FORMULA FOR SUCCESS WITH BEGINNERS

The *Formula for Success with Beginners* was developed by Kim Seevers, former Director of Education for PSIA-Eastern Division. Its purpose is to help ski school trainers and individual members make their training efforts more manageable and productive. It is intended to complement existing area training programs by providing a framework and guidelines for more effectively organizing training programs that target <u>teaching and retaining</u> <u>beginner skiers</u>.

The Formula for Success with Beginners has been divided into <u>four</u> sections.
Each section is comprised of:
➢ A training goal, training objectives, and course content
➢ Indoor training activities
➢ On snow training activities
➢ A suggested reading list

Formula for Success with Beginners
Because of our customers, we exist. Our existence as ski teachers revolves around creating a safe and exciting experience for our students. We exist to meet their expectations for skiing. We exist to create and manage an environment to which they will want to return time and time again. Perhaps the most crucial part of teaching beginning skiers is preparation of the "game plan"; what you are going to do, why you are going to do it, and how you are going to encourage your students to accomplish movements that will lead to skillful skiing. Your credibility with your students rests on your choices here. Your degree of success (and that of the student) will depend on your strategy for your student's development and your ability to improvise and change your lesson plan given the experiences that occur during the lesson, and your energy and judgment.

As with any equation, the *Formula for Success with Beginners* has many variables. A ski lesson for a beginner or group of beginning skiers invariably leads to a variety of variables, thus has many solutions. A great teacher has a solid understanding of the fundamental movements of efficient skiing, how variables will affect the outcomes, and how to manipulate the variables to create a solution that leads to success for the student. Snow sports schools across the country use many different teaching systems, but the fundamental movements that lead to effective skiing remain the same. To be effective as a teacher, it is critical to make accurate technical analyses, while keeping the customer's goals (as well as your goals) in mind. Remember, you exist to give your beginning student an exciting introduction to skiing. You exist to help your guest develop the skills that will lead to successful skiing and riding.
BECAUSE THE CUSTOMER…
Because the customer has a need,
We have a job to do.
Because the customer has a choice,
We must be the better choice.
Because the customer has sensibilities,
We must be considerate.
Because the customer has an urgency,
We must be quick.
Because the customer is unique,
We must be flexible.
Because the customer has high expectations,
We must excel.

Because the customer has influence,
We have the hope of more customers.
Because of the customer, We exist!

The goal of The *Formula for Success with Beginners* is:

➤To help area managers meet ski school improvement and retention initiatives successfully.

➤To provide clear, concise, easy-to-use guidance for trainers in a convenient package.

➤To provide a framework for training that incorporates the ski school and ski area's unique culture and business goals into a set of customized training materials.

➤ To encourage ski teachers to clearly describe the characteristics unique to their ski area and to develop a teaching program based on these qualities.

➤ To encourage ski teachers to clearly describe movement related problems and process related problems, to isolate root causes, and to find creative and effective solutions.

FORMULA FOR SUCCESS WITH BEGINNERS
Program Overview

Your resort is in the business of creating memorable experiences. Those experiences are shaped by interactions with resort staff members. From the moment a hopeful resort enthusiast picks up a phone or logs onto the web to make a reservation, until the gear is packed and the trip home has begun, hundreds of interactions with staff members contribute to the overall impression of the resort. Snowsports teachers, through the relationships they build with students, have the power to enhance the resort experience exponentially. Important qualities for instructors in the modern world of ski teaching include

➤ Understanding and responding to guest expectations

➤ Providing value to the guest through skill development

➤ An understanding of their responsibilities to the ski industry, their home resort and their guest.

There are four elements that, when artfully combined, create the magical environment where a connection is made between the teacher, the guest, and the mountain environment.

The effective use of these elements combines to create a complete and satisfying learning experience.

Developing Trust:

Trust is the cornerstone of the new guest's successful experience. If at any time the instructor/student relationship is compromised the guest may leave the sport never to return.

