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National Football League Combine

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**CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, ST. PAUL: ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA: DEPARTMENT
OF KINESIOLOGY AND HEALTH STUDIES**

National Football League Combine

**A GRADUATE PROJECT
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts Degree in Sport Management**

by

Ricardo Jones

St. Paul, Minnesota

June 23, 2015

Dedications

I would like to dedicate this project to my lovely wife and handsome son.

Abstract

The NFL Combine is an annual event where potential professional football players get the opportunity to interview with professional teams. The combine is an invite-only event where the athletes prepare for weeks and months before the actual event. This paper discussed the marketing plan of the NFL Combine with a goal to market to current and new football fans across the globe. This paper also covered strategies that will be used to retain employees along with a feedback process. A risk management plan was included to protect participants and employees. This risk management plan also included a contingency plan in case issues occur. Ethics in sports has been an issue in multiple sports and the NFL Combine is no exception. This paper discussed the ethical issues related to the NFL Combine. The final chapter discussed my history as a student, father, and leader. The final chapter also discussed my five-year plan and my goals moving forward.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This Capstone will be tailored to the NFL Combine. The National Football League (NFL) is a very large and financially healthy organization that provides entertainment for many people throughout the United States. According to the NFL website, the organization's mission statement is, "To provide our fans, communities, and partners the highest quality sports and entertainment in the world, and to do so in a way that is consistent with our values" ("Mission and Values," 2015).

The NFL is a place that hires extremely talented young men to compete against other extremely talented men in the sport of American football. Prior to hiring these talented athletes out of college, the NFL will take its potential candidates through a series of verbal and physical tests to determine if they are fit enough to participate at the highest level of football. Similar to other hiring processes, the NFL will interview, poke, and prod these young men before allowing them to enter the yearly NFL draft. The NFL draft is a place where teams select new football players for the respective organizations. Prior to the draft, NFL teams evaluate players for several years while playing college football. In addition to scouting and game evaluation, the NFL offers multiple opportunities for prospects to show off their skills in front of NFL coaches and executives. One of these opportunities is the NFL Combine. NFL teams will interview and workout a select number of college athletes. The Combine is currently taking place at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, Indiana at the home of the Indianapolis Colts and home of the 2015 NCAA Final Four. According to the overview section of the Lucas Oil Stadium website, "Lucas Oil Stadium is the site of Super Bowl XLVI, the 2011-2015 Big Ten Championship Games, and the NCAA Men's Final Four Basketball Championship again in 2015 after hosting this event in 2010" ("About," 2012).

History

Since 1982, the NFL has provided the Combine for teams to hire new employees to play football in the NFL. Scouting is critical to the development and progress of every NFL team. The NFL Combine is an annual event that takes place in the first quarter of the year after the NFL season. The team executives use this event to evaluate athletes they are interested in. Over the years the Combine has proven to be an exciting tool for fans and coaches. As a member of the NFL Combine staff, the goal is to provide the best environment possible for college athletes to show their skills in front of these potential employers. Structure, integrity, and accessibility are the main objectives for the Combine. A priority of the NFL Combine is that all parties have a great memorable experience.

The NFL Scouting Combine began in 1982 and conducted its first camp in Tampa Bay, Florida. The camp remained in Florida for the first three years. According to the history section of the Scouting Combine website, “However, in 1985 all 28 NFL teams decided they would participate in future National Invitational Camps with the goal of sharing cost for the medical examinations of draft eligible players” (“Scouting Combine,” 2014). The Combine moved to New Orleans, Louisiana in 1984 for two years and then moved to Arizona for one year. “After brief stints in New Orleans (1984, 1986) and Arizona (1985) the camp was moved to Indianapolis, Indiana where it has been operated since 1987” (“Scouting Combine,” 2014).

Chapter Two: Event Introduction

Once the NFL Combine moved to Indianapolis in 1987, event organizers held its event at the RCA Dome. The RCA Dome was the venue for the Combine until 2008. The Indianapolis Colts and the City of Indianapolis built a new stadium in 2008, which opened its door to the Combine and the Indianapolis Colts in August of that year. The new facility was named Lucas Oil Stadium. According to the Wikipedia definition of the RCA Dome, the new retractable-roof stadium, Lucas Oil Stadium replaced the RCA Dome just in time for the 2008 NFL season. The vacant space caused by the RCA Dome was replaced by additional space for the Indiana Convention Center. The additional space will eventually connect the Indiana Convention Center to Lucas Oil Stadium (“RCA Dome,” 2015).

Agreement

The NFL picked the City of Indianapolis to host the NFL Combine for a couple of reasons. “After one year in Arizona and a return to New Orleans, it came to Indianapolis in 1987 because it was centrally located and had a domed stadium” (Chappell, 2014, para. 9). According to Jeff Foster, President of National Football Scouting Inc., the agreement to host the Combine in Indianapolis has been year to year. The National Football Scouting Committee did not see a reason to leave the city and they hoped to continue to have the Combine in Indianapolis as long as they can. The agreement was made with a handshake and that was all that was needed. The NFL owners were programmed to come to Indianapolis every year to do business, stay in the hotels and enjoy how easy it is for the visitors to get around (Chappell, 2014).

Convenience

Lucas Oil Stadium is very convenient for its visitors and NFL Combine participants. The stadium offers connecting hotels, food places, and many attractions that can entertain invitees during their stay. The centrally located stadium is located in downtown Indianapolis that helps with the participant transportation cost. “With over 5,000 hotel rooms, 200 restaurants and 50 attractions within walking distance of the center, attendees can walk while convening. Indy’s walk-ability keeps transportation cost down” (“Green Initiatives,” 2014).

Features

Lucas Oil Stadium is an award winning state-of-the-art facility with the amenities and space to host this exciting event. “Lucas Oil Stadium is a state-of-the-art retractable roof, multi-purpose facility seating over 67,000 fans while featuring spectacular views of downtown Indianapolis skyline” (“Lucas Oil Stadium,” 2012, para. 1). The stadium has more backstage space than any other NFL stadium. Lucas Oil Stadium has 11 indoor truck docks, 12 meeting rooms, and 44,000 square feet of exhibit space. The stadium can accommodate a large NFL event. A connection from Lucas Oil Stadium to the Indiana Convention Center and 12 hotels makes the stadium a one-stop spot for the NFL Combine participants and spectators. The NFL Combine Administrators can fly in its participants and keep them in one spot for the week. The NFL will use the hotels for the invited athletes and team scouts. Team officials will also use the meeting rooms connected to the stadium for the individual meetings that will take place between the team representatives and participants.

