



Pumpkin Patch Overview



After months of research and “de-bugging” we are excited to roll out the latest concept to the entire Wheel Fun family. Our test pilot program at the Santa Fe Dam proved that Pumpkin Patches can be a great turn-key operation to enhance your off-season revenue. If you’re not sure how all this works or how it can work for you, call Mark and he can answer all your questions.



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Pumpkin Patch

As you probably know from our annual calls, WFR central was instrumental in assisting new WFR San Gabriel Valley franchisees Frank and Maggie Quintero with implementing an ambitious new venture at their Santa Fe Dam location in Irwindale, California. If you are not familiar with this location, it is very much like most park locations; once Labor Day hits and the kids go back to school, business tapers off drastically. The thought was, "How to make the momentum of the season last a little longer?" The weather was decent, so how could you bring the people back?



As all of us have probably noticed, Halloween has increasingly become a very popular holiday. It's no just kids cutting holes for a costume in mom and dad's sheets, to seek treats on the 31st. It has become an event holiday where people are willing to spend considerable amounts of money to have a fun family experience.

The idea was suggested to the franchisees that they might (with a lot of help from WFR Central) consider putting in a Pumpkin Patch at the location. They had the area for a small patch, and they already had bikes, boats, and some simple snack foods (ice cream, candy, hot dogs, etc.), so what would it take to bring people out to a park they wouldn't normally go to in October?



What WFR San Gabriel decided to do was to have a pumpkin patch, bounce house for the kids, a haunted house (they have a storage area that was converted), a truck driven hay ride, simple carnival games for little kids (bean bag toss), in addition to decorations, carnival type foods (caramel corn, candy apples, cotton candy), and prerecorded

Halloween music ("Monster Mash", "Purple People Eater") to help complete the ambiance. In addition to all of this, the Pumpkin Patch offered something that no other Pumpkin Patch in the area could, WFR products! The Surreys were decorated and renamed "Creepy Carriages" and boat and bike specials were offered to stimulate rentals. The location was open from 9AM – Sunset on Saturdays and Sundays in October, but they did offer to open during the week for group rentals, provided the groups were large enough and guaranteed with a deposit. Tickets were sold

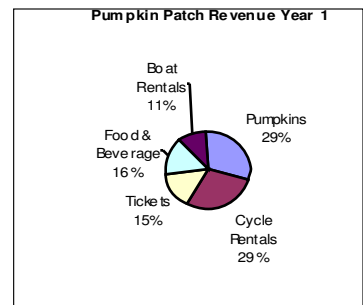


for the attractions such as the bounce house and haunted house but rentals and food were handled through normal transactions. Tickets (rather than money) were collected at each of the attractions by the employees to prevent issues.

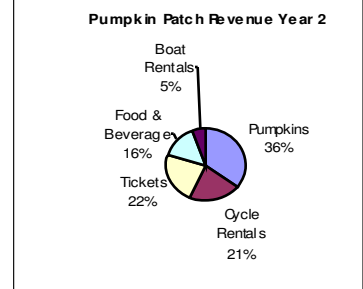
The Revenue Picture

Typically, October at this location generates \$2,200 combined in bike and boat rentals and food and bait sales. By having a Pumpkin Patch at the location they were able to turn a \$2,200 month into a \$27,000 month.

Revenue	Year 1	Year 2
Pumpkins	\$6,301	\$ 9,442
Rentals	\$6,241	\$ 5,665
Tickets	\$3,346	\$ 6,013
Food & Bev	\$3,465	\$ 4,271
Boat Rentals	\$2,443	\$ 1,349
Total	\$21,796	\$ 26,740



Expenses	Year 1	Year 2
Pumpkins	\$4,200	\$ 5,707
Hay	\$374	\$ 480
Forklift Rental	\$374	\$ 368
Insurance	\$690	\$ 690
Game Prizes	\$100	\$ 390
Hayride Trailer Rental	\$406	\$ *
Fencing	\$564	\$ 564



One Time Costs

Decorations	\$212	\$ 425
Games		\$ 300
Tent for Games		\$ 192
Haunted House	\$636	\$ 821
Signage	\$302	\$ 96
Inflatable Slide		\$ 2,800
Bounce House	\$1,500	
Total	\$9,258	\$ 12,834

* An 8' X 12' trailer was purchased for year round use for \$900

As you can see, to the right, the bulk of the expenses were the pumpkins, and although the margin of profit was small for them, the dramatically increased revenue coming from bike and boat rentals more than made up for it. The other substantial expense was the bounce house. It was decided that a Halloween themed bounce house would help build the atmosphere and as there were none available for rent it was decided to have one constructed from one of the many bounce house makers in the area. Expense-wise this turned out to be better than renting as the maker created a bounce house that could be easily modified for non-Halloween events, they didn't have to depend upon the reliability



of a third party every weekend, and the bounce house could be used for years.