A competent instructor is skilled at:

➤ Developing a trusting relationship

➤ Understanding their students and how they learn.

➤ Questioning and listening effectively.

➤ Creating an environment that puts guests at ease.

➤ Observing student behaviors to determine underlying emotions.

Assessing Movements:
Because the teaching/learning environment is fluid by nature, and circumstances change as learning proceeds, teachers must be able to accurately assess student performance and adjust goals as the lesson progresses.
A competent instructor is skilled at
• Understanding efficient and effective movements of beginning skiers and riders.

Working the Learning Environment:
An artful instructor is able to work the learning environment effectively so that the student/teacher bond of trust remains intact.
A competent instructor is skilled at
➢ Using available terrain effectively.
➢ Using a variety of activities with new participants that will help establish a comfortable, fun environment.
➢ Developing and using fun skiing formats
➢ Providing information and suggestions for the use of alternative snow tools.

Closing the Loop:
Effective communication is the final element in the learning loop. As with the other three elements, the ability to communicate well can make or break a learning experience. It can provide direction, reinforce a positive change, and redirect unproductive movements or actions. An effective communicator also understands information on teaching and learning styles.
A competent instructor is skilled at:
➢ Providing effective feedback.
➢ Effectively debriefing a student at the end of a lesson.

Developing Trust
Training Goal
➢ To improve the instructor's ability to build a trusting relationship with new participants in the sport
➢ To provide information about the instructor's contribution to the growth of the snow sport industry
Training Objectives
➢ To describe the role of the teacher in the guests' resort experience
➢ To explore typical new customer expectations in the resort environment
➢ To share tactics for initiating a learning partnership with the new participant
➢ To provide tools that will help the teacher generate return visits by helping the learner fit
➢ the sport into their lifestyle
➢ To share methods for teaching beginning skiing fundamentals
➢ To define the teaching, technical, and people skills that contribute to teacher success

Course Content
• The role and image of the instructor and the snowsports school: What defines success?
• Guest expectations and teacher solutions (Core Concepts, "Developing Trust")

•Previewing: *Purpose*; Why you are there, *Process*; How you will proceed, *Payoff*;

•The potential benefit to them from the lesson and for continued participation in the sport

•Questioning and Listening Skills

•Basic skill development and application for learners

•Retention, Conversion, and the role of the teacher

•www.thesnowpros.org *See* Who We Are for an overview of Vision, Mission, Values, and Service Relationships. This shows the importance of partnerships in the ski industry and how we can support growth initiatives for the sport. • *Trial and Conversion Best Practices: NSAA Model for Growth,* National Ski Areas Association, 2001. Discusses the growth initiative for skiing and gives examples of strategies that have worked.

Build Your Training Around These Activities!

Activity 1: The role and image of the instructor and the snow sports school: What defines success? With a partner, discuss why you are teaching snow sports. Choose one word that sums up your feelings about skiing and teaching.

Place the word on a card and go looking for others with the same or a similar word. In the groups formed, discuss what it will take to keep you in teaching. Apply that to teaching beginners; how will you stay interested, successful, and contributing to the resort and industry?

Activity 2: Guest expectations and teacher solutions Participants list what people expect for service when they come to our resorts to learn to ski. Compare the ski industry with the cruise industry, beach resort vacations, Disney, and other types of vacations. Tour your home resort. Visit all departments and list the services offered by each member of your team. List your strengths. Discuss areas in which improvements might be beneficial and make suggestions for implementing changes.

Activity 3: Participants role play "reverse psychology" and try NOT to build trust. Each smaller group illustrate for the entire team. Trainer facilitates a discussion after the presentations.

Activity 4: Previewing: Purpose (Why you are there), Process (How you will proceed), and Payoff (The potential benefit to them from the lesson and for continued participation in the sport)
See Purpose, Process, Payoff: Previewing Your Lesson (next page).
Explain the "Purpose, Process, Payoff" idea.