Facility Utilization

The NFL Combine organizers will use everything the stadium has to offer. The on-field test will be conducted inside of the enclosed stadium on its turf field. It will use its seven locker rooms for the invited participants. The stadium is centrally located and is connected to hotels to house 335 draft-eligible players that are invited to the Combine. The hotels will house about 60 NFL representatives. “Each of the NFL’s 32 teams are represented by about 60 individuals- more than 1,900 in all- including general managers, head coaches, assistants and various medical personnel” (Chappell, 2014, para. 7). The Combine will also use the East Club Lounge inside of the stadium for players and NFL personnel. “Lucas Oil Stadium’s spacious East Club Lounge serves as a workroom/ interview area for the 335 draft-eligible players invited to the combine” (Chappell, 2014, para. 6).

Environmentally Friendly

Leadership from the City of Indianapolis, the Convention Center, and Lucas Oil Stadium has worked together to offer Green Initiatives. Some of the leadership initiatives include a recycle program. According to the Green Initiatives of the Indiana Convention Center and Lucas Oil Stadium, “Overall objectives of the program identified recyclables, developed and implemented a holistic recycling education campaign, increased awareness of recycling options, and increase recycling tonnage and improve the facility’s environmental impact” (“Green Initiatives,” 2014, para. 2). In 2010 the stadium recycled 60 tons of cans, glass, cardboard, and plastic bottles from NFL games, the NFL Combine, big meetings, and expos. It can be perceived that this effort has contributed to the overall environment of the City of Indianapolis.

Expenses

The financial resources needed to host the NFL Combine can be costly for NFL teams. “The teams share the \$2 million expense of transporting, housing, feeding and medically evaluating the players, along with footing the bill to send their own delegations” (Clarke, n.d.). One of major expenses examined was the food for participants. There are about 300-college football players invited to the NFL Combine each year. Players that were invited to the Combine stay for three days. According to research specifying meal allowance to NFL players. It cost the NFL Combine organizers approximately \$104 per day to feed Combine participants (Gordon, 2013). It cost the NFL Combine organizers \$312 to feed one player for three days at the Combine. It cost the NFL Combine organizers \$96,600 to feed 300 athletes for three days at this scouting event.

Another major expense was plane tickets. Round trip plane tickets vary from state to state. According to research specifying round trip airline tickets from Minneapolis to Indianapolis, plane tickets average about \$380 (“Travelocity,” n.d.). It cost the NFL \$114,000 to purchase 300 round trip tickets for Combine participants.

It has been a challenge to get information about renting Lucas Oil Stadium, home of the NFL Combine. Research specifying the rental fee for a domed stadium similar to Lucas Oil Stadium detailed a cost of approximately \$47,500 per day. It would cost NFL Combine organizers \$190,000 to rent a dome stadium similar to Lucas Oil Stadium (“Rate Schedule 3,” 2014). (See Appendix A).

Conclusion

Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, IN. is a great city and venue to host the NFL Combine. “Conversely, the city sees every reason for the NFL combine to remain on its calendar of visiting events” (Chappell, 2014. para. 12). Lucas Oil Stadium offers everything that is needed for the event remain successful. It speaks volumes that the Combine has remained in the City of Indianapolis for the past 28 years. All the planning and improvements that have been added to the organization and management of the event have made it hard for organizers to move to another city. It would be understandable to see the NFL Combine remain in Indianapolis for many years to come.

Chapter Three: Marketing Plan

Chapter Three of this Capstone project features the 2016 NFL Combine marketing plan. The marketing plan will serve as a road map for Combine organizers. The marketing team will use a 10-step process to develop a plan to match the mission of the NFL (“Mission and Values,” 2015).

Purpose

The marketing plan purpose for the 2016 NFL Combine is similar to the mission statement of the NFL. The mission of the NFL is to provide the highest quality sports and entertainment in the world (“Mission and Values,” 2015). The purpose of the marketing plan is to attract the largest audience possible to watch this televised four-day event and provide the highest quality entertainment in the world. The plan will create new and exciting ways for fans to experience the NFL Combine through television media and technology.

Product

The core product is the event itself and the activities that take place during the Combine. The ultimate goal of the marketing plan in 2016 is to market the NFL Combine to all NFL and non-NFL fans across the globe. In order to watch the combine, fans and casual spectators will need access to one of the NFL media outlets. The two outlets offered during the 2015 NFL Combine were the NFL Network and online streaming through Verizon NFL Mobile (“Sharp,” 2015). The NFL Combine is a testing ground for NFL teams to test the athletic ability of potential NFL employees. At the event, coaches, and evaluators take the invited athletes through a series of interviews and test that include but not limited to a 40-yard dash, position skill drills, vertical, broad jump, three-cone, and shuttle drills. “Aside from the position skill drill, the

prospects are measured and timed in several different test: 40-yard dash, vertical leap, broad jump, 3-cone drill and shuttle drill” (Sharp, 2015, para.3).

Project Market

Prior to the 2016 NFL Combine, event organizers will examine the market conditions by using a SWOT analysis. A SWOT analysis consists of four elements. The four elements are strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Strengths are internal factors that can help the organization achieve marketing goals. Weaknesses are internal factors that may prevent the organization from achieving marketing goals. Opportunities are external conditions that can help the organization achieve marketing goals and threats are negative conditions in the environment that can prevent the organization from achieving marketing goals. Below you will find some of factors identified in the SWOT analysis (see Appendix C).

Strengths:

- Supported financially by the NFL
- Expanding NFL fan base
- Excellent venue
- Support from host city
- Prepared athletes

Weaknesses

- Overworked employees and volunteers
- Uninterested fan base
- Inaccurate testing data

- Unprepared athletes
- NFL lockouts

Opportunities

- Technology
- Fantasy football partnerships
- Expanding fan base
- NFL pre-season excitement
- International sponsor opportunities

Threats

- Competing sports
- Terroristic threats
- War
- Extreme weather
- TV & Wi-Fi blackouts

Position

The NFL Combine has done a great job establishing its brand in the minds of the fans. The NFL shield is an established logo that represents the most popular sport in America. “Pro football is the most popular sport in America for at least the 30th straight year. That’s according to a survey taken this month by the Harris Poll, which has been asking adult fans, ages 18 and over, about their favorite sport since 1985” (Rovell, 2014, para.1). Under Armour united with the NFL to establish a logo that will continue to promote the NFL Combine. The NFL Combine

logo is displayed on the NFL network during football related programming. NFL Network consumers will view NFL Combine advertisement during aired programs. “Since 2009, UA has sponsored the NFL Scouting Combine: an invitation-only event where 300 to 350 of the country’s top draft prospects run the 40-yard dash, lift weights and complete other athletic drills” (McCarthy, 2012).

