1999

Researching potential partners for an equestrian learning center in Frankenmuth, MI

Tracy Weber

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RESEARCHING POTENTIAL PARTNERS FOR AN
EQUESTRIAN LEARNING CENTER IN
FRANKENMUTH, MI

by

Tracy Ann Weber

A project submitted to the School of Food, Hotel and Travel Management
at Rochester Institute of Technology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

August 1999
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
School of Food, Hotel and Travel Management
Department of Graduate Studies

M.S. Hospitality-Tourism Management
Presentation of Thesis/Project Findings

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Title of Research: Researching Potential Partners for an
Equestrian Learning Center in Frankenmuth, MI

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ABSTRACT

Researchers believe that 90% of emotional communication is non-verbal (Gibbs, 1995). Monty Roberts (1997), and many others in the equestrian industry, recognize the power of using horses as a communication tool for humans. The North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) is an organization whose mission is to promote and support equine-facilitated activities, including communication, self-awareness and self-esteem. A learning organization incorporates the elements of a shared vision, personal mastery, systems thinking, mental models, and team learning. This study found that there are NARHA members that possess a learning organization philosophy and therefore could possibly be interested in creating an equestrian learning center in Frankenmuth, MI. Sixty-seven percent of the learning organization questions were answered affirmatively with either strongly agree or agree; almost half of those were in the strongly agree category. Additionally, because a lack of self-esteem and self-awareness directly relate to the vulnerability of young people, the literature review of this study explores youth as a potential target market for programs offered by an equestrian learning center.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In June of 1998 a group of seemingly ordinary people came together for the freshman class of RIT’s Executive Leader. The twelve people, now known as team MICRONY, have gone beyond the ordinary to the extraordinary. Many of us have found that through this group of people we have reached the most human part of each of us, touching our very souls. I sincerely thank each MICRONIAN for their contribution; the experiences we’ve shared have contributed directly to this body of work, as well as how I look at the world and my place in it. Deserving special recognition is my “partner in crime,” Annie Rummel. Her belief in me and the values we share have made this experience a journey of love and laughter. The transformation from the ordinary to the extraordinary would not have been possible without the caring and dedicated leadership of the Executive Leader staff at RIT, under the direction of Dr. Richard Marecki. For his vision and incredible listening skills, my deepest gratitude and sincere appreciation to Dr. James Jacobs, Jr.

I also thank my family for their support and understanding. This experience will help me when my daughters, Kaitlyn and Carlye, begin the search for their dreams. Love Ya’ Man!
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CHAPTER I
Introduction

"But just as trust has to be won with a horse, so must it be won between people and the organizations that employ them. I hope that my pioneering work in the human-to-horse field has so opened up the potential for communication that decades hence the relationship will evolve and change beyond recognition. Similarly, our understanding of human-to-human interactions might also take great leaps forward." --Monty Roberts (1997, p. 245)

Monty Roberts (1997) is a real-life horse whisperer--an American original whose gentle training methods reveal the depth of communication possible between man and animal; a form of non-verbal communication far stronger than the spoken word. His philosophy begins with respect and ends with expectations clearly defined. He teaches this understanding to all who will learn to listen. Listen closely to a story about a learning organization that applies this philosophy through self-awareness training and leadership programs. SHHHH . . . Listen . . . it's called Web Learning Center (WLC).

The Problem

Our lives include more fear, stress, and violence than ever before. Youth, today, seemingly grow up with more pressures than those of generations' past; yet with less family support and community involvement than helped yesterday's adolescent cope. Not antithetically, many corporations and organizations today are looking for ways to fix, repair, and change their organizational climate and culture to one that is in tune with the values and goals of the organization. Many consultants suggest a transformation that begins with the individual--
identifying personal goals, and matching them with the company's values. If the company's value system matches those of the individual, it creates a win-win situation, for both the individual and the organization. Hierarchical authority is much more effective at securing compliance than it is in fostering genuine commitment. A value is only a value if it is voluntarily chosen. (Senge, 1996).

Organizations have formal and informal processes and structures for the acquisition, sharing and utilization of knowledge and skills. A learning organization continually adapts to a changing and interdependent environment. One in which people at all levels, individuals and collectively, are continually increasing their capacity to produce results they care about. People in learning organizations look forward to creating, instead of merely reacting to, the new world that emerges. They recognize the interdependent orientation of the individual's personal vision in relationship to the greater whole and try to balance what they want for themselves with what they want for the larger system: the organization, nation or planet (Senge, 1996).

Moreover, Goleman (1998) is redefining the importance of self-awareness through his research in emotional intelligence (EQ). EQ describes the understanding of one's own feelings, empathy for the feelings of others, and the regulation of emotion in a way that enhances living. A recent survey by Goleman of major corporations asked them to define leadership qualities. The results showed that a high EQ made for a successful leader and is critical for success in all jobs as well as important for team performance. The traits most highly prized by major corporations are self-awareness, handling emotions, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Goleman's goal is to restore civility to our streets and a caring attitude to our communal life. (Gibbs, 1995). He sees practical applications everywhere from hiring practices for companies to, parents raising their family, to how schools should teach children.
Researchers believe that 90% of emotional communication is non-verbal (Gibbs, 1995). Monty Roberts (1997), and many others in the equestrian industry, recognize the power of using horses as a communication tool for humans. The North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) is an organization whose mission is to promote and support equine-facilitated activities, including communication, self-awareness and self-esteem. A learning organization incorporates the elements of a shared vision, personal mastery, systems thinking, mental models, and team learning. This study identifies NARHA members level of agreement of a learning organization philosophy as potential partners for an equestrian learning center in Frankenmuth, Michigan called Web Learning Center (WLC). Additionally, because a lack of self-esteem and self-awareness directly relate to the vulnerability of young people, the literature review of this study explores youth as a potential target market for programs offered by an organization such as WLC. As Lord Palmerson stated it, “The best thing for the inside of man, is the outside of a horse” (Scanlan, 1998, p. 1).

**Scope and Limitations**

Survey questions were generated through a comprehensive literature review, but due to the unique organizational design of WLC, it may not identify all potential opportunities and challenges. The wording may lead respondents to answer not as they practice, i.e. as what the systems in their organization support and reinforce, but rather as they believe they “should be.” Because this survey is limited to their opinion on a certain day, it may not accurately reflect the actual philosophy of the organization. Following the survey, if potential partners to actively be cultivated, a more comprehensive method will need to be used, such as visiting those member centers whom scores reflect the likelihood of a learning organization philosophy.
**Background**

The benefits of horseback riding range from the physical improvement of flexibility, balance and muscle strength to the emotional and mental rewards of increased confidence, patience and self-esteem. Although references to the physical and emotional benefits of horseback riding date back to writing in the 1600s, the first centers for therapeutic riding in North America began operation in the 1960s. Today, the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) has established accreditation requirements for centers interested in providing quality, professional therapeutic riding centers. Many medical professions, including the American Physical Therapy Association and the American Occupational Therapy Association, recognize the therapeutic qualities of horseback riding. Physically, hippotherapy can improve balance, posture, mobility and function; it may also affect psychological, cognitive, behavioral and communication functions for clients of all ages (NARHA, 1998).

The Equine Facilitated Mental Health Association (EFMHA) is a special interest section of NARHA. Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy is an experimental treatment approach within the therapy classification of therapeutic riding that provides the client with opportunities to enhance self-awareness and re-pattern maladaptive behaviors, feelings, and attitudes. The term “equine experimental learning” implies that you learn about yourself through your interaction and relationship with your environment including people, animals, nature and situations therein. Equine Experimental Learning emphasizes the interactive nature of the participant’s emotional mental, social, physical, and spiritual well being.

Conversely, much of the American educational system has followed a traditional “assembly-line mentality” based on economic and societal models from manufacturing and industrial eras. This hierarchical system ignores the interdependent relationships of all aspects of
learning and the individual goals of the student. Reform movements and progressive educators are seeking ways to improve the quality and effectiveness of our educational system by offering programs and opportunities that prepare students for a service economy, called a "blur economy" by some (Davis & Meyer, 1998). To be successful in an increasingly competitive and global environment educational systems, as well as organizations, must create cultures and climates that support and reward desired lifelong learning behaviors. C. William Pollard (1998), Chairman of The ServiceMaster Company, in testimony to the Education and Workforce Committee of the House of Representatives answered the question, "How does one keep up with the pace of change?"

