would not smell as sweet. Not only do you see what you want to see, you also smell what you want to smell... And Hog Island in the Caribbean was going nowhere until they changed its name to Paradise Island (Ries and Trout, 2001, p. 66).

For example, a key rule when seeking the support of business groups for park issues is to use their language. Examples include:

- Refer to 'investments' in leisure amenities, not 'tax subsidy'.
- Not 'greenways' or 'trails', but 'dual purpose (or 'green') infrastructure'. The implications of using the term 'green infrastructure' are elaborated upon in Figure 9.
- Refer to 'amenities that will be attractive to knowledge workers', not 'leisure or recreation facilities'.
- Not encouraging 'natural areas', but 'low maintenance areas'.
- Not 'environmentalism', but 'creating a sustainable economy', so the message resonates with the need to have a viable economy.

When you fish, you use the bait that the fish are biting on. The business mind is familiar and comfortable with phrases such as investment, infrastructure, knowledge worker amenities, and low maintenance, and leisure services advocates have to fit their case within those existing schemata to be effective in repositioning.

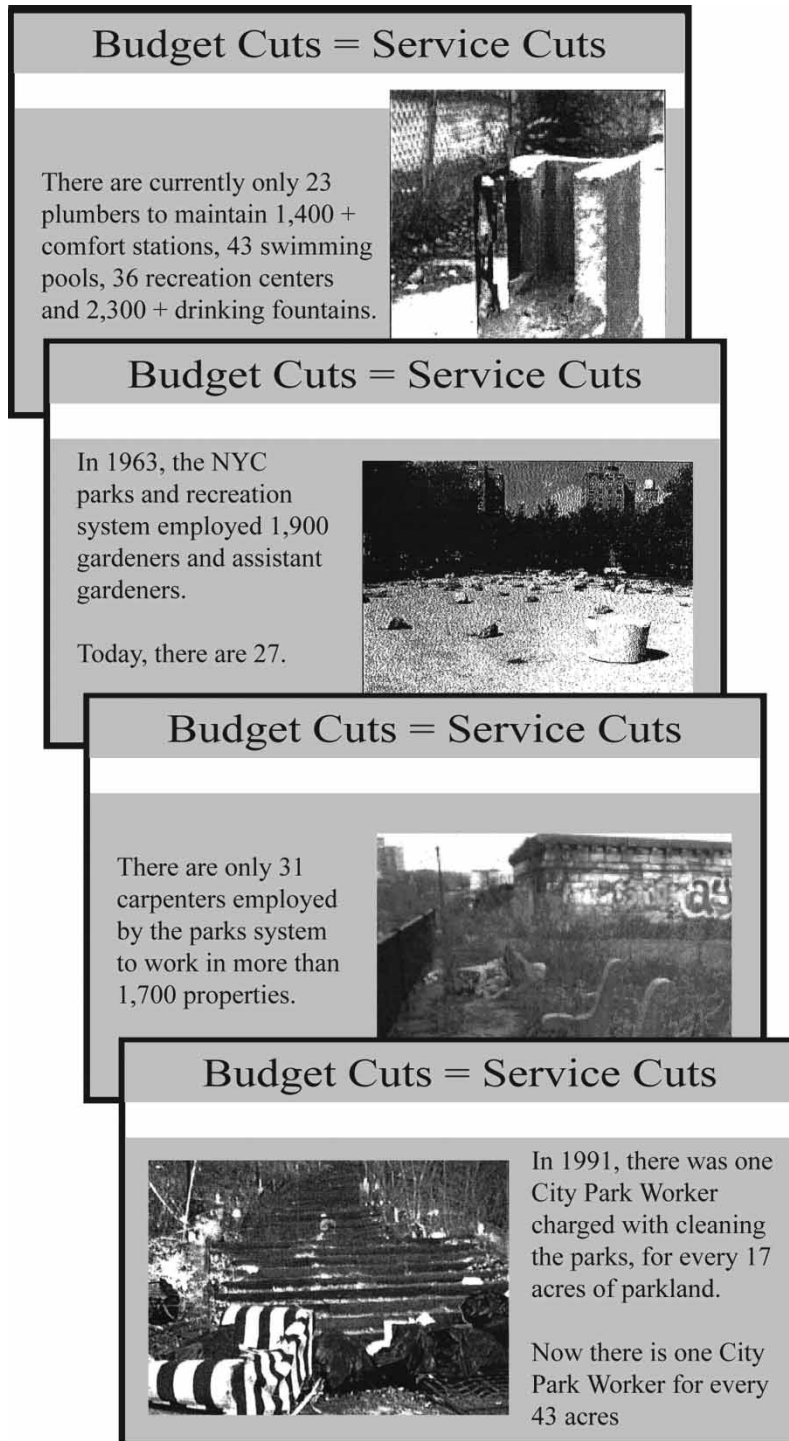


Fig. 6. Using specific consequences of budget cuts to psychologically reposition the parks budget

COUNCIL DISTRICT 21

Corona, Flushing Meadows, Corona Park, Elmhurst, East Elmhurst, Jackson Heights

In your district, there are more than 2,660 children per park/playground.