Pick Players

One goal for the 2016 NFL Combine organizers is to capitalize on a target market that has already been established by the NFL. The NFL has a growing fan base and the increase in viewership during the combine is proof that targeting the NFL fans is the correct group to market to. There are very few fans allowed inside of the facility to watch the combine. Only coaches, scouts, and executives get the opportunity to actually watch athletes perform in person.

NFL coaches, scouts, executives and a few lucky fans may have been the only ones allowed inside Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis to witness the *2013 NFL Scouting Combine Presented by Under Armour*, but the NFL Media delivered the event to a record audience around the world (Kondoljy, 2013).

Many fans take advantage of the other opportunities to watch the combine since they are not allowed into the stadium. NFL fans go to other NFL media platforms.

A record high total of 7.25 million viewers watched coverage of the *2013 NFL Scouting Combine Presented by Under Armour* on NFL Network over the four days (Saturday, Feb. 23 –Tuesday, Feb. 26, live and re-air telecasts) – topping last year’s 6.51 million total viewers by +11%, according to The Nielsen Company (Kondoljy, 2013).

Viewership not only increased on the NFL network but it also increased digitally. “On the

digital front, for the week of Feb. 20-26, unique users to NFL.com and NFL Mobile, including *NFL Mobile From Verizon*, grew 33% to over 10 million (10.1M vs. 7.6M). Video content was especially popular for fans following the combine online and on their smartphones. Video streams of Combine Live were up 89% (3.6M vs. 1.9M), with audience up 21% (1.4M vs. 1.2M) and Total Minutes up 35% (18.6M vs. 13.8M). (*All % growth vs. 2012*)” (Kondolojy, 2013).

Package

Year after year the popularity of the NFL entices more fans to watch the NFL Combine. “While many skeptics doubted that the combine would ever work as a TV show, 6.51 million people tuned in to coverage last year, up from 5.2 million in 2010 and 3.7 million in 2007” (Breer, 2013, para. 6). Fans are attracted to the NFL Combine because they are able to keep tabs on their favorite college players and professional teams. Fans of fantasy football leagues will tune in to watch the next rising star of the NFL. “Other than coaches general managers and scouts, who makes time in the middle of the day to devote to projecting a kids future? The answer won’t surprise anybody with a fantasy football team. For them, the combine has become much-see TV” (Litke, 2015). In 2016, the NFL teams and Combine organizers will offer viewing parties in all 32 NFL cities. The viewing parties will be similar to viewing parties offered during the NFL draft. Football fans will have the opportunity to get together with other football fans and do their own evaluating in their teams stadium or designated area.

Price

The NFL Combine does not sell tickets to watch the Combine inside of Lucas Oil Stadium. Fans will watch the combine from the comfort of their own homes, personal electronic devices, viewing parties, and/or local establishments. The viewing parties offered by the NFL

teams will charge a minimum fee to watch the Combine inside of the teams establishment or designated area.

Promotion

NFL Combine organizers will use a mixture of elements as a promotion strategy to entice football fans to watch the Combines four-day event. The promotion strategy is referred to as the promotional mix. Promotional mix elements include advertising, publicity, activities and inducements, community and media relations, personal selling, and sponsorship.

Advertising. The marketing team will place commercials ads during events like NFL pre-season and regular season games. The team will also use the NFL Playoffs, Super Bowl, and Pro Bowl to advertise for the Combine. During all of the mentioned events, the marketing team in conjunction with NFL teams will promote by using the scrolling signs at the NFL stadiums.

Publicity. News releases about participating athletes will help promote the 2016 NFL combine. Prior to the 2015 NFL Combine, participating athletes worked with former NFL coaches and college coaches. This type of publicity will help promote the 2016 Combine. “Prospective NFL Draft picks Jameis Winston and Bryce Petty are at the Michigan’s football facility, preparing for the NFL Draft Combine with Jim Harbaugh” (Duffy, 2015).

Promotional Activities. During the 2015 football season, NFL Combine organizers will offer reading material about past Combine participants. The reading material will feature football prayers that are participating in that particular game. For example, when the Minnesota Vikings host the Green Bay Packers on November 22, fans will have the opportunity to read material with Combine test results from the athletes that are playing in that game.

Public Relations. The week prior to the NFL Combine, organizers will offer a NFL Combine Fan Day. During the NFL Combine Fan Day, the public will get the opportunity to go through some of the same test that athletes will go through. For example, fans will have an opportunity to run a timed 40-yard dash. The test results will be posted next to the 2015 results for comparison.

Community Relations. Building and maintaining a positive relationship with the city of Indianapolis will remain a priority in 2016. Combine organizers will offer an autograph signing session. After the Combine participants finish their interviews and test, the athletes will be available to fans interested in meeting and getting an autograph.

Media Relations. During the 2016 NFL Combine, media personnel will have access to the Combine participants. The media will have reserved space at Lucas Oil Stadium. Media sessions will be scheduled into the four-day event. During media sessions, media representative will have opportunities to interview participants and coaches.

Personal Selling. NFL Combine organizers will use the Combine Fan Day to remind fans of the upcoming Combine date. The NFL Combine employees and volunteers will personally ask the participating fans about their experience at the Fan Day. This face-to-face communication will help organizers adjust the offered experiences, build personal relationships, and promote future Combine activities.

Sponsorship. In 2016, Under Armour will remain the official sponsor of the NFL Combine. Combine participant will use Under Armour products during the four-day event. As in years past, participants will use Under Armour shoes, socks, shirts, shorts and pants (“NFL Combine Authentic,” 2014). This plan will help companies like Under Armour promote their

brand and get exposure during this popular event. “Under Armour, recognizing the potential challenges in gaining prominent exposure for the brand during the draft, focused its efforts to gain consumer attention by building buzz at the NFL combine” (“NFL Draft Marketing,” 2012, para.5).