"Continuing education and training is no longer a nice thing to do --it is a necessity. We have workers increasingly coming to us with little or no training in social skills or relating to others or in understanding the standards of civility. The distinctions we once made of going to school and being educated during part of our life and then working for the other part of our life are no longer there. The lines between school and work are blurring" (Time, 1998, p. 5).

In a blur economy (Davis & Meyer, 1998) the economic web is essentially about relationships; therefore, the relationship, i.e., culture and climate of the community surrounding Web Learning Center (WLC) are essential. Frankenmuth, Michigan will be the founding location of WLC. As a testament to the climate and culture of Frankenmuth, the mission statement of the Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau is to promote Frankenmuth and the prosperity of all businesses in the community through a unified organization. They promote unity in the community, foster "gemütlichkeit," which is a German term meaning a feeling of good will or spirit, and nurture their Bavarian Heritage. Frankenmuth is a unique community, developed in
1845 by a group of German Lutheran missionaries. This little community of 4,500 people has grown into one of Michigan's most popular visitor destinations, welcoming over 3 million visitors annually. A key component in the Frankenmuth success story is their vision for the community, which includes the goal of taking an active role in linking business and education. This commitment to lifelong learning echoes Pollard's statement that the lines between business and education are blurring. Frankenmuth's recognition and commitment to lifelong learning point to a potentially supportive climate for an organization such as WLC.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to identify potential equestrian partners who posses a learning organization philosophy. A lack of self-esteem and self-awareness directly relate to the vulnerability of young people, therefore the literature review of this study will explore youth, ages nine through fifteen years old, as a potential target market for programs offered by an organization such as WLC.

**Significance**

Many existing training programs currently use traditional methods, such as seminars with speakers, consultants or experimental learning programs that offer active learning and “ropes training.” Similarly, current equestrian programs focus on mastering skills, such as riding or for the therapeutic benefit of a disability. Neither industry has brought the concept of combining self-awareness and leadership training in an equestrian environment to mainstream America. Therefore, this study may cross-pollinate the two industries, thereby creating new marketing strategies for both.
A traditional, "Management by Results" managerial philosophy emphasizes a hierarchical chain of command, with numerical goals used to measure objectives and accountability. It pays little, if any, attention to the processes and systems that define the real capabilities of the organization. This study will measure philosophical ingredients that are part of existing NARHA member organizations. The publication of the research results may increase awareness by NARHA members of the potential to improve their organizations through embracing a learning organization philosophy. Those individuals requesting the survey results, may want to learn more about how to develop the elements of a learning organization philosophy, specifically things like shared vision, personal mastery, systems thinking, mental models and team learning.

Lastly, because Frankenmuth, MI would be the home of WLC, this community could benefit significantly from a business of this nature. Many of the Frankenmuth businesses and organizations already embrace components of a learning organization philosophy, but additional training and increased awareness could enhance the lives of the individuals living in this community and the surrounding mid-Michigan area.

**Nature of the Study**

This study uses a written questionnaire to measure the level of a learning organization philosophy within members of NARHA, with the goal of identifying potential partners for WLC. A random sample of three hundred and fifty NARHA members indicated their level of agreement to a series of learning organization statements. Additionally, some questions will categorize the members as to their organizational structure, specifically, in the area of their decision-making process, evaluations and special interest organizations.
Following the survey, the results will be available to members of NARHA. The written survey is only the beginning of the learning process and the development of potential partnerships. With the ultimate goal of creating an organization that offers self-awareness programs using horses as a tool, the survey itself was a tool to begin a dialog with NARHA members.

**Hypothesis**

This study will identify potential partners for creating the archetype of equestrian learning center in Frankenmuth, Michigan. The research hypothesis is: Potential partners with a learning organization philosophy are currently members of NARHA. The negative hypothesis is: There are no potential partners within NARHA who exhibit a learning organization philosophy.

**Definition of Terms**

*learning organization* - is one that continually adapts to a changing and interdependent environment. It is a systemic, cooperative and creative organization that goes beyond personal loyalty to include a commitment to societal changes through one’s organization.

*hippotherapy* - a multidisciplinary form of treatment that uses a horses’ movement, based on the methodology of classic hippotherapy to achieve physical goals while affecting psychological, cognitive, social, behavioral and communication outcomes.

*Gemütlichkeit* - a German term meaning a feeling of good will or spirit.

*double-loop learning* - depends on being able to take a “double look” at the situation by questioning the relevance of operating norms.
Long Range Consequences

NARHA’s members centers with a learning organization philosophy could become a team of people with a shared vision that work to develop this idea into a learning center.

Results showing a lack of a learning organization philosophy would show a lesser likelihood for potential partnerships, indicating the need for further research and the re-evaluation of some of the initial elements of this study.
CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

The review of literature will explore four key themes critical to researching an equestrian learning center in Frankenmuth. First of all, a short market analysis will provide a synopsis of the environment Web Learning Center (WLC) would be entering.

Secondly, the literary review will include a description of the components defining learning organizations, including topics such as shared vision, successful cultures in organizations, and systems approach to service organizations. The information gathered in this section will be the basis for a significant portion of the questionnaire sent to NARHA members.

Thirdly, since the target market for this study is youth ages nine to fifteen, the literature review will reflect information about existing youth programs as well as how this group “learns.” To begin with the WLC’s initial “product” would be training programs and self-awareness games. This study includes research of existing training games and experimental learning programs, applying them to an equestrian setting.

Lastly, an important literature research component will describe the value of equestrian programs concentrating on the whole child and the relationship between human and horse.

Market Analysis:

The American Society for Training and Development (1998) reported that, “We are on a cusp of working and learning because business demands it . . . Non-traditional educational programs appear to be increasing in number as our society moves from the industrial to the information age.” Life-long learning does not stop with traditional educational and training
programs offered to the individual, but expands to systemic learning as a way to improve learning and performance in general. The connectivity of the economy and its' resources is creating an environment that supports developing learning programs that enhances the individual, and thereby enhance the entire system. The old polarities between business and education are coming together in a way that includes the creative human spirit as a realistic factor in the competitive marketplace (Bleedorn, 1997). This brings us to a "shared world vision," in which we all want to develop innovative, high-performance, leading-edge systems for our mutual benefit.

In the *Art of the Long View*, Schwartz (1996) explains scenario planning as making choices today with an understanding of how they might turn out in the future. Scenarios can help people make better decisions by forcing us to look at our assumptions, our view of reality and honesty look at our biases. He states that every scenario requires specific research and suggests paying attention to the areas of science and technology, perception-shaping events, music, and fringes. The limited scope of this project does not allow for a detailed analysis of each of these areas in relation to WLC’s organizational structure. The ongoing process of scenario planning will become part of the WLC organizational system. One example of how examining information will be pertinent to the future success of WLC is in the area of perception shaping events. The issue of moral and ethic behavior is in the forefront of our society as a result of the President Clinton’s recent impeachment hearings. This "perception shaping event" may direct parents to seek activities that reinforce the importance of the values they hold in high regard. A majority of Americans are re-focusing on the importance of family and marriage, accountability and morality, the value of religion and prayer in school. The programs offered through WLC, as well as the culture and climate of the organization, will be compatible with many traditional Judeo-Christian
values, and therefore, should speak well to the public seeking a moral and ethical environment for their children.

Programs and organizations that offer comparable services for the target audience are Junior Achievement, 4-H, YMCA’s, boy and girl scouting programs, as well as other learning centers and leadership camps. They all include a component that focuses on skills such as goal setting, interpersonal skills and self-esteem. For example, one of the purposes of Junior Achievement is to develop experience-based learning, provide life skills acting as a catalyst that brings business leaders and educators together to educate tomorrow’s workforce. Once established, WLC will look to develop partnerships with many of the aforementioned organizations in hopes of offering compatible programs. This theory can eventually expand to adult courses such as Dale Carnegie Training®. Additionally, WLC should work with schools, educators, community leaders and other youth programs with the goal of identifying opportunities that would benefit both organizations.