Queens has only: ♦ 1 full-time gardener for every 2,900 acres of parkland ♦ 1 recreation director for every 139,620 children ♦ 6 plumbers for more than 395 bathrooms and 690 drinking fountains.

Here's how City Council candidates say they will improve parks in your neighborhood:

ANGEL DEL VILLAR "The public parks have always played an important role to me and my family. If elected, I would help to improve park conditions in my community."	AIDA GONZALEZ-JARRIN "As former Director of Cultural Affairs of Queens, I had the opportunity to work for 15 years in events in our parks. I deeply appreciate the role of parks in our urban environment and I will work very hard to bring about improvements."
HIRAM MONSERRATE "We need to ensure the servicability of park facilities and ensure that safety is maintained."	LUIS ROSERO "I have worked with the Department of Parks in Queens. I have helped plant trees in my neighborhoods. Green adds beauty, peace, and stress release."

PARKS 2001 asked the City Council and Mayoral candidates: "If elected, would you work to commit 1% of the city's annual budget to maintaining city parks?"

CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATES

Angel Del Villar Yes	Aida Gonzalez-Jarrin Yes	Hiram Monserrate Yes	Luis Rosero Yes
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MAYORAL CANDIDATES

Herman Badillo No	Michael Bloomberg Yes	Fernando Ferrer Yes	Mark Green Yes	Alan Hevesi Yes	Peter Vallone Yes
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PARKS 2001 goal: For all candidates to say YES to PARKS.
 Better parks = better neighborhoods and a better life for you and your family.

VOTE PARKS 

Fig. 7. Political advertisement

One of the prevention programs targeted at youth-at-risk in the USA in the early 1990s was 'Midnight Basketball' which was designed to keep youth off the streets. Most of these programs incorporated an educational/tutorial component as well as basketball games scheduled on weekend evenings. However, the position created by the name was unfortunate since it implied that leisure agencies were acting irresponsibly in encouraging youth to stay up and be out of the home so late. This resulted in some political criticism from uninformed elected officials. This probably could have

been avoided if they had been termed 'Youth Enrichment' programs, in recognition of their educational component.

Elected officials and government funding agencies that are responsible for providing resources do not 'get it' the way that leisure services advocates 'get it'. They do not think in the social merit frame of reference which frequently reflects the values system of those in leisure services, rather they think exclusively in their frame of reference which frequently is economic. To acquire resources, the field has to adapt to their frame of reference; they are unlikely

NEW YORK CITY PARKS ARE IN CRISIS

- ◆ NYC ranks 21st out of the largest 25 U.S. cities in terms of parks spending;
- ◆ Maintenance budget cut by 40% over the last 15 years;
- ◆ Staff cut by 70% over the last 30 years;

Deplorable conditions! Unacceptable for our children and families!

**Say NO to locked bathrooms, dusty ballfields,
broken water fountains and benches.**

PARKS 2001 wants 1% of NYC's budget to maintain our parks.

Say YES to 1%. Say YES to PARKS.

PARKS 2001 Endorsed By:

The New York Times, Daily News, Queens Tribune, Bronx Times, Riverdale Press and Staten Island Advance;

Over 1 million gardeners, runners, little leaguers, businesspeople, parents, teachers, bird-watchers;

Over 1,000 community, civic and environmental organizations;

and 85% of all candidates for City Council.

**Tell your City Council candidates that you want
cleaner, safer and better parks in your neighborhood.**

Tell them to pledge 1%.



PARKS 2001

A citywide campaign to restore, reform and revitalize parks and recreation services in New York City
Visit www.parks2001.org or call 212-490-0010 to learn what the candidates will do for your neighborhood parks.

Fig. 8. Political advertisement

to adapt to the leisure advocates' frames of reference.