Participants pick an activity they will "teach" from a hat (activities may or may not be related to teaching beginning skiing).   Then they must interview the group to find out "about" them.
Share a "Purpose, Process, Payoff" statement that makes sense for the group and their topic.

Purpose, Process, Payoff: Previewing your Lesson

Previewing is the act of telling a learner where the clinic is going and what they can expect to do and accomplish. It is a critical component of decreasing tension and reaffirming what they are there for. It is the time to define the exact process that will allow the student to achieve their goals. When your student knows and understands the basic format of the lesson, they will be more likely to contribute. Even if the contribution consists only of anticipating and moving more efficiently from one part of the lesson to the next, the student will be a part of the process as well as the product. One way to preview the lesson effectively is to use Purpose, process, payoff.

- *Purpose; Why you are there*
- *Process; How you will proceed*
- *Payoff; The potential benefit to them from the lesson and for continued participation in the sport*

Example:

Purpose: "I am here to guide you all in your first experience on snow."

Process: "Today you will learn to use your new gear and movements that you already know from your experience playing tennis, and other common activities, to ski/ride. We will begin with an indoor orientation, and then move outside to our learning terrain."

Payoff: "By the end of the day you will understand how much skiing/snowboarding has to offer. You will have experienced the first in what could be many joyful days on the snow, and you will be a part of a very special group of people who play in the mountains."

After conveying "Purpose, Process, Payoff", check for understanding and ask to proceed.

"Are you ready?"

Most Teachers Forget to Let People Know *The Payoff*… It's Not As Obvious as You'd Think, and It Is Specific To Each Student.

Activity 5: Questioning and Listening Skills

•One member of each group thinks of a famous person. The remaining members of the group ask questions that will let them know who the famous person is.

Group members may ask any question but "what is your name?" Try not to ask "yes or no" questions. The amount of time it takes to find out the names is recorded. After the names are discovered, discuss the "good" questions that were asked. Discuss use of "High Gain Questions". How do good coaches use the information gained in their initial conversations with students to help set lesson goals? What are the qualities of a good listener?

Activity 6: Formula For Success worksheet:

•As a group, complete questions 1-6 on the Formula for Success Worksheet found in Appendix A.

Activity 7: Retention, Conversion, and the role of the teacher

   •The group lists reasons why people DON'T continue skiing after their first experience. Propose positive solutions to those reasons.

On Hill Application: Application of skill development as it relates to beginners and developing trust.

Activity 1: Ski through the basic movements necessary for a beginning skier to progress effectively (see Stepping Stones)

- Orientation with no skis
- Stepping, walking on skis
- Sliding and gliding
- Turning and stopping

Activity 2: The group leader models a "bad" lesson for beginning skiers. The group debriefs the experience

Activity 3: In small groups, plan a "good" lesson. Share the lesson plan with the group. Follow with debrief.

Activity 4: Play "Tag-team beginner lesson". One teacher begins the lesson with an exercise, then hands off to a second instructor, who continues the lesson with a second activity. Continue until all instructors have contributed to the Beginner Zone lesson.

Activity 5: Experience, from the customer's perspective, different skier services and activities at your area (e.g. rental shop, parking, cafeteria, purchasing a lift ticket, purchasing a lesson and being in a class line-up). If possible, try to observe a family as they go through these processes.

Activity 6: Using other instructors in your training group, practice three different activities or methods to develop group dynamics and interaction.

