



Papio Fun Park targets groups, private functions during cooler months of year

by Megan E. Holt

Papio Fun Park, a six-acre family entertainment center located at 210 E. Lincoln St. in Papillion, has changed its marketing strategy in order to draw in a different demographic during the winter months as the company expects a 10 percent increase in revenues for

Papio Fun Park 2012.

Rather than targeting families with children ages six to 14 between mid-March to mid-October, when the business normally closes its doors to the public, Margaret White, Papio Fun Park owner, is building one-on-one relationships with groups of people, like schools, church youth groups and a segment of the corporate world to keep the park's doors open year-round.

White hopes to increase traffic to her business, which offers its customers attractions such as go-karts, laser tag, miniature golf, a jump-shot game, batting cages and a traditional arcade, by accommodating small or large private parties or meetings during slow months.

Customers are given the opportunity to book private events or office off-site meetings undisturbed by the public, and Papio Fun Park will try to accommodate any need necessary, White said.

"Because we are a smaller business, we can custom package deals that can be more flexible as there are no hard and fast rules," White said. "We can customize what your needs are by working around what we have and what you need."

In addition to targeting atypical customers, Papio Fun Park has participated in the new marketing trend of trading product, or wristband certificates, for marketing spots on television or radio stations as well as advertising in newspapers.

The small business' shift in marketing strategies over the past couple of years has

proven beneficial — Papio Fun Park grew five percent in 2011 and is on track to increase an additional 10 percent this year, White said.

"The biggest change in the amusement industry has been this concept of 'the daily deal,' where consumers can go in, and they can buy something at a reduced price," White said.

"It has a good side and a bad side."

Consumers have gotten used to thinking they can pay half-price everywhere they go, which undoubtedly takes a toll on small business' bottom line, White said.

With the opportunity to up-sell their product once people walk in the front door, businesses have been able to survive.

Another challenge has been staying fresh in the industry and creating new attractions in order to challenge the competition, White said.

"Traditionally, in the amusement industry, you're coming for the new thing and staying for the old," White said. "You have to justify whether you need to create a new attraction

or just go after a new demographic and work harder to bring in a different group of people that have never been here before."

Currently, White has not implemented any new attractions as the business is essentially "landlocked" and surrounded by property it cannot expand upon.

"I'm always looking at what we can do or change, and we did have some plans last fall to put in new things, but we sat back and decided to get another one or two years of really good income under our belts before doing anything," White said. "Justifying cost is a hard thing."

Papio Fun Park was founded in 1990 by White's husband and a partner with the dream of offering greater Omaha children something to do. It originally consisted of only batting cages and miniature golf, but has since expanded to include both indoor and

Papio Fun Park

Phone: 402-592-5671

Address: 210 E. Lincoln St., Papillion 68046

Service: family entertainment center that offers various amusement activities, like go-karts, laser tag, miniature golf, a jump-shot game, batting cages and a traditional arcade

Employees: 32

Founded: 1990

Goal: Increase revenue during the winter months by targeting groups.

Website: www.papiofunpark.com



Owner Margaret White ... Anticipating growth by keeping the entertainment open in the winter months to attract groups and private parties.

outdoor games.

White, with a master's degree in music education from Florida State University, became the sole owner in 1997 after having worked on the business' finance and marketing side since its conception.

"We often jokingly say the former management, meaning my husband, would not approve of the business today because there have been some things we've done that required taking risks — jumping off a ledge and hoping to have a parachute," White said. "We've come a long way."