Figure 10 demonstrates the key role of nomenclature in the development of a large 150-acre complex of youth athletic fields. The council's primary concern was economic development. Given this frame of reference, 'youth soccer fields' were not an important priority in their minds but 'outdoor special events center' resonated well with that issue. Thus, the project came to fruition only when it was presented using the terminology that made it compatible with an existing economic development framework.

Table 5 summarizes the findings of research commissioned to identify words that established a positive position for conservation among the general public. These may be regarded as 'rules' for communication. The researchers noted, 'While there can certainly be unique circumstances, we found few exceptions to these broad rules in terms of geography or key demographic groups' (Fairbank, Maslin, Maulin & Associates 2004).

Competitive Repositioning

Whenever resources are allocated to one service rather than another, there is an

Some people think of parks and open space as an amenity, which is nice to have but cannot be afforded in difficult economic times. However, often the same people understand that infrastructure is a necessity not an amenity; something that communities must have, not just something that is nice to have. They view infrastructure as a primary public investment, not something they pay for with leftover money. Likewise, public officials understand that infrastructure must be constantly upgraded and maintained. It is not something they just buy and forget. Finally, they all know that infrastructure must be developed as a system, not as isolated parts.

One way to change this perception of open space as an amenity is to change the nomenclature. Webster's New World Dictionary defines infrastructure as "the substructure or underlying foundation, especially the basic installations or facilities upon which the continuance and growth of a community depends." People understand the need to invest in infrastructure—even in an era of deficits. Next to national defense, funding for roads, bridges, sewers, airports and other forms of capital infrastructure is always at the top of the list. However, just as we must carefully plan for and invest in our capital infrastructure, so too must we invest in our environmental or green infrastructure.

Green infrastructure is the ecological framework needed for environmental, social and economic sustainability. It is our nation's natural life support system. Green infrastructure is an interconnected network of green space that conserves natural ecosystem values and functions and provides a wide array of benefits to people, wildlife and communities. For example, green infrastructure reduces a community's susceptibility to floods, fires and other natural disasters. Documenting these public benefits is a key step toward securing adequate funding.

Words matter. A shift in nomenclature from talking about open space to talking about green infrastructure will help communities understand that green space is a basic necessity that should be planned and developed as an integrated system. A popular bumper sticker says "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance." Well, if you think green space is expensive, just imagine the future costs for clean air, clean water and healthy natural systems if we don't invest in green infrastructure today.

Fig. 9. The Use of 'green infrastructure' in psychological repositioning

Source: Edward McMahon, vice-president for land use programs at The Conservation Fund. *Common Ground*, 14(i) 2003, p. 2.

opportunity cost associated with that decision. This cost consists of the benefits that would have accrued from investing those resources in alternative service options. Hence, in this context, other public agencies, such as the police, health, transportation, or economic development departments are viewed as competitors. Many of them have large budgets that dwarf those available to parks and recreation, and

successful repositioning is likely to offer agencies access to these large pools of funds. Competitive repositioning (Figure 3) means altering stakeholders' beliefs about what other public service agencies do (Crompton 2000), so elected officials recognize that resources allocated to them would yield a superior contribution to alleviating a given community concern if they were invested in particular leisure services.

The city had plenty of money for economic development, but the council could not be persuaded to commit \$15 million for a 150 acre youth athletic field complex for which there was a clearly demonstrated need. The proposed site was adjacent to two major highways and would be well suited for tournaments in such sports as soccer, rugby, baseball, softball, tennis, and lacrosse. Hence, after an initial rejection by the council, the project's supporters regrouped and repositioned the project as an "outdoor special-events center." This terminology resonated with the council and taxpayers because the city had an existing indoor special-events center which was recognized widely to be a good investment in economic development because of the nonresident visitors which it attracted.

Representatives of the hotel-motel association, restaurant association, convention and visitors bureau, and chamber of commerce came to a council meeting to lobby for the athletic complex because its supporters pointed out that the city could hold tournaments bringing 300 to 1000 people to the community each weekend from out-of-town. Once it was repositioned into this economic development context and viewed as an outdoor special-events center, the council approved resources to acquire the site and initiate development of the athletic field complex.

Fig. 10. Repositioning an athletic complex by framing it to fit with an existing successful position

Competitive repositioning may be conceptualized as 'depositioning' another agency since it is challenging the legitimacy or authenticity of that agency's positioning claims and trying to demote them. An irony of this strategy is that if it is successful, then it is likely that associative repositioning will follow since addressing a given problem holistically probably means that park and recreation's contributions will complement those of the other agency. Thus, the leisure service agency will be required to associate with the agency from which resources have been re-assigned. Thus, competitive repositioning has to be undertaken with caution, sensitivity, and subtlety to avoid a backlash of resentment from those in the other agency. For this reason, challenging the position claims of others should probably be undertaken by advocates from outside the leisure agency, so the personal chemistry and relationships of managers in the two agencies is not poisoned.