Suggested Reading

- PSIA *Core Concepts Manual* (2001)
- PSIA *Alpine Technical Manual* (2002)
- www.thesnowpros.org *See* Who We Are for an overview of Vision, Mission, Values, and Service Relationships. This shows the importance of partnerships in the ski industry and how we can support growth initiatives for the sport.
- *Purpose, Process, Payoff: Previewing Your Lesson*--Handout

Assessing Movement

Training Goal

- To develop the teacher's understanding of basic movements and their effect on the performance of new participants

Training Objectives

- To describe, observe, and perform basic movement patterns used by learners
- To prioritize skill blending and fundamental movements of learners
- To determine cause and effect relationships of beginner's movement patterns and how they affect successful learning
- To help teachers develop activities that target a new participant's needs
- To help teachers develop a set of solutions to movement problems and challenges
- To provide information about how equipment and proper alignment can help or hinder student performance

Course Content
- ATS Skills Concept; Beginner application

- Assessing levels of proficiency and potential
- Observing movements and describing results and solutions
- Activity suggestions for developing and enhancing performance while increasing the "fun factor"

Build Your Training Around These Activities!
Indoor presentations
Activity 1: Introduction to ATS Skills Concept and the Cues To Effective Skiing adapted specifically to Beginner/Novice Zone application

Activity 2: Discuss equipment issues, problems, and potential solutions with beginning skiers. If possible, invite a knowledgeable instructor or local ski shop employee to help with this presentation and to answer questions.

Activity 3: Using the PSIA Core Concepts and Alpine Technical manuals, develop a written plan for assessing the movement patterns of your Beginner/Novice Zone guests.

Activity 4: As a group, complete questions 10, 11, and 12 on the Formula or Success Worksheet found in Appendix A.

On hill application
Activity 1: Experience basic movements and the related skill blends for the effective development of beginning skiers.

Activity 2: Develop a variety of solutions and ski through activities for troubleshooting typical Beginner/Novice Zone problems.

Activity 3: Identify defensive movements of skiers in the Beginner/Novice Zone. Does the movement appear to be a result of fear? An inappropriate terrain choice? Equipment problems? Other factors?

Activity 4: Watch skiers from the chairlift. Identify one positive movement, as well as one movement that could be improved. Give three activities to help the skier improve the movement you identified.

Activity 5: View videotape of Beginner/Novice Zone skiers. Develop an accurate description of the movement patterns you see using the plan you developed in Indoor

Activity 3: Practice being positive and descriptive, as well as prescriptive.

Activity 6: Discuss how poor equipment fit could adversely affect your students' success and enjoyment.

Materials:
À PSIA *Core Concepts Manual* (2001), see Chapter 3—Assessing Movements
À PSIA *Alpine Technical Manual* (2002), see Chapter 4—Movement Analysis
À Video of learners; include some learners with equipment issues
À Written formatted plans for development (movement assessment sheets)
À *The Professional Skier,* Fall 2001. (*See* www.thesnowpros.org and look under the
TPS Archives to find the articles online):
•*What's the Big Idea?,* by Greg Hoffmann

•*Lower Leg Alignment,* by Victor Gerdin
•*Ankle Flex,* by Allan Tencer
•*Vail and Beaver Creek Adult Alpine Teaching Handbook* (Vail Resorts Mgt. Co.,
2001). Available through PSIA.

Working The Learning Environment
Training Goal
•To provide tools for creative teaching that will help the instructor provide a safe and fun
learning experience
•To provide information on levels of learning and tactics for achieving them
•To share information about the latest snow tools and their application for learners

Training Objective
•To provide information on risk awareness and Maslow's hierarchy of needs that
will allow the teacher to develop a fertile learning environment
•To illustrate "fear" from the student's perspective and provide tactics for
understanding and coping
•To provide tools to help the teacher choose effective terrain for appropriate speed and turn
shape choices
•To provide options for group management that will help the teacher to individualize
instruction while taking advantage of group dynamics
•To develop a variety of skiing formats that are fun and effective for use with learners
•To experience movements on specialized snow tools and explore the application to learning
•To share tactics for determining the level of learning achieved by the students, and ways to take
the learning deeper via lateral learning, teaching for transfer, etc.