Place

The NFL Combine and Lucas Oil Stadium will remain closed to the public during testing and interviews. Fans will have the opportunity to meet participants during autograph sessions. In 2016, Combine fans will have the opportunity to visit viewing parties at their local team stadium.

Promise: Evaluation of Strategy and Tactics.

Measuring the success of the marketing plan will involve a few different evaluation ideas. NFL staffers will start by gathering television-rating data from the four-day Combine event. In 2016, Combine organizers will offer Twitter and Instagram accounts to invited athletes that participate at the Combine. NFL employees will examine how many new Twitter and Instagram followers were added after the announcement of the athlete’s participation. A NFL Combine Facebook page will be created and used to survey the fan experience. The information gathered will help organizers improve the event for the 2017 NFL Combine.

Conclusion

The data gathered from new ideas presented in the marketing plan will try to bring a new dimension to the NFL Combine. The plan will attempt to use technology to improve the fan and participant experience. Moving forward, the marketing plan will involve employees of the Combine and use technology to improve the overall experience of everyone involved.

Chapter Four: Employee/Volunteer Planning

The NFL Combine is a large event with multiple staff members/officials from many of the 32 NFL teams. Approximately 1,000 officials, from the 32 teams send front-office executive, coaches, scouts, and medical staff to evaluate Combine participants (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright, 2008). When new NFL Combine employees are hired, organizers will have strategies to train new employees and retain current employees. The managers at the NFL Combine will have a mentorship program to help the new employees get acclimated to this new work environment. New staffers will be partnered with veteran and returning employees. In the weeks prior to the event, all Combine employees will participate in this mentoring program. New staffers will get the opportunity to learn from the returning event workers. “Just while observing your mentees pick up many things: ethics, values and standards; style, beliefs and attitudes; methods and procedures.” (Wayne Hart, 2010, pg 1). Returning event workers will have the opportunity to display the leadership skills needed to train new employees. This environment is a win-win situation for all involved. “Many mentors enjoy the teaching aspects of mentoring, which mean not only imparting their knowledge but also sharing their experiences and recommending assignments” (Wayne Hart, 2010, pg. 1).

Company Perks

Managers of the event will also offer company perks to all event workers. One obvious perk is the event workers will have an opportunity to meet the future stars of the NFL. Managers will also provide tickets to games during the season. As staff members work hard to provide the best environment possible to these potential stars, the staff members will also get to see positive results throughout the season. If the staff know that their actions during the event could help or hurt the athletes test results and that they will have an opportunity to watch the athletes during

the season, the employees will hopefully do everything in their power to provide a five-star event.

Relaxation

The event managers will also offer relaxation rooms for event employees. The employees will be encouraged to use the relaxation rooms during the training weeks prior to the event and during the event. As mentioned earlier, the NFL Combine can be a stressful event for all involved. The relaxation rooms will be open to all employees during the week's events. The event workers will have breaks throughout the day. During breaks, the employees will have the opportunity to use the rooms for naps or whatever they choose. Some rooms will have televisions, video games, and pool tables.

Games are important in the break room for two reasons. First, they give people a chance to unwind and engage in an activity that doesn't stress them out. It helps relieve stress and promotes greater productivity when the employees go back to work. Second, if you offer a multiplayer game like foosball or billiards, it promotes bonding amongst your workers and leads to a stronger team mentality. (Demers, 2013).

Other rooms will have will have couches and napping areas. The message from the managers will be to work hard during the event. In return the managers will take care of the employees during breaks. "Create a room specifically for relaxing and meditation. Use feng shui in the room to ensure there is a good flow and atmosphere for all your employees" (Hopkin, 2013, pg. 1).

Scheduling

Managers will also offer some flexibility with scheduling. The event workers will have the schedule at least 10 months in advance. Managers will allow the event workers to set their

own schedule. The actual event only lasts for one week, but the flexibility will be used to attract the busiest employees. As long as the managers know how much and when employees are available to work, they can be flexible with scheduling. “According to CareerBuilder, 59% of employees value a flexible schedule more than a title...” (“What Motivates Employees,” 2013, pg.1).

Feedback

The final strategy used to motivate and retain high performing employees is offering a platform for employees to give feedback to the managers after the event. During the debrief session; managers will open the floor for all to share thoughts and opinions about the event. By allowing this open session, the employees will know that their opinions are valued and appreciated. “One way to inspire that feeling is to have each member of a team become familiar with what other team members are doing, allowing them to bring their ideas for improvement to the table and have input in the whole process” (Strauss, 2013, para. 4).

Conclusion

In conclusion of planning for the employees/volunteers necessary for a successful NFL Combine event, all employees and managers will know that the NFL Combine is a place where all workers are appreciated and valued. The event workers are there to provide the best atmosphere possible for the players and coaches. If the event workers know that they will be taken care of during the entire process, they will want to work hard and share the positive work environment with others.

Chapter Five: Risk Management Plan

Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, Indiana, has been host to the NFL Combine since 2009. The yearly event attracts nearly 1,900 individuals to Lucas Oil Stadium to participate in the Combine. “Each of the NFL’s 32 teams are represented by about 60 individuals-more than 1,900 in all-including general managers, head coaches, assistants and various medical personnel” (Chappell, 2014, para. 7). It is in the best interest of the NFL Combine committee members to ensure all participants are safe and protected. It is also important for committee members to be prepared for any unforeseen distractions or disruptions. To avoid unforeseen distractions, a risk management plan is needed to improve the chances of a great event. “Assessing and managing risk is the best weapon you have against project catastrophes. By evaluating your plan for potential problems and developing strategies to address them, you’ll improve your chances of a successful, if not perfect, project.” (Stanleigh, n.d., para. 15). According to the Business Improvement Architects website, in order to complete a risk analysis process, staffers will need to identify the risk, assess the risk, develop responses to the risk, develop a contingency plan, and design preventative measures for the risk (Stanleigh, n.d.).

Risk Management

Risk management has been defined as a process to identify, evaluate, analyze, and treat potential liabilities and review risk control and the financial resources to reduce the adverse effects of loss (“What Is Risk Management,” 2015). Developing the risk management plan, implementing the plan, and managing the plan (DIM), is used to establish an effective risk management program. When the D.I.M. process used as an anticipatory technique rather than as a reactionary procedure, this process will assist organizations in decreasing the chance of a lawsuit (Cotton & Wolohan, 1997).