Although WLC will not originally cater to the traveling market, such as conventions, reunions and motorcoach groups, the programs offered have the potential to attract a visiting public if marketed correctly. Therefore, a market analysis would not be complete without information regarding Frankenmuth and the State of Michigan as a visitor destination. Both Frankenmuth and Michigan are growing travel destinations. Michigan is the sixth largest travel state in the US with 34,536,000 domestic visitors in 1995. Frankenmuth sits in Saginaw County. Frankenmuth is one of the state’s number one visitor destinations with over 3 million visitors annually. Of the 360 billion dollars Americans spent for domestic travel, entertainment and recreation, increased 6.7% from 1994 to 1995. A profile of the typical visitor to Michigan puts their primarily purpose for coming to the state to visit friends and relatives (36.5%). Potentially,
WLC's programs, which would fall into the entertainment and recreation category, could attract family gatherings; conventions and other group travel tapping into Frankenmuth's visitor market.

**Learning Organizations**

A learning organization is one that continually adapts to a changing and interdependent environment. It is a systematic, cooperative, and creative organization that goes beyond personal loyalty to include a commitment to societal changes through one's organization (Kofman & Senge 1993). A learning organization philosophy is one in which people at all levels, individuals and collectively, are continually increasing their capacity to produce results they really care about. As a result, learning organizations are both more generative and more adaptive than traditional organizations. Because of their commitment, openness and ability to deal with complexity, people find security not in stability, but in the dynamic equilibrium between holding on and letting go--holding on and letting go of beliefs, assumptions and certainties. What they know takes a second place to what they can learn, and simplistic answers are always less important the penetrating questions. The people involved build collaborative relationships in order to draw strength from the diverse knowledge, experience and capabilities of everyone in the organization. Organizational learning, therefore, is the process of gaining knowledge and developing skills that empower us to understand, and thus to act effectively within social institutions, such as businesses, government departments, schools or charities (Addleson, 1998).

Learning organizations are based on the interdisciplinary science of cybernetics. This suggests that these organizations must develop capacities that allow them to scan and anticipate change in a wider environment to detect significant variations. They must also develop an ability to question, challenge, and change operating norms and assumptions and allow an appropriate
strategic direction and pattern of organization to emerge. To avoid being trapped in single-loop processes they must evolve designs that allow them to become skilled in the art of double-loop learning. Double-loop learning allows people to challenge core operating principles and, in both the process and the outcome, to affirm and reaffirm the values that are to guide action.

Paradoxically, it is a process that mobilizes disagreement to create consensus. Part of the challenge hinges on adopting a philosophy that views and encourages the capacity of learning to learn as a key priority and developing organizational principles that support this process (Fulmer & Keys, 1998).

"Creating the Climate and Culture of Success," an article appearing in Organizational Dynamics, defines the atmosphere and pattern of behavior within successful organizations (Schneider, 1995). Climate is the atmosphere that employees perceive is created in their organizations by practices, procedures and rewards. The culture, on the other hand, is the broader pattern of an organization’s mores, values and beliefs. When all team members share cultural attributes of an organization, they become part of the organization’s qualities and characteristics. A culture is a pattern of understanding and shared meaning that helps us cope with situations and provides a basis for making our own behavior sensible and meaningful (Morgan, 1997). In a service organization, the effects of the “moment of truth” of a service encounter is determined by the climate and culture of the organization, as exemplified by the employees behavior. When the system of the organization supports the values and beliefs, it will communicate those to the customer. The total environment sends a message to the customer as well as the employee. Schneider (1995) points out that organizational effectiveness requires that employees need to be committed to the organization’s success. The organizational structure of WLC will support autonomy and empowerment by employees to make decisions that benefit the
organization and its’ customers. Since WLC will not have a traditional hierarchical structure, this should also help eliminate the need to try to interpret what the “boss” wants.

A learning organization needs a culture that supports change and risk taking. It needs to promote an openness that encourages dialog and the expression of conflicting points of view. Genuine learning is usually action based. It would be hypocritical for WLC to offer action-based programs designed to help people learn to work in teams, develop self-esteem and help others, and then not internally incorporated those principles into the organizational system. The behavior of intelligent systems require a sense of the vision, norms, values, limits or reference points. Successful organizations build cohesive cultures around common sets of norms, values and ideas that create an appropriate focus for doing business (Morgan, 1997). Corporate culture is not a simple phenomenon. It is not something that can be mandated, designed or made. It is a living, evolving, self-organizing reality that can be shaped and reshaped but not in an absolute way. We must recognize that our environments are an extension of ourselves, and that since we are in a constant state of flux, our corporate culture will continually change and evolve. The culture and climate of WLC must support change, through application of double-loop learning, dialogic communication and a shared vision.

One way WLC could create an environment that values “learning to learn” is in the area of personal growth and training for each WLC employee. All WLC employees will be called “partners” and treated as such, since each will have an equal commitment to the organization and its’ success. In addition to directly promoting the idea of continuous learning, this “personal commitment training” also helps people focus on their own self-awareness, identifying their changing personal wants and needs. As part of their commitment to the organization, each
partner may decide to read a book, take a class, join a civic organization, or research a particular subject. Once all partners participate in their area of personal growth, they will be expected to share with the group how this skill will benefit both the individual and the organization. At a regularly scheduled meeting, perhaps monthly, the WLC team would develop a dialog about how this new skill benefited the individual and how it can be applied to the organization for the benefit of all team members.

In addition to the approach of personal commitment training, other training programs and informal learning will be supported through an open-book approach to management. All information will be accessible to all WLC employees. The concept of a “need to know” basis of information sharing will be expanded to the nth degree, with every partner having access to all organizational information, to open their minds to new opportunities. High involvement organizations have found that less hierarchical organizations have greater opportunities for success, usually effective participation requires the elimination of hierarchical layers (Bowen & Lawler, 1993). In essence, WLC will be a boundaryless organization that systemically supports a values-based organizational model. Since this is a very untraditional structure, people may initially feel uncomfortable participating in this environment. In spite of the individual comfort level, if the partners agree that information sharing is a value of the organization, than the system must support that position by making all information available, including such sacred cows as wages and benefits.

Recognizing that people posses different learning styles and personality types, means that WLC will need to provide an organizational structure that supports various learning styles and people. A nurturing climate that meets the needs of every individual all the time is virtually
impossible to create, especially when one considers the one constant—things are always changing. In order to systematically incorporate the goal of speaking to everyone’s individual learning style, we must first identify the various learning and personality styles of the people working at WLC. This can initially be done through standardized personality tests. This information will provide all the partners with some of the building blocks needed for dialog concerning various learning styles and offer each individual the opportunity to learn about themselves. The WLC philosophy will personify an active learning approach, continually increasing knowledge through dialogic exchange with the goal of creating an organization that supports a learning system as well as learning individuals. When WLC partners slip into traditional roles (old paradigm), the system will be designed to challenge norms and assumptions, looking for creative information, insights and capacities that allow us to evolve to new levels of development. In order to help WLC with the development of scenario planning and building potential futures - the question “what if” will be blended into organizational structure. Brainstorming sessions and other forms of creative thinking will be incorporated to create new direction and paradigm shifts. In addition to a commitment to constantly improve, the culture and climate of the organization will support the value of these efforts.

The learning organization philosophy at WLC will blur the traditional roles of “customer” and “employee.” WLC partners will be required to be active participants in the programs offered to customers. By asking employees to participate, they emulate the dual role of customer and employees, so that they can more fully experience the environment from that point of view. Additionally, they may gain the confidence of customers and learn through dialog with them new information that otherwise might not have been available. Conversely, some of the programs will put paying customers in the performing roles where in a traditional setting they were a paid
employee. For example, an equestrian facility includes all aspects of caring for animals, often including cats and dogs as well as horses. These animals must be fed and watered daily. The customers participating in a program may be given the challenge of haying and watering the horses—finding the most efficient method to do this. Once they have accomplished this task their time will be recorded and future groups will be challenged to improve upon their methods and efficiency. The learning for each group will occur in part through the discussion about how they organized themselves as a team to accomplish the goal of feeding and watering. Did they evaluate the strengths of group members and assign tasks accordingly? Did they appoint (or did someone self-appoint) a leader to coordinate the effort? What was the communication and learning process that took place and how does that apply to other situations in work, school and at home?