Course Content
À Risk awareness and Maslow's hierarchy of needs
À The "*fear factor"* and how to adjust goals and activities
À Choosing effective terrain and tactics
À Describing and modeling learning activities
À Creative group strategies
À Using activities that target the individual needs of the student or group members
À Emerging technology: new snow tools and the application for learners
À Cues for determining learning progress

Build Your Training Around These Activities!
Indoor Presentations
Activity 1: Introduction to Working the Learning Environment
An overview of "Working the Learning Environment" from the Core Concepts manual.

Activities 2 through 4: Consider working through the following team initiatives from
"The Bottomless Bag; Again!" by Karl Rohnke and debrief each one.

Activity 2: Your responsibility for student comfort (Risk awareness)
À Do a "Sherpa Walk" and then debrief the activity. Discuss the trust-building aspect, and lead
into risk considerations on the hill.

Activity 3: Maslow's hierarchy of needs
À Play "The Burning Ski Lodge" and debrief:
•How could issues such as hunger, pain, cold, heat, fatigue, and other physical discomfort
distract from the learning situation?
•How might feeling unsafe, or worry about possible injury affect the environment?
Was there any time when anyone felt fearful? How did we deal with that?
•How did the need for belonging play into the learning environment?
•Was there an opportunity for everyone to feel self esteem? Did that become
an issue at any point?
How could that affect the outcome?

Activity 4: Levels of learning
•Play the game "Pole Passing" and then debrief the activity. Discuss the levels of learning involved
in coaching, the "close and confusing" teaching situations, and the many variables that must be
understood by teacher and learner.

Activity 5: As a group, complete question 13 on the Formula for Success Worksheet located in
Appendix A.

On Hill Applications
Activity 1: The "*fear factor"* and how to adjust goals and activities: Participants write
down a personal "scary moment" and trade them, each develops a way to handle their
assigned challenge while the group discusses and guides
•"Blind Person and Guide"; With management approval to perform this, the blindfolded person
makes turns with the other person as guide. This needs to be done in a VERY controlled
environment, and the leader must be able to watch carefully. Vary partners and types of turns if
possible. Encourage as much exploration as possible. Debrief using fear principles outlined in the
Core manual.

Activity 2: Experience alternative snow tools and the application for learners

Activity 3: Practice Beginner/Novice Zone movements wearing your own equipment, rental
equipment, short shaped skis.

Activity 4: Develop an understanding for how the available terrain at your home area affects skill
application and student success.

Activity 5: Identify defensive postures shown by beginning skiers. Create and ski through
activities that will help your guests become more comfortable with the skiing stance.

Activity 6: Explore the similarities and differences in skill application and blending with regard to traditional skis, shaped skis, short shaped skis.

Activity 7: Relate the skill blend necessary to perform Beginner/Novice Zone movements for different populations of skiers (i.e. seniors, children, women, well conditioned athletes). Does the skill blend necessarily change?

Activity 8: Lead your group on terrain exploration runs. Discover all of the terrain features available on your teaching terrain.

Activity 9: Using your training group as your class, place the group in call down mode. Using your poles as guides, practice guiding each individual down to you by dictating turn shape, direction, and size as well as stopping and straight-running. Pay particular attention to your use of terrain. Pointing your pole left or right indicates a turn, crossed poles indicate a stop, and poles straight over your head and parallel to each other indicate a straight run.

Materials:
À PSIA *Core Concepts* (2001)
À PSIA *Alpine Technical Manual* (2002)
À Teacher directions for initiatives: Sherpa Walk, Burning Ski Lodge, Pole
Passing from *Bottomless Bag: Again!,* by Karl Rohnke, 1994.
À *Good Things To Know About Sliding On Snow,"* by Stu Campbell and
Tim Petrick, Mountain Sports Press.
Available from mountainsportspress@skinet.com

Closing the Loop
Training Goal
•To make the teacher aware of different learning styles
•To help the teacher give effective feedback
•To provide tools for effective debrief and closure

Training Objectives
•To provide information on the learning process and how different learning styles affect communication and performance
•To share teaching tactics that will address different learners
•To provide information on effective feedback and experience the results through practice
•To provide information on debriefing and where and how it fits into the teaching cycle
•To experience effective debriefing through practice and group interaction

Course Content
À Learning Styles
À Feedback: Giving and Receiving
À Effective debriefing skills
Build Your Training Around These Activities!
Activity 1: Work on creating a great opening impression and on successful closure to your lessons.