After a leisure services agency has selected its preferred position(s), then other public services that contribute to that issue should be identified with the

intent of pursuing associative and/or competitive repositioning strategies. This involves asking two questions: (i) To what niche(s) can leisure contribute that complements what other services are doing (associative repositioning)? and (ii) what contributions made by others can leisure services deliver more effectively and/or more efficiently (competitive repositioning)?

The following paragraphs offer examples as to how positions claimed by others may be challenged by advocates making the case that resources would yield a better return if they were reallocated to parks and recreation.

In the context of at-risk youth programs, there are multiple other ways to reinforce competitive repositioning. Consider the following:

- During the past decade, the clearance rates reported annually by law enforcement agencies nationwide in the USA for major offenses by juveniles who were less than 18 years of age have been remarkably stable at 20–21%. An offense is declared cleared or solved when at least one

Table 5 Psychological repositioning: the language of conservation

DO talk about water, voters prioritize water as a critical reason to purchase and protect land, no matter how it is expressed. Voters closely link land conservation with protecting water
DO link land conservation to preservation of “working farms and ranches.” “Working” is important 'Agricultural land' and 'farmland and ranchland' are less effective
DO evoke protecting wildlife and wildlife habitat. 'Wildlife' is interpreted to fit the locale – urbanites regard rabbits and birds on their lawn as 'wildlife'
DO NOT use 'endangered species'; it is more polarizing than 'wildlife' with connotations of environmental regulations holding up important projects
DO NOT use 'openspace'; it could mean empty land or abandoned lots DO use 'natural areas' instead; it brings to mind positive images of trees, mountains and streams, and a pristine state
DO NOT just say 'trails' – say 'hiking, biking, and walking trails'; attach meaning to them
DO talk about repair and maintenance of parks or preventing the closure of parks; they resonate more than creating new parks
DO NOT use 'undeveloped land' it has connotations that it may be developed in the future
DO use 'poorly planned growth' rather than 'unplanned growth' or 'sprawl'
DO use growth messages in local context with specific statistics (e.g. one million more people in the next 20 years)
DO stress planning; voters want well-thought out and responsible planning for growth (e.g. 'We must plan carefully for growth and reduce its negative impacts by preserving clean air, clean water, and natural areas')
DO talk about 'conservationists' and NOT 'environmentalists'. The latter are viewed as more radical; it is a more polarizing term
DO NOT needlessly politicize an issue (e.g. talking about federal government cut-backs is polarizing to those who approve)
DO NOT say 'conservation easement'. The word 'easement' evokes connotations of being forced into doing (or not doing) something with part of a landowner's property DO say 'land preservation agreements' or 'land protection agreements' instead
DO NOT say 'purchase of development rights' it implies someone wants to develop the land!
DO stress the voluntary nature of land preservation agreements

Source: Fairbank, Maslin, Maulin & Associates (2004).

person is arrested and charged with its commission. The major crimes to which these statistics relate are murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. However, the 20–21% clearance rate overestimates the proportion of crimes cleared because data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation indicate that many major crimes are not reported to the police. The level of underreporting includes 50% of all violent crimes, 30% of personal thefts, 41% of household crimes, and 75% of motor vehicle thefts. Hence, for the purposes of this discussion, it has

been assumed that 14%, rather than 20–21%, of youth crimes are solved. Of these, approximately one-third are acquitted or dismissed. Of the 9–10% of juveniles who are convicted, approximately one-half receive sentences that do not involve incarceration.

Obviously, incarceration is an essential component in alleviating juvenile crime. However, from a competitive repositioning perspective, the point to be made is that if only 5% of the juveniles committing crimes are incarcerated and 95% of them remain available to engage in more crime, then a

strategy focussed predominantly on incarceration cannot solve the problem.

Although the police provide crime resolution services, these have to be supplemented with effective preventive services which the police are not equipped to provide. If this is pointed out and repeatedly reiterated to stakeholders, especially elected officials, then there is likely to be a realization that for major progress to be made, resources have to be allocated to prevention programs that target the overwhelming majority who are not arrested and incarcerated. Further, the evidence clearly indicates that early and consistent prevention efforts have the best chance of diminishing the need for more costly measures later.