Lucas Oil Stadium/ Indiana Convention Center

All of the potential risks of hosting the NFL Combine will take place at Lucas Oil Stadium and the Indiana Convention Center. The NFL Combine participants will use Lucas Oil Stadium for the physical testing. The participants will use the stadium-connected Indiana Convention Center to conduct meetings and media press conferences. The Indiana Convention Center currently features 566,600 square feet of convention and exhibition space, 71 meeting rooms and three ballrooms. The eleven exhibit halls span from 36,300 square feet to 89,900 square feet (“About,” 2012). With all of the spaces that will be used for the Combine, the NFL organizers will need an effective risk management plan to ensure a successful event.

Identifying Risk

The NFL Combine is an important evaluation process for professional teams. “The combine is simply a tool for NFL scouts and GMs. They’ll collect all the data, then go back to the film to see if the scores translates to the football field” (Wiltfong Jr., 2012. para. 3). It’s also an important event for the City of Indianapolis. The city will generate millions of dollars in revenue and will give a boost to the Indianapolis economy. “The event brings in about 3,400 visitors to Indianapolis. That’s a boost to central Indiana’s economy during a typically dry tourist season for many Midwestern states” (Courtney, 2010. pg.1). Chris Gahl of the Indianapolis Convention and Visitors Association explained “four-point-six million dollars in direct visitor spending is huge for central Indiana” (as cited in Courtney, 2010). With all of these factors in play, it is important for the Combine organizers to identify potential risks that could hurt the annual event. Faulty testing equipment, weather, loss of stadium power, staffing, and food safety could all be considered potential risks. “In the past few years, Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis and Angel Stadium in Anaheim were cited with dozens of critical violations for

rodent infestations” (Lavigne, 2010. para. 23). Information about potential food violations could prevent athletes from attending the event for fear that food poisoning could hurt the testing opportunity. “Inspectors at Lucas Oil Stadium, where concessions are run by Centerplate, found only one location with a mouse problem during their most recent review” (Lavigne, 2010. para. 24).

Assess the Risk

Providing working testing equipment could be viewed as a critical component to the Combine. Without properly working testing equipment, evaluators could have a tough time recording accurate information and providing participants with results. A delay caused by faulty equipment could hurt the schedule of events, which in turn could damage television ratings. Some would argue that the 40-yard dash is the most important test for skill position athletes. “The 40 is the most famous and probably the most talked about test that players go through at the Combine. You hear about the 40 all year long- ‘he’s a 4.4 40 guy’ or ‘he ran a 4.5 at the Combine” (Kelly, D., 2014). An automated timing system is used to conduct this test. Evaluators need a working timing system to record results. “The Sports Xchange confirmed that the combine will have fully automated timing (FAT) in place...” (Cooney, 2014). Another potential risk is weather. Bad weather could delay arrival times for invited athletes. A delay in arrival could prevent participating athletes from participating in scheduled events. Adequate power is needed to perform all Combine activities. A loss of power could destroy the entire event. Trained and informed staff can keep detailed-oriented events on schedule. Security staff can help keep athletes safe from non-invited guests. A breach in security could create issues for event organizers. For example, if a die-hard fan is able to gain access into the Combine, the fan could disrupt any or all of the scheduled events. It would also seem important that the food

provided to participants give an athlete the best opportunity for success during testing.

Underprepared or unhealthy provided food to participants could cause food poisoning and really hurt testing outcomes for athletes.

Risk Response

Developing a response to risk is the third component to the risk analysis process. Within the risk analysis process organizers will look what could be done to reduce risk and what could be done to manage risk. To reduce the chance of not having a properly working timing system, organizers could test the equipment prior to start of the event. Weather is an uncontrollable risk that is unpredictable but manageable. Weather could alter arrival times for participants and testing officials. A flexible schedule for athletes could help ease tension created from a late arrival. For example, if an athlete is supposed to arrive on Friday and weather has delayed the arrival time to Saturday, a flexible schedule would help that athlete participate in all events but with a potential different schedule than others in his position group. Power could be viewed as a very important need at the event. A loss of power could potentially end all activities or change the entire structure of the event. To reduce this risk, organizers could meet with the local power company and share information about everything that will take place during the Combine. This proactive conversation could prevent disruptions. If the Combine organizers and power company representatives discuss the event, they could create a contingency plan in case of power failure. Properly preparing staffers, hiring enough security, and providing a police presence could prevent unforeseen issues. Security staff and police presence could help participants feel safe and allow them to solely focus on the scheduled events and not have to worry about their safety. The final identified risk response is the preparation and handling of food provided to participants. Hiring professional cooks or professional caterers could prevent issues stemming

from food. Event organizers could check references of hired catering organizations. This step could be the difference between having a sick participant who is unable to finish events or a healthy, well-nourished participant.

Contingency Plan

Event organizers will have a contingency plan for all of the risks that have been identified. Hired staff will have a clear idea of what to do if any risks occur. A backup timing system will be in place in case the original system goes down. Stopwatches also will be accessible to testing staff if needed. Staffers will look at weather weeks prior to the event. If bad weather has the potential to halt travel, some participants may have the ability to fly in early to attend the Combine. If power is lost during the event, backup generators will be in place to keep the event going. The contingency plan for security is having on-call officers available if they are needed. Hiring medical staff to help sick athletes may in turn help athletes finish the evaluation process.

Conclusion

A risk management plan is a must have for an event like to the Combine. The NFL Combine is an event that could be viewed as a critical evaluation process for participants and evaluators. Ensuring that all risks have been identified and prepared for could help the event continue for years to come. If events are not prepared for, unforeseen distractions and catastrophes could damage the reputation of the NFL and its evaluation process.

Chapter Six: Ethical Analysis

Ethics in sports has been an issue in multiple sports and the NFL Combine is no exception. Performance enhancing drugs is an ethical issue that has plagued professional sports in recent years. The medical examiners will test all of the participating athletes and look at any past issues in relation to drugs.