Envisioning is a powerful technique for guiding organizations and individuals toward positive change-making the company more humane and successful. (Ross, 1997). When creating the vision of WLC, a key component will be to develop a plan of expectations, identify the tools each person needs to do their job, and determine ways performance measures that can be rewarded and recognized. The development and maintenance of WLC’s vision is not a single one-time event, but rather the organizational system will need to support this as an emerging process. One method will be to incorporate the tool of the “Plan-Do-Check-Act” cycle into the organizational structure (Scholtes, 1996). By looking at programs, systems and the vision of both the organization and individuals, the team can continually identify different, and hopefully better, ways of accomplishing their goals.

Howard Schultz, Chairman and CEO of Starbucks, holds Starbucks up as “living proof that a company can lead with its heart and nurture its soul and still make money (1997, p. 5).” He
believes the secret to Starbucks success is the team of people who have built a company based on a value-centered culture with guiding principles incorporated into a system that support those values. Furthermore, Senge (1994) believes that you need a shared vision in order to have a learning organization. Considering these two opinions, the development of the team of people interested in pursuing the creation (dream) of WLC is dependent upon identifying those individuals that share the vision and values of this organization.

The culture, information systems, structure and roles of WLC will support a philosophy incorporating the visions, values and sense of purpose that binds the organization together. These can be used as a way of helping every individual understand and absorb the mission and challenge of the whole enterprise. Since the employees of WLC will be the ones actually designing the vision and values of the organization, they will, therefore, be creating the purpose that binds the organization together. The cultural codes uniting the organization must foster an open and evolving approach to the future. Who are the individuals that could create such an organization as WLC? “Ordinary people can be trained, motivated and empowered to achieve extraordinary results on a combined basis, especially when they posses the desire and attitude.” (Pollard, 1995).

**Youth Learning and Training Programs**

Youth, today, seemingly grow up with more pressures than those of generations past, yet with less family support and community involvement than helped yesterday's adolescents cope. America, today, is more divided, fearful, stressed, rude and violent. Statistically, murders increased 165% from 1985 to 1993 among 14-17 year-olds (Josephson Institute, 1998). Lack of self-esteem directly relates to the vulnerability of young people when drugs and alcohol, eating
disorders, prejudice, and violence tempt them. Programs for youth expounding the benefits of self-esteem and self-respect abound as a way to prevent gangs, stop violence and stop drug abuse. Prevention efforts include education and awareness programs that build self-esteem and confidence. WLC’s goal will be to go beyond a conventional instruction of ideas and theories to the integration of self-awareness tools.

One organization that is designed to help adults and teens teach children about character education is CHARACTER COUNTS! (CC) (Josephson Institute, 1998). This youth education initiative is a project helping to prevent violence among youth and develop strong moral character. The universal ethical values stressed by CC are trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. According to CC, character education is the process of learning common attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that are important for people to have as responsible citizens. Good character education can provide ground rules for life for adults and young people and it stresses the importance of helping children learn and practice behaviors that reflect universal ethical values. The Youth Development/4-H Youth Programs Department of Michigan State University offer training opportunities and CHARACTER COUNTS! development events throughout Michigan.

In part, WLC programs will be based on experimental learning theory (Kolb, 1984). Kolb states there are four aspects of the learning cycle: 1) concrete experience 2) reflective observation 3) abstract conceptualization and 4) active experimentation. Kolb notes that learning can begin at any point on the cycle, and the preferred point of entry for learners is an indication of their learning style.
Games will be the primary tool used for Kolb's "active experimentation" learning phase. The goal of group games for children is very similar to the goals of training games for adults. Both seek to promote real understanding through the active or experimental learning process of making decisions, negotiating and compromise. Furthermore, DeVries (1990) points out that group games with rules have not always been viewed as having educational value. However, Piaget's research and theory (1932/1965) convince constructivist educators of the value of group games for intellectual and moral development as well as for social and physical development. For both youth and adult, experiences are then reviewed and discussed and the training experience can then be summarized and used to form a bridge from what was learned in the games to real life, be it at school, at work or in family relationships. Self-reflection and non-judgmental learning are essential to this learning process, for it can link the concrete to the abstract.

Whether the goal is to reach the entertainment and recreation market or help children learn, the primary product offered by WLC will be self-awareness training in the form of games. Games and other interactive exercises can help create an atmosphere of playfulness, collegiality, and shared values (Nilson, 1993). *Games Trainers Play* (Nilson, 1993) and other resources used by business facilitators and trainers to create activities for learning can be modified so that they use horses and their environment. One example of how to do this is the "Straw and Paperclip" exercise by Takas (1998). Takas (1998) suggests giving each group a box of straws and a box of paperclips. Then, give each group a task and let them go. The tasks could be to build the tallest, strongest, most creative, etc. structure. Debriefing includes describing teamwork and situational leadership skills, as well as how different models are needed to accomplish different tasks. This exercise could easily be modified for WLC using a horse and asking the group to groom the animal to the best of their ability. After a short introduction into "horse etiquette," the group
would be given a grooming box (brushes, hoof pick, combs) and put to the task. The original goal of describing teamwork and situational leadership would be met, but further discussion could be held about communicating with the horse. The horse/human communication becomes a springboard for human - to - human communication, self-awareness, shared vision, etc.

A person’s learning style is the way that he or she concentrates on, processes, internalizes and remembers new and difficult information and skills. Styles often vary with age, achievement level, culture, global versus analytic processing, preference and gender. According to Shaughnessey (1998) in an interview with Rita Dunn, an authority on learning styles, the best approach to teaching is to identify a student’s learning style by using an instrument that measures individual preferences. The preference areas revealed in the Learning Style Inventory (LSI) created by Dunn, Dunn, and Price (1993) relates to the environment, emotionality, sociological, physiological and indications of global or analytic processing inclinations. The LSI details preferences such as the physical classroom environment, working individually or in teams, time-of-day energy levels and food or liquid intake needs. Since learning styles are inherent to learning, WLC will use a variety of approaches to enhance the learning experience.

Motivation has been identified (Magjuka 1994) as a key component in learning, specifically mastery versus competitive motivation (Bergin 1995). One way WLC will try to identify an individual’s personal motivation is through the distribution of cards to participants prior to program participation identifying their individual goals and reasons for participating. These will be filed by theme and reviewed periodically to look for trends and as a tool to evaluate program offerings as well as organizational goals.

The whole language classroom refers to the idea that all four-language process components (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are learned as a whole rather than in
segregated parts. Children achieve optimum success by participating actively in all four processes. The teacher’s role in a whole language classroom becomes that of a facilitator, as students assume many of the responsibilities that once belonged solely to the teacher. When students use tools such as brainstorming and fact gathering it promotes a feeling of ownership. The programs offered at WLC use the same basic premise as the whole language classroom, applying it to a group game experience. Students learn the skills; techniques and attitudes of identifying behaviors and exploring situations that can help prepare every youngster for lifelong learning. Dr. Peter Benson, President of Search Institute, calls these skills “developmental assets.” The assets are those characteristics or “positive building blocks” that are essential for healthy development (1998).

Researchers have found that mastery, retention, and transfer of concepts is more readily acquired in cooperatively structured learning than in competitive or individually structured learning. This type of learning promotes higher quality and greater quantity of learning in addition to developing interpersonal skills. The essence of cooperative learning is assigning a group goal. To complete the assigned task, students must interact with each other, share ideas and materials, pool their information and resources, use division of labor when appropriate, integrate each member’s contribution into a group project and facilitate each other’s learning. As a result communication, conflict management, leadership and trust-building skills are developed. There are hundreds of studies that demonstrate the superiority of cooperative relationships, as opposed to competitive, in promoting healthy social development (Devlin, 1998).