What was discovered by creating the pumpkin patch was that the customers coming to the patch wanted to make a day out of their experience. People who were not the typical Santa Fe Dam customer drove several

miles specifically for the pumpkin patch. They initially came for pumpkins and maybe the bounce house or haunted house, but then decided to ride a bike or a boat (or both) and buy ice cream and snacks for the family. Anyone in business will tell you that getting a new customer is one of the hardest things you can do, but for this pumpkin patch the majority of customers had never been to that park or hadn't been there in a very long time.

Pulling It Together

The first steps were getting approval, then the planning process. These are some of the reasons you're seeing this article now and not in September. If you think this is something feasible for your location and your park contract will allow it, it wouldn't hurt to run this by the park official who has the power to say yes. That way, if the official is reluctant, you have some time to get them to turn that no into a yes. Also, planning should be done well in advance, and although now may be too early to do some things, the middle of summer may be too late for most of you due to the hustle and bustle of day to day operations.

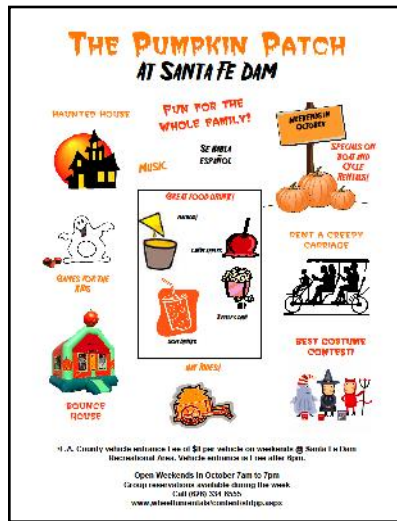
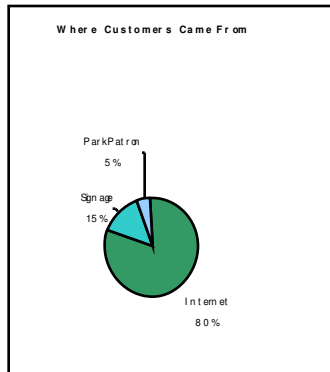
If it's something you find you'll be able to do, the next thing to achieve is deciding which elements to have at your pumpkin patch. Obviously, pumpkins but it's the other elements that add to the customer's experience. Try to pick at least three of these:

- A Bounce House
- A Haunted House
- A Hay Maze
- A Hay Ride
- Carnival Type Games
- A Trackless Train
- A Petting Zoo
- Pony Rides



This is just a list of some standard things that you might find at a Pumpkin Patch, but there are many other fun things that you may think of that will possibly be a good fit as well.

Once you've decided what elements to have, then you'll need to see where and if they'll fit. You may be limited on space or have restrictions that prevent you from some of these items, but if you're creative, parks typically have lots of space so you should be able to fit them in.



Securing vendors for most of the items shouldn't be too much of a challenge, Google any of these and you'll see many offerings. For vendors such as trains, zoos and pony rides, be sure to book these 4-6 months in advance. The most important (and sometimes hardest to pin down) vendor to secure is the pumpkin vendor, because it goes without saying that you can't have a pumpkin patch without pumpkins.

Marketing & Awareness

Marketing for the pumpkin patch was handled primarily through WFR Central. In addition to creating flyers and brochures, the marketing department had a press release circulated in English and Spanish to the various publications in the area as well as several free listings posted on popular events websites such as: Go City Kids, About.com, pumpkinpatchesandmore.org, and others. In addition, the WFR marketing department designed a web page that linked to the WFR Santa Fe Dam location page. When asked how they found out about the pumpkin patch 80% of the customers said they found out about it "on the internet", 15% had seen the signage that had been posted on the freeway or the street to the park entrance, and the remaining 5% came due to word of mouth or were park goers. In the end, Frank and Maggie were pleased with the project, as it added nicely to the season's revenue in just 8 weekend days (and a couple of weekdays for groups). They definitely have plans to do it again this year and intend to create an annual event people will look forward to year after year.

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