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When it comes to facility challenges, your business requirements do not change

Working in collegiate athletics, periodically we can lose sight of the basic fact athletics generally operates as a university auxiliary unit. For all intent and purpose, we operate a standalone business partially subsidized by the university. We work within the university business model. At a minimum, the athletics business model generates revenue via our operations to couple with any university subsidy to become the revenue base from which we do the things we do. Athletics is a complex, highly visible campus unit. It goes without stating, athletics becomes synonymous with being the “front porch” of the university.

Sitting on the front porch if you will, in our roles as athletics business officers, we find ourselves constantly trying to balance our budgets, stretching revenue as far as it can go to balance with expenses, known and unknown. It never fails that something arises that stresses our balancing act. Athletics facilities

can become one of the areas that cause budget stress. Let the “facility arms race” exit your mind. That is a whole other topic for discussion. We may find ourselves in situations that require immediate attention, crisis if you will. More often than not, that situation involves one of our facilities. Once the annual budget is set, it is very hard to adjust our budgets midstream. What do you do when facilities have problems, or a crisis, once the fiscal year has started? You help find a solution by getting yourself to the table, listening, offering feedback, and helping facilitate a sound resolution.

First, our department responsibility is to provide financial information to the department. In times of crisis, this responsibility does not go away. I have found that consistently providing sound business insight or logic during normal operations will help increase your departmental value in times of crisis. Be ready to lend your input when you get to the table.

When you are called to “the table”, listen first, talk second. Everybody at the table, or in the meeting, has interest in the resolution. Understand what everyone’s interest is. In crisis management, many times the final resolution may not take on sound business logic, but it may be all you have, especially when it comes to facilities and/or facility operations. Yes, this resolution will affect your valued budget.

Offer feedback during the meeting. You are not there to fill the room. You are there because your input is valued. Your feedback needs to remain in your responsible area. Again, as business officers, our area is the financial impact. What is the financial impact of the crisis? The facility crisis you face could have long-term effects on your department’s ability to generate the required revenue for the business model. Your value lies in your ability to explain, understand, and offset any negative financial impact a facility crisis may have for the department. Think ahead!

Finally, you are responsible for implementing and facilitating the final resolution. You may face closing a facility for safety concerns. It does not matter if you are in-season, out of season, home, traveling, or whatever. Public safety is always first when it comes to athletics facilities. Your ability to think ahead gives you the foundation to walk through required financial planning. If you need contractors to work, what is the process on your campus when it comes to contracting, or with whom do you contract? If purchases are necessary, how are emergency purchases completed on your campus? You will become the point person with other campus units implementing any resolution. The business piece is your responsibility in times of crisis. Prepare yourself!

We never expect a crisis to arise, let alone with facilities. However, as the business officer, more importantly a valued athletics department staff member, any crisis will affect you. Your value to the department hinges on your ability to react.



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