The programs at WLC will be committed to a pedagogy that reaches the whole person, that is one that engages the student’s affect, intuition, soma and spirit as well as their intellect.
Only through engaging the wholeness of a person can sensory and imagine experience be apprehended directly making discernment possible. Wholeness is a key to discernment, if critical reflection deconstructs, discernment leads to seeing things in their relational wholeness (Boyd & Myers 1988).

For purposes of this study, the target age group for programs at WLC is youth ages 9 through 15 years old. The programs at WLC could potentially be modified and offered to other target audiences such as older youth, training programs for businesses, or as a visitor destination for motorcoach and other groups. Michigan State University (MSU) Youth Development/4-H Program guide (1997) reports that kids learn many life skills through their experiences with animals. Involvement with animals can help reinforce life for both kids and adults who work with them. Furthermore, the guide defines the ages of 9-15 as early adolescents. Early adolescents are going through many changes, including physical, thinking, social and emotional changes. Human development specialist believe each stage of life has “jobs” that each individual needs to learn in order to go on and live a healthy or productive life. The six interrelated “jobs” of early adolescents they identified are:

- increase positive feelings about themselves and who they are.
- increase positive feelings about their changing bodies.
- become more responsible and develop decision-making skills.
- become increasingly independent.
- develop better interpersonal communication skills.
- begin to think about a plan for the future.
The programs of WLC will be designed to create appropriate learning environments and engage young people in appropriate learning experiences at different development stages.

Rituals and symbols are used to arouse sensory knowing, to make emotions and feelings assessable, and to slow down processes of dialog and reflection (Kasl & Elias, 1997). From religious to sporting events, rituals promote the values of the sponsoring organization and the people involved. WLC will incorporate its own set of evolving rituals as part of the system, an example of a ritual and symbol, the blue ribbon fork, follows:

The “First Place Fork” (a blue fork-shaped piece of paper that looks somewhat like a ribbon) is based on an equestrian tradition and a heartwarming story. The tradition with horse people is to show off their ribbons by hanging them in the barn and blue is the color of first place or the winner. The story is about a very giving woman who was loved by many because of the wonderful things she had done throughout her life. Sadly, she found out she had an incurable disease and began putting her affairs in order and planning her funeral. One thing she asked her pastor was to place her bible in one hand and a fork in the other. Perplexed the minister asked her to explain. “Pastor,” she said, “you know I have been very active in the church throughout my life, attending potlucks and other worship activities. At every meal I’ve ever attended, when time comes for the dessert, those cleaning up plates and cups will suggest you keep your fork. Why? Because you will be needing it. From experience, if they tell you to keep your fork, you know you’re getting a good dessert - not a bowl of sherbert or a cookie, but the really good stuff! Pastor, to me keeping my fork symbolizes that the best is yet to come.” So at WLC we will mount the “forks” of our participants in the gathering room of WLC and a small one will be given to each participant to take with them. The forks are to remind each of us that when we apply what we learn “the best is yet to come.”
Equestrian Information

In the United States, the ever-expanding horse industry contributes more than $15 billion to the economy. The numbers are staggering: 14,000 sanctioned horse shows annually, close to 300,000 young people involved in 4-H and pony programs or Pony Club. The number of horses in America has grown from 6.6 million to 6.9 million in the past year. There are more horses in North America now than there were in the 1800s when horses powered the family farm (Scanlan, 1998).

There are a growing number of programs and organizations devoted to helping people with disabilities interact with horses in a positive environment, as well as provide therapeutic programs for emotionally and physically challenged people. The North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA), a leading organization in therapeutic riding, has grown from four member centers in 1969 to more than 500 centers today. Research shows that the benefits of horseback riding range from the physical improvement of flexibility, balance and muscle strength to the emotional and mental rewards of increased confidence, patience and self-esteem. Although references to the physical and emotional benefits of horseback riding date back to writing in the 1600s, the first centers for therapeutic riding in North America began operation in the 1960s. NARHA has established accreditation requirements for centers interested in providing quality, professional therapeutic riding centers. Many medical professions, including the American Physical Therapy Association and the American Occupational Therapy Association, recognize the therapeutic qualities of horseback riding. Physically, hippotherapy can improve balance, posture,
mobility and function. Hippotherapy may also affect psychological, cognitive, behavioral and communication functions for clients of all ages.

NARHA is also affiliated with other related organizations, such as the Equine-Facilitated Mental Health Association (EFMHA). This special interest section promotes the psychotherapeutic value of the horse in treatment of people with emotional, physical, mental, social and/or spiritual needs. Because the mission of EFMHA includes promotion, education, setting standards and planning the future for equine facilitated psychotherapy activities, members of this special interest segment of the NARHA are potentially similar to the organizational philosophy this research is measuring.

Anthropologist Elizabeth Atwood Lawrence and entomologist, the only two-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize, Edmund O. Wilson, advanced a philosophy called “biophilia” (Scanlan, 1998). Humans, they argue, have an innate tendency, however repressed, to focus on other life forms. Lawrence and Wilson assert that as we come to understand other life forms, including horses, we value them and ourselves more. Furthermore, Lawrence believes that “Humans have let each other down. Our society is so fragmented. If we ride horses or own horses these days, it is because we want to---may, in fact, need to” (Scanlan, 1998, p. 305). Even when relationships with other humans are satisfying, we still seek out animals because they offer us something that humans can’t. The fine tuned communication between rider and horse is both physical and mental. She contends that the horse represents a sense of freedom, power and romantic beauty that can take you outside yourself.

Philosopher Vicki Hearne (1994) argues that humans can learn the meaning of true happiness from animals, for whom happiness is usually a matter of getting the job done. She
contents a happy horse is one who knows his job and does it. Horses are wonderful teachers. Anyone who has ridden or worked with them is aware of their ability to teach patience, confidence and perseverance. Horse trainer, Monty Roberts (1997), teaches a method based establishing a bond of communication and trust, creating an environment in which both the horse and the human learn. The recognition of horses’ ability to teach skills such as non-verbal communication and the balance between risk and reward, will be the basis for the learning programs offered at WLC.

Linda Tellington Jones (Scanlan, 1998) is an international leader in the field of animal-human connection and a renowned teacher and animal behavior expert. She believes that teaming up with horses (and other animals) is a gift that contributes to the health (by reducing stress, lowering blood pressure, and lengthening our lives) and happiness of humans.

Horses have long been used in recreation-based programs for physically disabled children. The idea of using them as a tool to combat misbehavior is newer (Pool, 1998). Horses in the Hood (HHLA) is the brainchild of international show-jumping legend Kathy Kusner. Kusner has organized a program in Los Angeles with the goal of restoring hope and a sense of purpose by offering poor urban children the opportunity to care for horses and master riding skills as a way to build self-esteem. HHLA is about horses and how they can open a window on the larger world (Goldreyer, 1998). In essence, the youngsters end up having to see the world through the horse’s eyes, not just their own.

If we take Kusner’s example and apply the description of looking through not only the horse’s eyes, but also that of other people, we are in essence creating Senge’s (1994) “shared vision”. A shared vision, according to Senge, is a necessary part of a learning organization. Can
we combine the advantages of learning organization philosophy with the proven benefits of using horses as a tool for self-esteem and self-awareness? One way to begin to answer that question is to first identify potential partners within the equestrian industry that practice a learning organization philosophy.
CHAPTER III

Methodology

Assumptions

Procedural: A pre-test of the learning organization information was used to help eliminate questions that are leading or judgmental. This section of the survey, was scored without weighing the answers, hence, eliminating personal bias as to what parts of a learning organization philosophy are the most critical and important. Also, the random selection of the participants eliminated a bias towards those organizations where it could be identified they are “most like” an organization like WLC.