Teleology

If a potential athlete is the subject of a positive performance enhancing drug test during his college career, that athlete will get questioned about the drug test during the Combine interviews. If the interviewed athlete takes the teleology approach, the interviewing team will need to decide if the answer helps or hurts the athlete's NFL Draft chances. According to the Malloy and Zakus (1995, p.40) article, "The teleological approach to decision making advocates the position that decisions can be judged good or bad based on their outcomes or consequences". If the athlete uses the teleological approach in his/her response the athlete might say that taking the drug would have the greatest good for the greatest number of people. In this reasoning, the athlete would be referring to the performance of his team and his personal performance during the game or season. Some people would disagree with this statement by the athlete. The athlete's team would be a small percentage of the teams and number of opposing athletes they would face during the year. The typical football team has around 105 total athletes on the roster ("Ask," 2014). If his college team faces 10 teams during the season, the total amount of opposing players would be around 1,050. That would be only 10% of the athletes affected by his performance enhancing drug use. With this response, the interviewing team could argue that the athletes had a subjective consequential attitude and was only thinking of himself. The athlete

could also express his objective consequential theory by stating that the only way that his team could compete is to take the performance enhancing drugs.

Deontological

An athlete that has used performance-enhancing drugs would have a hard time answering questions within the deontological approach to ethics. Within the deontological approach the athlete could not say there were no rules around the use of performance enhancing drugs. According to the Malloy and Zakus (1995, p.41) article, “Deontological proposes that right decisions are those that abide by certain universal principles of conduct, duties, or rules”. According to the NCAA drug testing policies, “The NCAA shares the responsibility of promoting a drug-free athletic environment with its member institutions to protect the health of student-athletes and preserve fair competition” (NCAA, 2014). The use of performance enhancing drugs does not promote fair competition during athletic contest. The drug use by the interviewed athlete would give the athlete an unfair advantage over the competition. During the Combine interviews, the interviewing teams could view this as a potential problem.

Existential

The final ethical theory is the existential approach. According to the Malloy and Zakus, (1995, p.45) article, “The strengths of existentialism lie in the belief than an individual is capable of exercising and taking responsibility for one’s free will”, (Malloy & Zakus, 1995, p.45). The interviewed athlete had a choice to take the performance enhancing drugs or not. This choice was a part of the athlete’s free will. During the Combine interview session, the action of the athlete after being a subject to a positive test could be critical to the athlete’s future. If the athlete uses the existential approach when answering the question, he would take full

responsibility for his actions. If the athlete denies the drug use, it could raise a red flag for the potential employer. If the athlete denies the accusations imposed during his/her college career, the interviewing employer could see this as a potential problem moving forward. The interviewing employer could view the athlete as a person that does not take responsibility for his actions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the interviewing teams and athlete could really examine the three ethical theories during the interview process at the NFL Combine. The teleology approach could be a way for the athlete to explain why they took the drug. The deontological approach would be hard to explain because of the clear rules established by the NCAA. Hiring teams could recommend the existentialism theory with an explanation for athletes that are serious candidates. Admitting to the drug use and talking freely with the teams would show that the athlete has understood the outcome of his actions. Some could argue that the existentialism theory is the best approach for any athlete being asked about an ethics issue at the Combine. In my opinion, before a team decides to draft a player and potentially spend millions of dollars on an athlete, the athlete should be as honest as possible. The three theories really open the door to explore reasons behind ethical issues.

Chapter Seven: Personal Statement

Leadership and is a gift that can be rewarding and challenging. The rewards that I have experienced throughout my life are memorable. The challenges have been enlightening and educational. When individuals get the opportunity to lead a project or team, they learn about the people they work with and the project's content. It has been an honor and privilege to serve in that capacity. Athletics and Activities are also a rewarding and challenging experience. The memories created from athletics will last a lifetime and the challenges have made me stronger as a person.

Higher Education

The decision was made to pursue a graduate degree in Athletic Administration for several reasons. One of the most important reasons was to show my high school aged son that it doesn't matter how old you are, you can still go back to school and continue your education. I wanted to show him that I not only have high expectations for him but I also have high expectations for myself. This cohort helped me as a family leader and practice what I preach. I have continuously told my son that in order to succeed in school with a busy schedule, you need to manage your time well. As a full time employee, it is a challenge to complete the course work and keep up your daily responsibilities. As a high school student it is also a challenge to be a three-sport athlete and get good grades. My message to my son has been, if your father can complete his course work with good grades and still work an average of 60 to 80 hours a week, he has no excuses for poor grades. As a family, we have high expectation for everything and schoolwork is no exception. I wanted to be an example to my son, his friends and students that I work with. Hopefully my completion of this program will serve as motivation for him and his peers. I believe that I have witnessed this motivation while watching the change in his time

management. I know that I serve as a role model to my son and the multiple teenagers that I work with everyday. As one of very few African American males that work in my school district, I know that many young African American males in my school district look up to me and watch how I approach work and a graduate education. I have always told them, that we are lifetime learners. People can learn new things everyday and there is a benefit to pursuing knowledge about a subject that you are interested in. It doesn't have to stop with a high school diploma, AA, BA, Masters degree or Doctorate degree. There are and will be plenty of opportunities to continue your education. It is up to you to seek out and take advantage of those opportunities.

Another reason why I wanted to pursue a graduate degree is to prove to myself that I could get it done. After receiving my Bachelors degree in 1999, I told myself that I would go back to school and get my Masters. At the time I didn't really know what I would be interested in pursuing. I knew that I enjoyed sports and that sports would remain a big part of my life. I knew that I would always be competitive in life. What I didn't know at the time is that I could put my passion for recreational and competitive sports and my passion to remain a lifetime learner together. After spending a handful of years in the Athletic Administration role, I knew that I had found something that I was really passionate about. After realizing that I finally found my work passion, I felt that I needed to further my education so I could be my best possible self and leader in the field. Achieving a Masters in Athletic Administration became a goal that I had to accomplish. After determining that I wanted to pursue a graduate degree, I needed to find the right program that would fit my busy work/ home life schedule. I feel that I found that perfect match. If it were not for the convenience of this online program, I would not have been able to complete my graduate degree goal.

Another reason why I wanted to pursue a graduate degree is to help achieve my goal of becoming an Athletic Director at a high school or major University. Understanding how competitive it is to achieve that goal, I knew that I would need to pursue higher education. With a degree coupled with experience, I believe that I would become an attractive candidate for employers. Without a graduate degree, all I would have is my experience. Experience is great but completing a graduate degree at my age would hopefully display that I am serious about an athletic director position and that athletic administration is a profession that I could see myself in for a long time.