Activity 2: Discuss and practice how to give positive reinforcement during a lesson and accompanying practice.

Activity 3: Practice using both verbal and non-verbal communication while teaching a mini-lesson to the group. Discuss the effect on student outcomes and enjoyment.

Activity 4: Split into two groups. Teaching the same exercise line, demonstrate the difference between task and command style teaching.

Activity 5: Practice using different class arrangements during lessons. Discuss what seems to work best with students of differing skills levels, speed, or endurance in the Beginner/Novice Zone.

Activity 6: As a group, choose one specific teaching activity. Each person present that activity while addressing one specific learning style.

Activity 7: Identify clues that will help identify a student's learning preference. With the permission of a fellow coach, shadow a lesson. Attempt to categorize each student by looking for these clues. At the close of the lesson, ask each student how (s)he best learns. How many did you get correct?

Activity 8: Develop the skill to teach a visual or kinesthetic learner by teaching a mini-lesson to a group of "deaf" skiers.

Activity 9: Complete question 14 of Formula for Success worksheet.

Appendix A: Formula for Success with Beginners Worksheet
1. Characterize your home ski area:
2. Characterize the type of beginning student you teach most frequently:
3. Characterize the type of beginner lesson you generally teach (i.e. hour privates, 1 ½ hour group, half-day groups/privates, full-day groups/privates).
4. What type of rental equipment are your beginning students most likely to have?
5. What kind of shape is the rental equipment in? Does your rental equipment help or hinder the learning process at your resort? Why?
6. Are there any physical barriers to the development of a trusting relationship with your guests in existence at your area? Is there anything you can do to alleviate the problems created by these barriers?
7. What type of learning terrain is available at your area? What type of lift service do you have for your beginner terrain? Characterize your terrain by describing the pitch, contours, any physical barriers, and accessibility for students. Would you characterize your terrain as user friendly?
8. What do you do at the beginning of your lessons to help develop a trusting relationship with your guests?
9. Can you pinpoint any place in your lessons where the bond of trust sometimes breaks down?
10. What are realistic goals for the first time skier you listed above at your area?
11. Given your typical student profile, the type of rental equipment available, and the terrain and lift service available at your home resort, list an IDEAL selection of activities for a beginning student that you have found to be both appropriate and effective.
12. List two challenges that you frequently encounter and discuss how you solve them.
13. List two skiing formats you use to make your beginner lessons fun and exciting. If you have learned any new teaching formats here that you intend to add to your repertoire please list them here as well.
14. How do you most frequently provide feedback to your students? List a second method of feedback that you would like to develop and incorporate into your lessons.

Appendix B: Additional Resources
• www.thesnowpros.org *See* Who We Are for an overview of Vision, Mission, Values, and Service Relationships. This shows the importance of partnerships in the ski industry and how we can support growth initiatives for the sport.
• Stepping Stones to Parallel chart is available in the following formats:
See *PSIA Alpine Technical Manual* (2002): Appendix F.

PSIA website: PSIA members can go to the Alpine Education section of the website and log in to access the Stepping Stones chart with associated hyperlinks.

• Visual cues for skiing are available in the following formats:

Alpine Movement Assessment Pocket Guide, PSIA, 1999.

In, Alpine Technical Manual (PSIA, 2002): Appendix E.

Movement Assessment Made Easy, by Katie Fry and Megan Harvey, *The Professional Skier,* fall, 1999. See, *TPS* Archives on the PSIA website.

• *Trial and Conversion Best Practices: NSAA Model for Growth.* National Ski Areas Association, 2001.

Discusses the growth initiative for skiing and gives examples of strategies that have worked