Procedures

The literature review was used to identify key components of successful learning organizations. The survey was pre-tested to see if any of the learning organization questions were leading or unclear. The survey was then mailed and e-mailed to NARHA’s Membership Director, Amy Newsome. Once their approval was given, labels were purchased from NARHA of all their member centers. The mailing list was generated from a systematic random selection of 350 of their 608 members. The survey, a cover letter, and a stamped return envelope were mailed together. Respondents were given approximately two weeks to complete and return the questionnaire. One hundred and seventy-three of the three hundred and fifty questionnaires (50%) were returned, two were returned incomplete.
Research Instrument

The goal of this survey is to identify potential partners within the equestrian industry that reflect a learning organization philosophy. In addition to facts gathered from the literature review, information from the NARHA membership packet was used to generate the survey questions. In order to build a profile of the respondent, questions 1-7 categorizes the person completing the survey and the member center:

1) Validates that the person providing the information is in a traditional leadership role within the organization, and therefore, more likely to be able to respond to the balance of the questionnaire with a global perspective. This is not to say that any member of the organization (i.e. the CEO vs. a barn manager) is more or less valuable, all results regardless of how this is answered will be used. This is only used as a method of categorization by the individual completing the survey.

2) NARHA members can belong to different membership categories. This question identifies where the respondent is located.

3) NARHA Operating Centers instructors can be certified in three levels from registered to advanced to master. This question tells us about the number of certified instructors and their levels of certification per center.

4) NARHA members can pursue accreditation status. This question is designed to look at the respondents of the questionnaire in relationship to that process.

5) In addition to NARHA membership, NARHA offers membership in three special interest sections. This question identifies which special interest sections they belong to:
American Hippotherapy Association - their mission is to promote research, education, and communication among physical and occupational therapists and other using the horse in a treatment approach based on principles of classic hippotherapy.

Competition Association of NARHA - is dedicated to furthering equestrian competition for individuals with disabilities.

Equine-Facilitated Mental Health Association - makes a commitment to promoting work with horses in the treatment of people with emotional, behavioral, social, mental, physical and/or spiritual needs.

6) The center’s organizational structure as defined by a “team-approach” to decision making. This question is designed to look at how the respondent would categorize the decision-making process of the organization.

7) The question is designed to look at the target market I’ve identified for the thesis, which is able-bodied. The intent of this question to find out how many NARHA member centers offer programs to this market segment.

8) Because this project targets youth aged 9 - 15 years old, this question will identify what percentage of the existing market are in the age range.

9) These questions were derived from the literature review and are used to measure the philosophical perspective of NARHA member centers as they relate to a learning organization philosophy. The book or article that generated each sub-question follows:

a. “There are no teachers, only guides with different areas of influence.” “There are no “teachers” with correct answers, only guides with different areas of expertise and experience that
may help along the way. Each of us gives up our own certainty and recognizes our interdependency within the larger community” (Kofman & Senge, 1993, page 17).

b. “It is important to offer programs that are adaptable to various learning styles.” “A person’s learning style is the way that he or she concentrates on, processes, internalizes and remembers new and difficult academic information or skills. Styles often vary with age, achievement level, culture, global versus analytic processing preference, and gender.” (Shaughnessy, 1998, page 1). Improved achievement in the form of higher test scores and/or grades has been statistically proven when teachers change from traditional teaching to learning-style teaching (Shaughnessy, page 2).

c. “It is important to create a balance between cooperation and competition with similar businesses.” Our overemphasis on competition makes looking good more important than being good... and reinforces our fixation on short-term measurable results. Competition becomes cooperation when we discover the “community nature of the self” and realize our role as challengers to help each other excel (Kofman & Senge, 1993, page 2).

d. “Organizational goal setting must include individual goal setting by every employee and volunteer.” “Learning does not occur in any enduring fashion unless it is sparked by people’s own ardent interest and curiosity. If learning is related to a person’s own vision, then that person will do whatever he she can to keep learning. When a shared vision effort starts with personal vision, the organization becomes a tool for people’s self-realization, rather than a machine they’re subjected to. People begin to stop thinking of the organization as a thing to which they are subservient. Only then can they wholeheartedly participate in guiding its direction” (Senge, 1994, page 323)
e. "Imagining and anticipating possible futures, often called "scenario planning," is an important part of our organizational system." Building scenarios pulls you past your blinders and illuminate understanding, sparks creativity and preparation. (Senge, 1994, page 277) The scenario method systematically raises people's understandings of their environment, and, of each other. It is designed to produce the kind of mutual understanding that allows people to act toward common ends (Schwartz, 1996, page 227).

f. Employees should dig beneath the surface of recurring problems and uncover the forces that are producing them, even at the risk of identifying the need for significant organizational changes." Learning depends absolutely on being able to acknowledge specific uncertainties and design organizational capabilities in advance to embrace possible errors as soon as they occur, and use the resulting understandings to continually adjust. These two ideas, acknowledging uncertainties and embracing error will engender honesty and integrity (Senge, 1994, page 500). Organizations learn in order to improve their adaptability and efficiency... learning also increases information sharing communication, understanding, and the quality of decisions made in organizations (Balasubramanian, 1995, page 2).

g. "Uncertainty and lack of control are resources for new learning." As a result of these capabilities, learning organizations are both more generative and more adaptive than traditional organizations. Because of their commitment, openness and ability to deal with complexity, people find security not in stability but in the dynamic equilibrium between holding on and letting go—holding on and letting go of beliefs, assumptions and certainties. What they know takes a second place to what they can learn, and simplistic answers are always less important than penetrating questions (Kofman & Senge, 1993, page 13). Whenever people work together conflict is likely.
Since many people associate conflict with stress, tension, and anger, it's not surprising that conflict is often viewed as a disease that should be stamped out. However, conflict can actually be of value to a working team. If can help by increasing the energy level, and by providing greater creativity through a diversity of viewpoints. If can also add depth to discussions; members are challenged to elaborate their ideas so that others understand them better. Another benefit is that more effective solutions result because more diverse perspectives are taken into account. Conflict that is part of critically examining ideas is necessary for good decisions (Scholtes, 1996, page 7-1).

h. "Objectives should be hard and fast and clearly stated for all to see." Visions are always evolving (Senge 1994, page 305). The best constructs for explaining and organizing the world will imitate life itself. They will be in a continual state of becoming (Kofman & Senge, 1993, page 12).

i. "Employees should, at all times, be able to make decisions that benefit the organization and its' customers." Organizations can only indirectly control the service encounter. The climate and culture determine the quality of the service provided. To be successful in an increasingly competitive and global environment, organizations must be simultaneously excellent in service and innovation. They must also create conditions that foster the willingness to expend extra effort on behalf of the organization (Schneider, Gunnarson & Niles-Jolly 1994, page 12).

j. "Self-reflection is essential to learning." Bill Gates of Microsoft apparently believes that mistakes are a valuable learning process and the willingness to question, challenge, experiment and innovate (Trapp, 1997, page 1). Reflection is essential to the learning process, for it can link the concrete to the abstract. When experiences are thoughtfully considered and
analyzed, generalizations are formed that influence future action (Glenn & Nelson, 1998). Reflection is a tool for shaping thoughts, ideas, and beliefs. As a human capacity, reflection enables us to evaluate experience, learn from mistakes, repeat successes, revise, and plan (Swain, 1998, page 1).

k. "Rituals and symbols make emotions and feelings accessible and therefore are an important part of the programs offered through our organization." Rituals and symbols are used to arouse sensory knowing, to make emotions and feelings assessable, and to slow down processes of dialog and reflection (Kasl & Dean, 1997, page 5). Commitment builds when people are an active part of the experience creating something they value together. Using common language, symbols and metaphors that evoke positive emotion also help bring people together (Senge, 1994, page 512).

1. "Our organization should go beyond personal loyalty to include a commitment to making societal changes." Eighty-two percent of the young successful leaders state that it is important for them to contribute to the well being of society. A clear majority is of the opinion that companies should be more socially responsible. One of the key factors for future leaders will thus be the ability to develop organizations and people with integrity and to act socially (Insight Lab AB, 1997, page 2).

10 & 11) These questions are designed to inquire whether the member center values customer and employee satisfaction.

12 & 13) These questions look at the community relationship and the market of the organization. Since Frankenmuth is a very cohesive community with a diverse market, it is
important to identify whether potential partners have a similar systematic view. Also, this question is designed as partially open-ended to introduce any new ideas for networking.