Five-Year Plan

I currently serve as an assistant athletic director at a high school. I am blessed to have worked with some brilliant minds within the field. I have had the opportunity to work with the directors of Minnesota State High School League, Athletic Directors of the Lake Conference, and other Athletic Directors from around the state of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and South Dakota. My current position allows me to lead in many areas. As the head sophomore coach of the football team, I get the experience of leading my team. I also get to coordinate several sports at my high school. I coordinate boys and girls cross country, boys and girl's track and field, boys and girl's basketball, Alpine ski, and Nordic ski. I get to coordinate boys and girls golf and boys tennis. For example, as basketball coordinator, I get the opportunity to lead the conference in conversations around scheduling structures. In my role as facility manager, I get to lead facility related initiatives. I also get to lead the district annual calendar meeting. Within the next five years I plan to challenge the existing calendar meeting process. "Getting out of routines and ruts requires treating every job and assignment as an adventure. This involves putting your head up and looking all around, and being willing to invest your time and energy in finding out about

other possibilities” (Kouzes & Posner, 2012 pg.157). I want to use technology to streamline the process make it less time consuming for the teachers and facility users. I will start that process by offering evaluations to users. The evaluations will gather information on how to better serve facility users.

Within my five-year plan I hope to continue to improve as a leader in the areas that I coordinate and continue to learn from other professionals. Also within the next five years, I hope to continue educating myself and learning from the successful Athletic Administrators in my field. I know that I need to continue to go outside of my comfort zone and work with the individuals that are experienced in the field. Within the trait approach and according to the Big Five Personality Factors, I believe that I need to work on my introvertedness, “...in their study, extroversion was the factor most strongly associated with leadership. It is the most important trait of effective leaders. Extroversion was followed, in order, conscientiousness, openness, and low neuroticism. The last factor, agreeableness, was found to be on weakly associated with leadership. (Northouse, 2013 pg. 27). Extroversion is a challenge that I face. I know that I need to work on being more sociable. I do believe that I am assertive and have been told that I bring positive energy but I know that I could be better in that area. I tend to keep to myself and only mingle with people that I already know. To me, being more sociable means networking with others in my field when those opportunities are present. An immediate goal within my five-year plan is to network with my cohort members. This goal will hopefully help me shed my complete introversion by the end of my five-year plan.

As part of my five-year plan, I want to improve my skills as an effective leader. According to the three-skills approach, I believe that I am strong in two of the three skills needed for effective administration. Technical skill is the first part of the Three-Skill approach. I know

that I have the technical skill to succeed in the position and lead people. “Technical skill is knowledge about and proficiency in a specific type of work or activity” (Northouse, 2013 pg. 44). I also know that I will continue to learn the technical skills needed to serve as an Athletic Director. The second part of the three-skill approach is human skills. I believe that I am proficient in the human-skill area. “Being a leader with human skills means being sensitive to the needs and motivation of others and taking into account others’ needs in one’s decision making” (Northouse, 2013 pg. 45). For example, my co-workers and subordinates know that I care about how decisions I make affect them. Before I make decisions, I try to always ask for input from others. They know that I will listen and act on what I am being told. The area that I want to get better in is, the conceptual skills needed for leadership. I do believe that conceptual skills come with opportunities. I have many ideas and solutions to problems that we experience as an organization. When given the opportunity, I have taken advantage and have shared my thoughts and solutions to different issues. For example, we recently have had an issue with track and field event workers backing out at the last minute. When that happens, we need to find a replacement immediately to run a track meet. Sometime that replacement may be a lunch attendant or substitute teacher with little to no knowledge of the sport. I started creating short video clips as a tutorial to help the replacement event worker. Those video clips have made a difference in how successful the track meet is. Instead of spending a lot of time and resources explaining how and why we do certain things during the track meet. The short five-minute video is used to quickly prepare the substitute event worker. I have shared those videos with other school districts with that same issue hoping to eliminate the stressfulness associated with hiring replacement track event workers. I believe that I have the conceptual skills but I also believe I need the opportunity to show those skills.

Reflection

I am confident that this graduate program will help me achieve my future goals. I am blessed and honored to have worked with so many great professors and classmates. The professors challenged me to think outside of the box and move outside of my comfort zone. Over the years, I have learned that I am an introvert. As an introvert, I have always struggled when meeting new people. I have always been the type of person to keep myself, keep my head down and get the job done. The professors in this graduate program encouraged me not only work with other people but to learn from them and take advantage of this networking opportunity.

Throughout my life, I have always enjoyed challenges. I believe that challenges make you stronger and make you a better person in the long run. I also believe that people that don't experience challenging situations don't know how to handle a challenge when they occur. I think that you need to go through tough times to make yourself a better person. For example, a person that is challenged with completing multiple work tasks at the same time will learn to manage time. Managing time well can help a person with future challenging situations. Challenges and competition have always been apart of my life. As the oldest of four brothers in an inner- city single parent household, we experienced plenty of challenges throughout our lives. Those challenges have prepared me for this graduate program. I am glad that I had the opportunity to be challenged as a young teen. I was charged with being a role model for my siblings; being a father figure to my younger brothers challenged me. I was also challenged because I had to be the man and protector of the house. I had to work as a teenager to help provide for my family. Those challenges at a young age helped prepare me for this graduate program. In this program, I had to really manage my time to get through. My day-to-day job

takes a lot of my time, and it is was hard to find the time to complete assignments. Some weeks, I easily work 60 to 80 hours during the week. During those weeks, I still had to be a good father to my son and husband to my wife. I compare that challenge to my childhood because as a youth I had to pick my brothers up from school, cook, clean, get them ready for school everyday and still find time to complete my homework. The challenges as a youth made me a stronger person as an adult.

Competition is and was a big part of my life growing up. I come from a competitive family full of males. All of my cousins and uncles played sports, so every family function was full of competitive activities. It was either a game of basketball, football, cards, dominos or anything where there was a winner and loser. Those competitive challenges helped me not only in this program but helped me in life. I look at things through a competitive lens. I want to win at everything that I do. Losing has never been an option in my world. If I did lose at something, I was always told that I better learn something from it. That is how I approached the assignments that were presented in this program. If I didn't do well on an assignment, I learned from it and did better the next time. I didn't feel like I was competing against my other classmates. I felt like I was competing with myself. That competition helped me complete this program. This program was an opportunity for me to challenge and compete against myself to make me a better person, a better administrator, a better family man and a better coach and leader.

