Observation of Leadership Styles during Swift Water River Rescue Course

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# Outdoor Adventure 1

**Directing**

On September 13th, the second day of the Swift Water River Rescue Technician course, Matt Cuccaro lead hole swimming training at 7/8 hole. This activity required students to swim aggressively into the hole with the goal of getting stuck so that they might learn how to escape. Matt first explained the different ways to escape the hole; either swimming out to the side, or curling oneself up into a ball in order to be pushed out with the current underneath. After explaining the situation, Matt proceeded to demonstrate how to swim in the hole. He then returned to the students, and guided each of them individually as they attempted the swim. The style of leadership that Matt used in this situation was directing, which was extremely appropriate as the students had very little experience with hole swimming and many were not comfortable with the idea. As the students swam, Matt talked them through step by step. The ability of the students was very low and although the risk was not high (being that another instructor was in a kayak as a safety, and the hole was not very large), Matts direction and guidance gave the students confidence. This situation was task oriented and therefore his instruction was necessarily for the success of the students. There was also a fair amount of time for Matt to spend with each student to make them feel safe in the situation.

**Selling**

On day one of the Swift Water River Rescue Technician course (September 12th 2017), Alex lead the students through several activities on how to safely cross a stream. This took place early in the morning, at a relatively shallow stream (the river rising at most to the participants waists), which had a light current. Although the risk factor might have seemed low, as a shallow stream does not seem intimidating for most, the likelihood of foot entrapments was quite high. Knowing the level of risk, along with the ability and confidence of the students, Alex choose the leadership style of selling in this situation. The participants were still very much apart of the discussion but Alex was still in control, he allowed them their freedom within certain boundaries, in a sense. He only had a certain amount of time and a lot of possible methods to discuss. This was the appropriate style of leadership for the situation because the students had a goal to achieve but the risk was not extremely high. It allowed the guides in training to feel safe and confident in their abilities. The leadership style was based on task behaviour with the goal of crossing the stream safely.

**Participating**

On the final day of the River Rescue course, and during the final activity block of the day, Adam used the leadership style of participating to teach the use of throw bags. Now the guides in training already had previous experience with the throw bags from the day before, and their ability to use the ropes was steadily increasing. Many of the students were becoming quite confident when it came to throwing the bags. Since it was the last activity of the day, the group had plenty of time to practice, so Adam jumped into the water to pretend to be a victim. By grabbing a rope then proceeding to let go a few seconds later while calling out for another rope, Adam taught the guides that they needed to act fast in rescue situations. At the time Adam being in the water made the guides in training feel like they were playing a game, and therefore he made the learning experience much more enjoyable for everyone. It was the correct style of leadership to use in this situation because the risk was very low, everyone was in a safe area at the bottom of the rapid. There was very little potential for harm and the ability of the student guides was quite high. In conclusion, Adam was able to maximize the learning experience while also maximizing the enjoyment with this leadership style of relationship behaviour.

**Delegating**

Betty used the leadership style of delegating when it came to teaching the guides in training how to do tethered swims. It was the second day of the river rescue course (September 13th 2017), and thus the students had already had experience swimming rapids and using throw bags, so they already had a solid base layer of skills required to give them a good grasp on the idea of tethered swims. After demonstrating a tethered swim with the help of a few students to anchor herself, Betty let the students lead themselves through the activity. The guides in training organized which one of them would preform what task, and communicated with each other to make sure things ran smoothly. This style was appropriate for the situation as the risk was relatively low, and the students were very willing to perform the given tasks. The guides in training demonstrated high enough skill for Betty to be able to stand to the side, observe, and help students in and out of the water.