14) This question is a tool to identify the priorities of existing equestrian organizations.
CHAPTER IV
Findings and Analysis

Question one asked the respondents to indicate their job title and responsibilities. Program directors made up the majority of the respondents answering the questionnaire at 49%. Another 20% were the organization’s executive director and 18% were instructors. A small percentage, 14%, of the respondents were board members, and the least number of respondents, 9%, were the owner/CEO of the facility (chart 1a). Respondents often gave more than one answer, meaning they held more than one position in the organization. Primary responsibilities of the respondents included all aspects of operating the organization and its’ programs.

Question two asked respondents to indicate the appropriate member category, checking all answers that apply. The largest majority, 62%, of the respondent is an operating center member. This is followed by 37% of the members belonging to the individual/life member category. Only 1% of the respondents belong are spirit club members and less than 1% are allied members (chart 1b).

Question three asked the NARHA operating centers to indicate the number of certified instructors at their facility in each of the three possible instructor categories. There is a majority of registered instructors, at 76%. Only 21% have instructors in the advanced level, and only 3% have a master level instructor at their member center.

Question four asked respondents to state their center’s NARHA accreditation status. The majority, nearly 50%, of the respondents is a member only center. This is followed closely by 40% of the respondents in the accredited member category. A small percentage, 13%, belonged to NARHA less than one year and are yet eligible for accreditation (chart 1c).
Question five asked respondents to indicate those special interest sections they belong. The Equine-Facilitated Mental Health Association has 43% of NARHA members and the American Hippotherapy Association has 42%. Only 14% are members of the Competition Association of NARHA.

Question six looked at the center’s organizational structure. Forty-six percent of shared ownership/partnership use a team approach to decision making. By combining this with the number of single owners who also use a team approach to decision making, which was 23%, a total of 69% use a team approach to decision making. When looking at single owners, 5% make all decisions and 7% with a shared ownership/partnership make all decisions. Although board of directors was not a category selection, a significant number, 20%, wrote-in that the organizational structure of their center falls into this category.

Question seven asked respondents to indicate the percentage of programs they offer programs for people with disabilities and without disabilities. Of the 155 centers that indicated they offer programs for people with disabilities, 69% (108) said that 90% or more of their clients are disabled. Of the 79 centers that indicated they offer programs for the able-bodied, 63% (50) state that 30% or fewer of their clients are able-bodied.

Question eight asked respondents to look at 100% of the riders at their facility, both therapeutic riders and others, and asked respondents to divide the riders into categories. Their answers to this question ranged from .5% to 99% in each age group. For 104, or 74%, of the 141 centers that offer programs to clients that are 8 years old and younger, this age group makes up less than 30% of their members. For 127, or 83%, of the 153 member centers that offer programs to client’s ages 9 - 15 years old, this age category represents 50% or fewer of their clients. For 80, or 62%, of the 129 member centers that offer programs to client’s ages 16 - 25 years old, this
age category represents 20% or fewer of their clients. For 83, or 69%, of the 121 member centers that offer programs to client’s ages 26 - 50 years old, this age category represents 20% or fewer of their clients. For 57, or 87%, of the 66 member centers that offer programs to client’s ages 51 - 65 years old, this age category represents 10% or fewer of their clients. For all 31 or 100% member centers that offer programs to client’s ages 66 years old and older, this age category represents 10% or fewer of their clients.

Question nine asked respondents to indicate their opinion regarding the following twelve statements using five choices, from strongly agree to strongly disagree. When asked if there are no teachers, only guides with different areas of influence, the answers were split between agreeing, 26.8% and disagreeing, 28.7%; an almost even number, 22.6%, indicated they were uncertain (chart 2). When asked if it is important to offer programs that are adaptable to various learning styles an overwhelming majority agreed, at 87.6% (chart 3). When asked whether it is important to create a balance between cooperation and competition with similar businesses, the majority of the respondents either strongly agreed, 36.8% or agreed, 38% (chart 4). When asked whether organizational goal setting must include individual goal setting by every employee and volunteer, 40.7% agreed and 25% strongly agreed (chart 5). When asked whether scenario planning is an important part of their organizational system, 58% agreed and 30.8% strongly agreed (chart 6). When asked if employees should dig beneath the surface of recurring problems and uncover the forces that are producing them, even at the risk of identifying the need for significant organizational changes, 51.2% agreed and 40.6% strongly agreed (chart 7). When given the statements, “Uncertainty and lack of control are useful resources for new learning,” 29.4% disagreed and almost the same amount, 28.8% were uncertain (chart 8). When asked whether objectives should be hard and fast and clearly stated for all to see, 39.9% agreed and
25% disagreed, followed closely by the 21.4% that were uncertain (chart 9). The question of whether employees should, at all times, be able to make decisions that benefit the organization and its customers showed that 47.6% agree and 22.9% feel strongly about it (chart 10). When asked whether self-reflection is essential to learning, 53.8% strongly agree (chart 11). Thirty-nine percent are not certain whether rituals and symbols make emotions and feelings assessable, but almost the same amount, 37.3% agree (chart 12). Lastly, 44% agree that their organization should go beyond personal loyalty to include a commitment to making societal changes (chart 13).

Question ten asked respondents to indicate their primary measurement of customer satisfaction. Forty percent rely on repeat business and 38% believe that they know their customers and clients. Only 12% of the respondents use a formal written survey to measure customer satisfaction (chart 14).

Question eleven asked respondents how they measure employee and volunteer satisfaction. The majority, 52.2% use a non-formal approach, with another 24.2% relying on employee tenure. Only 18.8% of the respondents use a formal review process (chart 15).

Question twelve asked respondents whether their facility cooperates with other organizations, checking all that apply. The largest number, 30% indicated that they belong to service clubs such as Rotary, Lions or Jaycees. This was followed closely by 23% that belong to the chamber of commerce. Nineteen percent belong to or participate in 4-H activities and 15% are member of a church or another religious organization.

Question thirteen asked respondents whether their facility participates in various activities. Thirty-five involved in outreach to schools and another 30% participate in school field trips.
Question fourteen was the only open-ended question. It asked respondents to identify the single most important thing to consider when evaluating the potential success of a new equestrian program. The majority of the responses could be called “soft skills” with people indicating things like, “dedicated/motivated/experienced instructors,” to “client satisfaction” and harder business skills such as “financial backing.” The highest single response (which was worded the same) was “safety” with 30 people indicating that as the single most important thing to consider.

One hundred and one of the respondents indicated they would like a copy of the results of the survey.

The Equine Facilitated Mental Health Association (EFMHA) is a special interest section of NARHA. Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy is an experimental treatment approach within the therapy classification of therapeutic riding that provides the client with opportunities to enhance self-awareness and re-pattern maladaptive behaviors, feelings, and attitudes. EFMHA members reflect a higher than average propensity for a learning organization philosophy, the average score of all surveys is an eight, EFMHA members have an average score of nine point five.
CHAPTER V

Conclusions and Recommendations

The research hypothesis was stated as: Potential partners with a learning organization philosophy are currently members of NARHA. The results indicate that there are NARHA members that possess a learning organization philosophy, and therefore, might desire to become partners of an equestrian learning center in Frankenmuth, MI.

Specifically, the research indicates that in each learning organization question a majority agree with the philosophy. In fact, 67% of the answers from all twelve questions were answered affirmatively with either strongly agree or agree; almost half of those, 29% were in the strongly agree category.

In an effort to cultivate these potential relationships, my first step will be to respond to the 101 NARHA members that requested the survey results. A key component of the article will be an appeal for those equine organizations that are interested in pursuing the idea of an organization like WLC to contact me. An article detailing the results and explaining the questions will be submitted to NARHA for inclusion in their membership newsletter. If they agree to include an unedited article, then each responding member will receive a postcard thanking them for their participation and signaling them to watch for the appropriate newsletter. If NARHA does not agree to publish the unedited results, then a copy of the information will be sent to each member that participated in the survey.
Recommendations

Establishing a closer working relationship with the membership organization, in this case NARHA, could improve the accuracy of the questions that relate to the organization. For example, question #6 asked each member center to indicate the organizational structure. Twenty percent or 34 of the centers indicated they are run by a board of directors as a non-profit organization. If NARHA had taken the time to review the questions more closely, the survey could have been changed to reflect a more accurate picture of the possible organizational structures. Additionally, they might have pointed out a problem with question 9 g that stated, “uncertainty and the lack of control and are useful resources for new learning.” This statement is valid as a measurement of a learning organization philosophy, but the results are skewed because of the importance of safety when dealing with animals. This is confirmed by both written comments next to the question and the fact that the largest single answer to question #14, with 30 reporting that safety is the “most important thing to consider when evaluating the potential success of a new equestrian program.”