The Capstone project will help me accomplish two things. It will teach me how to lead a major sporting event and it will help me look at different ways that I can make a sporting event a great experience for everyone involved. The project will help me understand everything that goes into putting on a big event. My Capstone project is about the NFL Combine. The NFL

Combine is an event that I participated in as a college football player and an event that I watch every year. As a former player I got an opportunity to experience what an athlete goes through as a participant. As a fan, I get the opportunity to watch the event as a true spectator. My project gives me the opportunity to learn about the things that go on behind the scenes. I get to learn about the things that have made this event so popular. This project has helped me understand the research that is needed prior to planning for a major event.

The project has helped me learn how to make an event a great experience for everyone involved. One of the projects within my Capstone project was to motivate and retain high performing employees during the Combine. I will use these strategies when hosting a major event. Some of these strategies include mentorship programs, providing company perks, creating and encouraging the use of relaxation rooms, schedule flexibility and encouraging feedback and input. The project will help me examine the ethical issues that surround events. It will help me understand the questions that need to be asked prior to planning my event. This Capstone project will help me understand the marketing strategies that go along with major events. The marketing strategies that are needed to help make my event special. One of the most interesting learnings from this project is the examination of the SWOT analysis. “SWOT Analysis is a useful technique for understanding your Strengths and Weaknesses, and for identifying both the Opportunities open to you and the Threats you face” (“SWOT Analysis,” 2015). The Capstone project will help me understand the importance of having an event in a venue that is convenient for the event organizers and customers. The project will also help me understand the importance of examining and eliminating the risks that are associated with hosting an event. Understanding that simple things like directional signage may help or hurt the outcome of a planned event. As I mentioned in the beginning of this paper, my career goal is

to become an Athletic Director at a high school or University. At this point in my career I would prefer high school. This Capstone project will prepare me to host events in the role of a high school or collegiate Athletic Director.

Conclusion

In conclusion this program has challenged me to become a better leader. It has taught me the skills that are needed to be an exceptional leadership. My plan is to work on my weakness and improve as a person. I also will continue my journey to become an athletic director with the goal to make a difference in the life of others. I am blessed to have had this opportunity and would strongly encourage others to experience this journey.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Table 1

NFL Combine Expenses

Venue (Lucas Oil Stadium)= \$190,000

Hotel rooms for 150 athletes= \$790 per room= \$118,500

Hotel conference rooms (<http://www.jwindy.com/specials/footballpackage>)

Meals for participants= three days plus \$312 per player= \$96,600

Airline tickets for 300 athletes @ \$380 per ticket= \$114,000

80 Employees= \$51,200

Testing Equipment Rental= \$5,000

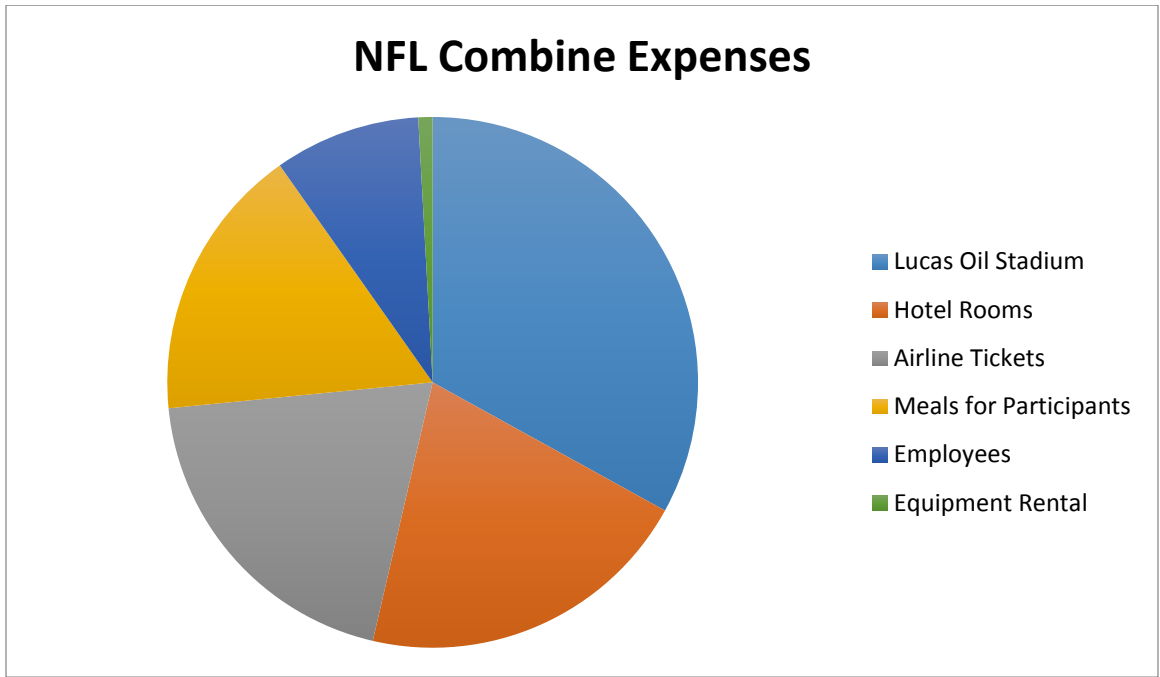


Figure 1. NFL Combine Expenses

Appendix C

Table 2

S.W.O.T.

	Strength	Weaknesses
Internal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported financially by the NFL • Expanding NFL fan base • Enthusiastic volunteers • Multiple interested sponsors • Competing TV networks • Support from all NFL teams • Excellent venues • Support from host city • State of the art testing equipment • Prepared athletes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too commercial • Uninterested fan base • Overworked employees & volunteers • Aging venue • Non-unified NFL teams • Unprepared athletes • Inaccurate testing data • Outdated testing equipment • NFL lockouts ex. Team contract negotiations, strikes
	Opportunities	Threats
External	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding global interest • Video streaming opportunities • Technology ex. Smart phones • International sponsor opportunities • Partnerships with youth organizations • Pre-Season excitement • Fantasy football partnerships • Yearly interest in a seasonal sport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other sporting events, like baseball & basketball • Concussion awareness programs • Terroristic threats • War • TV Blackouts • Extreme weather • Wi-Fi blackouts • Sponsorship & partnership fraud • Seasonal interest in football