The city of Fort Worth used a holistic approach involving coordinated action from a number of city departments to address the problem of serious gang-related crime. The Fort Worth Parks and Community Services Department (which includes recreation) played a central role in the effort. Table 6 shows data that compare the number of serious offenses the year before the program was launched with the number 2 years after the initiative was implemented.

The 22% improvement, reflecting 152 fewer offenses, was dramatic. If they had been committed by 100 young people, for example, and if all of these individuals had

been arrested and incarcerated, then using Texas Youth Commission's data, which report that the annual cost of incarcerating a youth is \$43,000 per year, the cost of incarcerating all 100 of them for 1 year would have been more than \$4.3 million. Given the gravity of the offenses, it appears reasonable to hypothesize that each of the individuals could have been incarcerated for an average of 10 years. With this assumption, the costs then escalate to \$43 million (ignoring the time value of money). The total investment of city funds in this at-risk youth initiative was \$430,000 and \$678,000 in years 1 and 2 of the program, respectively. This was supplemented with \$156,000 and \$278,000 in the respective years from private sources. Thus, the return on each dollar invested by the city was \$39 (\$43 million/\$1.108 million). These calculations do not take into account cost savings that are also likely to have accrued from at-risk youth not engaging in other less serious crimes not considered in Table 6. This level of return made the investment unbeatable! Certainly the level of return makes it easy for elected officials to justify to their constituents the use of tax money to retain and expand their investment in this program.

From a competitive repositioning perspective, exactness of the numbers is not important. It does not matter if in some jurisdictions juvenile incarceration costs are lower, if city

Table 6 Changes in the number of serious gang-related offences committed in Fort Worth over a 2-year period

Type	Year before the initiative	Year 2 of the initiative	% of change
Murder	37	29	-22
Aggravated sexual assault	3	10	+233
Robbery	116	83	-28
Aggravated assault	421	319	-26
Burglary	43	27	-37
Theft	35	35	-
Auto theft	25	25	-
Total	680	528	-22%

investment is greater, or if the magnitude of crime reduction is lower. The magnitude of the return on investment is so large that even quite major changes in the variables are unlikely to affect the principle.

If leisure's desired position relates to economic prosperity, then the competitive resources targeted are likely to be those allocated to tourism or economic development agencies. Tourism agencies have been effective in positioning themselves in the minds of stakeholders as important contributors to economic prosperity, and they receive resources commensurate with that favorable position.

However, when they undertake economic impact studies that show the spending of tourists in the community, this substantially overstates their contribution because many visitors would come even if there was no tourism agency, while others are there because of the leisure services department's efforts rather than those of the tourism agency. If the discrepancies between the established position of the tourism agency and reality are subtly pointed out, then resources that would otherwise be appropriated to it may instead be allocated to leisure services to develop additional events or facilities that will attract visitors.

Responsibility for business recruitment in most communities in the USA has been assigned to an economic development agency. Competitive repositioning could involve subtly challenging the myth that these organizations have created about their high level of influence on company location decisions. Frequently, they claim credit for bringing XYZ company to town. The reality is that economic development organizations rarely influence the company's initial decisions that result in it narrowing its list of prospective communities to a small set of between two and five communities. Narrowing the list usually occurs before community economic development organizations are contacted or have any awareness that a

particular company may be planning to relocate.

Typically, they become involved only in the final stage in a company's location decision process. At that stage, their role is to serve as a conduit through which companies conveniently can request specific information from those communities that they are considering, to host and coordinate visits to the community by company officials, to coordinate company requests for zoning changes, easements and planning permissions, and to coordinate the negotiation of incentive packages that their community is prepared to offer (Decker and Crompton, 1993). If this more-limited role becomes recognized as the real function of economic development organizations, then the scope of their operations may be scaled back and more funds released for providing amenities that companies seek.

The challenge for leisure services is to convince stakeholders to adopt a market-oriented rather than a product-oriented approach to business relocation. The common product-oriented approach focusses on selling the community as it is, whereas a market orientation adapts a community to meet the changing needs of relocating companies which means 'If small business constitutes the engine of the job generation process, then places should promote things that facilitate small business growth' (Kotler *et al.*, 1993, p. 12). One of these things is likely to be the investment in improved leisure amenities (Crompton *et al.*, 1997).