Secondly, and of interest, thirty-five respondents (20%) made comments near their answers, to explain or as if to justify their response. It makes one wonder what the results would reflect if the research had used a different approach, such as interviews or a focus group.

Thirdly, since the ultimate measurement of whether this report has been successful is the creation an organization such as the WLC Learning Center, the question becomes what is the next step in the process? The most meaningful recommendations are somewhere in the future. Consideration should be given to implementing a similar survey of training organizations and leadership facilitators that might be interested in potential equestrian partners.
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Chart 1A. Job Titles and Primary Responsibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Director</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Member</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner/CEO</td>
<td>8.8</td>
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</table>

Chart 1B. Member Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual/Life Member</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating Center Member</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit Club Member</td>
<td>1.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allied Member</td>
<td>0.8</td>
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</table>

Chart 1C. NARHA Accreditation Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accreditation Status</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accredited Member Center</td>
<td>40.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Member Only Centers</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NARHA Member less than 1 Yr</td>
<td>13.1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Chart 2. No teachers, only guides

Chart 3. Programs are adaptable to learning styles

Chart 4. Balance between cooperation and competition
Chart 5. Individual goals setting important

Chart 6. Scenario planning is important

Chart 7. Employees open to identification of change
Chart 8. Uncertainty and lack of control

Chart 9. Objectives clearly stated

Chart 10. Decisions to benefit entire organization
Chart 11. Self-reflection is essential

Chart 12. Rituals and symbols are important

Chart 13. Go beyond personal loyalty for change
Chart 14. Measurements of Customer Satisfaction

Chart 15. Measure Employee/Volunteer Satisfaction
APPENDIX

Tracy Weber
6 Mission Ridge
Frankenmuth, MI 48734
tweber@journey.com

January 26, 1999

Amy Newson, Membership Director
North American Riding for the Handicapped Association
PO Box 33150
Denver, CO 80233

Dear Amy:

I am a graduate student at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) researching equestrian training and education programs. As part of my thesis project, I would like to survey NARHA members using the attached questionnaire and cover letter. As you can see, the first set of questions (1-8) categorizes the facility and the programs they offer; question 9 is designed to uncover data about the center’s organizational philosophy; and the last group of questions (10-14) looks at how the center measures satisfaction and their relationship with their community.

In order to ensure a valid sample of 100-150 completed surveys, I would like to send the questionnaire to 350 NARHA centers, randomly selecting centers from your mailing list. So that there is no cost to participating members, in addition to the survey, recipients will receive a return envelope that is self-addressed and stamped. I plan to ask members to return the completed survey in approximately two weeks from receiving it in the mail; at this point I’m assuming near the end of February. Since this survey is a critical source of information for my investigation, I would be happy to send results, at no charge, to any member that would like to receive a copy.

Regardless of your response to my request, to show my support of your organization and its mission of bringing equine activities to individuals with disabilities, enclosed please find my membership form and check. I will call you next week to see if it possible for me to purchase labels of NARHA members. If you would like to contact me, please do so by calling (517) 652-8552 or my email address is tweber@journey.com Thank you sincerely for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Tracy Weber

Enclosure: cover letter and questionnaire
Dear NARHA Member Center:

My name is Tracy Weber and I am a graduate student at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). As part of my master’s degree I am researching equestrian training and education programs. I randomly selected your name from the NARHA membership list to help me. Please take the few minutes necessary to answer the 14 multiple choice questions on the attached page (front and back). There are no “right” or “wrong” answers; simply select the answer that most closely represents your opinion. Your answers are confidential, although the results from all completed surveys will be available, at no charge, to interested NARHA members.

Please use the enclosed stamped, self addressed envelope to return the survey to me by March 4, 1999.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Appreciatively,

Tracy Weber
6 Mission Ridge
Frankenmuth, MI 48734
NARHA Questionnaire

1) Please indicate your job title and list your primary responsibilities: ____________________________

2) Please check the appropriate member category (check all that apply): □ Individual/Life Member
   □ Operating Center Member    □ Spirit Club Member    □ Allied Member

3) As a NARHA Operating Center, please indicate the number of certified instructors that your facility has in each of the following categories:
   ____ Registered Level    ____ Advanced Level    ____ Master Level

4) Please check the answer that most closely resembles your center’s NARHA accreditation status:
   □ Accredited Member Center  □ Member Only Center  □ NARHA member less than one year and not yet eligible for accreditation

5) In addition to your NARHA membership, please check those special interest sections you belong to:
   □ American Hippotherapy Association  □ Competition Association of NARHA
   □ Equine-Facilitated Mental Health Association

6) Please check the following that most closely describes your center’s organizational structure:
   □ A single owner making all decisions.
   □ A single owner, with a team approach to decision making.
   □ Shared ownership/partnership or other, with owners making all decisions.
   □ Shared ownership/partnership or other, with a team approach to decision making.

7) If your center offers programs for people with disabilities and without disabilities, please indicate the percentage of programs you offer to these two groups:
   ____ People with disabilities    ____ People without disabilities

8) Looking at 100% of the riders at your facility, both therapeutic riders and others, please divide your riders into the following age categories:
   ____% are 8 years old and younger  ____% are 9 - 15 years old  ____% are 16 - 25 years old
   ____% are 26 - 50 years old  ____% are 51 - 65 years old  ____% are 66 years old and older

9) Please indicate your opinion regarding the following twelve statements using SA to Strongly Agree; A to Agree; U if you are Uncertain; D to Disagree and SD to Strongly Disagree:
   a) There are no teachers, only guides with different areas of influence. □ SA  □ A  □ U  □ D  □ SD
   b) It is important to offer programs that are adaptable to various learning styles.
      □ SA  □ A  □ U  □ D  □ SD
   c) It is important to create a balance between cooperation and competition with similar businesses:
      □ SA  □ A  □ U  □ D  □ SD
d) Organizational goal setting must include individual goal setting by every employee and volunteer.
   □SA □A □U □D □SD

e) Imagining and anticipating possible futures, often called “scenario planning,” is an important part of our organizational system. □SA □A □U □D □SD

f) Employees should dig beneath the surface of recurring problems and uncover the forces that are producing them, even at the risk of identifying the need for significant organizational changes. □SA □A □U □D □SD

g) Uncertainty and lack of control are useful resources for new learning. □SA □A □U □D □SD

h) Objectives should be hard and fast and clearly stated for all to see. □SA □A □U □D □SD

i) Employees should, at all times, be able to make decisions that benefit the organization and its customers. □SA □A □U □D □SD

j) Self-reflection is essential to learning. □SA □A □U □D □SD

k) Rituals and symbols make emotions and feelings assessable and therefore are an important part of the programs offered through our organization. □SA □A □U □D □SD

l) Our organization should go beyond personal loyalty to include a commitment to making societal changes. □SA □A □U □D □SD

10) Which is your primary measurement of customer satisfaction: □ A formal written survey
   □ Repeat business □ Non-formally, we know our customers/clients □ Other, please explain

11) How do you measure employee/volunteer satisfaction? □ Formal evaluations
   □ Non-formal reviews □ Employee tenure □ Other, please explain

12) Does your facility cooperate with any of the following organizations (check all that apply):
   □ Chamber of Commerce □ Service Clubs (Rotary, Lions, Jaycees, etc.) □ 4-H
   □ Junior Achievement □ Church or another religious organization
   Other organizations:

13) Does your facility participate in the following (check all that apply): □ school field trips
   □ group tour destination (motorcoaches/buses) □ camp/overnighters
   □ outreach programs to schools □ training for businesses/corporations

14) In your opinion, what is the single most important thing to consider when evaluating the potential success of a new equestrian program:

THANK YOU! Please return this survey, and if available, a brochure or information about your center, in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you would like to receive a copy of the results from this survey, (I sent it to 350 NARHA member centers) please check here: □