THE PAY-OFF FROM IMPLEMENTING REPOSITIONING STRATEGIES

It has been noted that:

Professions, like organizations and individuals, can become so involved with the routines of daily activity they may lose sight of that for which they are working. Short-term objectives, momentary crises, and the

latest fad or operating techniques tend to distort their perceptions. It is easy to assume that tomorrow will be like today and that what we are doing is what we ought to be doing – that we are where we ought to be (Sessoms, 1992, p. 46)

If professionals focus all their energies on doing a good job of managing the park, recreation center, or swimming pool for which they are responsible, then that will define the level of their relevancy (Driver and Bruns, 1999). As a field, we must think more broadly about our relevance in society. If we fail to do so, then nothing broader will happen and we will be marginalized. As the adage goes: 'If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always gotten'. If the field does what it has always done, it will be treated as it currently is by legislators. If it has ambitions to do more, then it has to change. Given the increased sophistication with which other fields present their case and the increased pressures on governments to offer more and better services, if leisure services continues to do what it has always done, then it can expect fewer resources in the future. Agencies that commit to repositioning are likely to see four major positive outcomes (Driver *et al.*, 2000).

First, better understanding and appreciation of the significance of leisure services by stakeholders and professionals. Repositioning is the way of expressing to others, as well as to the field's professionals, the nature of leisure's contributions to society. The perspective shifts from 'trivial fun and games' for a relatively narrow segment of users, to addressing important community issues.

Second, stronger justification for the allocation of public funds to leisure services. By repositioning leisure services so they contribute to alleviating community problems, agencies are better able to justify their budget requests. Elected officials are being

held more accountable and must be able to explicitly explain how their investments in leisure benefit community residents. Consequently, it is appropriate that they require agencies to develop outcome-oriented performance measures and to provide 'evidence-based' justifications for their budget requests.

Third, clearer guidance for service prioritizations. Responding to the question, 'What business are we in?' defines the long-term vision of what an agency is striving to become and establishes the boundaries within which objectives, strategies, and actions are developed.

Fourth, enhanced pride in the profession. The trivial 'fun-and-games' connotations associated by many with leisure have caused some professionals to feel uncomfortable and defensive. Sometimes professionals have a self-esteem problem. They are not convinced themselves that what they do is important, so they do not advocate their cause with the conviction and enthusiasm needed for an agency to develop a high profile in a community.

The newness of the concept of repositioning in the leisure field, and the relatively long period of time needed for repositioning strategies to be effective, means that no field studies have been reported which evaluate the effectiveness of repositioning strategies. However, the results of an experiment designed to measure this were reported by Kaczynski *et al.* (2005).

Kaczynski *et al.* (2005) gave a sample of people in a community an article to read that related to youth crime. The article was designed to appear that it had been published in a local newspaper. Four different versions of the article were produced. Each of them added information to that included in the previous version.

- A control version containing no repositioning information
- A real/associative repositioning version reported a large number of youth

programs offered by the agency and a large number of qualified staff to run them. It also incorporated associative information relating to other organizations with which the agency partnered.

- A real/associative and psychological version referenced positive outcomes to youth and the community that emanated from the programs.
- A real/associative, psychological, and competitive version added information on how funds allocated to the police department could be better used by the park and recreation agency.

After reading their version of the article, respondents were asked to divide \$100 between the police department and the leisure services agency. The control group allocated an average of \$47.72 to the leisure agency. When the real/associative repositioning information was added, this increased by 22% to \$58.10. Adding psychological outcome information increased this only marginally to \$58.20, but when competitive information was added, there was another quantum leap to \$64.97, which represented a 36% increase compared with using no repositioning strategy at all. The budget increase equates to \$1.8 million on a \$5 million operating budget for youth development programs. This study demonstrated the potential effectiveness of repositioning strategies and that they are most effective when the four repositioning strategies are used cumulatively rather than if only one or two of them are used.

The future of leisure as a viable public service is likely to be dependent upon its ability to demonstrate that its offerings contribute to issues perceived to be important by elected officials and their constituents and by government funding agencies. This conceptualization of the field's future returns it to its roots. In the USA, the initial rationale for public investment in parks was that they would contribute to four important societal goals: democratic equality, social coherence,

public health, and economic prosperity (Young, 2004). The rationale for investment in public swimming pools was based on community health and cleanliness, alleviating juvenile crime and facilitating gender and class integration (Wiltse, 2005). Similarly, early advocates of publicly tax-supported recreation argued that it would be an antidote to the rising problem of male juvenile crime and delinquency and be an effective vehicle for teaching good citizenship (Crompton and Witt, 1999). In each case, resource allocations by elected officials were made because these services were viewed as a means through which compelling community problems could be resolved. The lessons of the field's roots suggest a road map for the field's future.

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