

Today's Camp Families Want Variety, Flexibility and Traditional Camp Values in One-Week Sessions

By: Grace Tummino, LINX Marketing Specialist

When it comes to personalities and interests within a family, many parents will tell you that no two kids are exactly alike. These differences can lead to high expectations when it comes to summer camp requests from our kids! Johnny may want to try acting while Jane wants to work on science experiments, and Jake wants to play basketball, flag football and traditional camp games all day long. Thanks to kids connecting on social media with each other about what they think is fun and exciting, campers are getting inspired to try many new activities. Of course, as parents, we want to entertain every notion to satisfy their curiosity, but the search for a camp with this kind of diversity, coupled with the ability to meet other challenging demands like scheduling flexibility and special needs concerns, can lead to one big camp headache! But before you reach for the pain reliever, take a peak at my interview with Josh Schiering, LINX Camps' Vice President and Executive Director, whose mission has always been to understand and act on the needs and expectations of every camp family generation. This article is second in a series of interviews with Josh, found on the LINX Blog, to help you get to know LINX Camps and some benefits you may not yet be aware of.

Me: Josh, do you see a need in the local community for one-week sessions throughout the summer?

Josh: Absolutely. When we first started the LINX Camps programs, we did a thorough analysis of what the market needs were for summer day camps, and we had a pretty good handle on it from talking about it with parents, other professionals and even children. This need rose out of varying parent work schedules, family vacation plans, and the desire for kids to try different types of programs. One-week programs have made this a reality for many families.

Me: As a mom of 3, I can appreciate good flexibility in a camp. Tell me more about that.

Josh: Each individual child is able to come to our camp for any given

week and pursue his/her individualized passion and interest within all of our offerings. This is great because now mom doesn't have to put the kids on different buses or race around multiple Massachusetts towns to get each kid to a different camp. We've taken that stress away by offering such a large variety in one-week increments. A family of 4 can choose 4 different types of programs and have their kids all at the exact same camp location.

Me: That sounds great. What about variety?

Josh: We have over 30 specialty camps, and we've introduced many new camps this year due to overwhelming feedback from parents. One of our most popular new programs this summer is our Spy Adventure Camp where kids get to be immersed in a world of studying and training to become a spy. They go on "mission impossible" type tasks and use sophisticated finger scan technology, laser sensors and infrared sensors, while going through a variety of training elements to ultimately learn how to become a spy and go on their own team mission. We've also added a gaming app design program, and enhanced and grown our art program. We've added a new program called the Lion's Den, which is similar to the NBC hit show *Shark Tank*, so as things evolve and become of interest to our camper community, we find a way to offer expert-led camp programs to indulge and satisfy their curiosity.

Me: How does LINX Camps include a variety of camp activities and traditions into a week of camp?

Josh: One of the first things I talk about with our counselors is the challenge of packing all of those traditional camp values, connectivity and building a community into one-week increments. Most of our campers are registered for an average of 6 weeks throughout the summer, and we look at each week as an individual stand-alone week. Our counselors know this is their one week with these kids and they've been challenged to get this group to be united, focused and rallied around positivity, inclusion, being kind to one another, and putting their best foot forward. I let my counselors know that their campers' first week might be their 8th week, and there's no room to slow down or decline in our energy and excitement for what it is we're doing. They do it and they prove it, that's why we're not only the

number 1-day camp in Massachusetts but also the fastest growing day camp in New England five years running.

Me: What makes LINX Camps' one-week sessions stand out from other camps?

Josh: I think we have something that is really magical and ambitious and our counselors are excited to be a part of it... and once they realize that "*This. Is. Awesome.*", it increases their game and makes them want to be that much better. So while I know we were ranked the #1 day camp in MA, we know we can be even better. And I think that's one of the unspoken founding principles of LINX - to be innovative, forward thinking, and to hire people that think that way. We constantly look and analyze what it is we're doing and find ways to do it even better. It's a matter of time and implementation and each year we keep doing better and better. The proof is in our enrollment, and a lot of that is through word of mouth. Parents are happy with our customer service and they are also satisfied with their children's growth as people, not just in the specialty camps. It's really happening just as we had envisioned and we're all very excited about it.

Me: Has LINX addressed any other needs of busy families?

Josh: Yes. Our flexibility doesn't only unfold in our offering one-week programs; it also unfolds in how kids can get to camp, extended day, early drop off, allergy awareness, and a variety of our other services. We try to exceed parent expectations when it comes to customer service and preparedness for flexibility. So, for example, if a parent wanted to do extended day, they used to have to sign up for the entire week. But what if mom or dad only works late on Tuesdays and Thursdays? For this reason, we offer extended day options on a daily or weekly basis. The same is true with our early drop off policy. We also have busing services and a very efficient car line service, because the last thing parents want to do is wait in a long car line for their camper. If parents want to send their kid to camp on the bus because the bus stop is convenient, but unexpectedly has to work late with the need to have an extended day, that's fine, we can accommodate that. If mom wants to drive her child to camp and have them go home on the bus, that is totally fine. We can accommodate

that. It comes down to accountability and logistics management. To make this a reality, we've built our own internal database structure that has all the tools to account for the whereabouts of every single camper.

Me: For families that decide to add more camp weeks to their registration later in the summer, is there a financial benefit?

Josh: Yes, the more weeks a family gets, the greater the discount. So for example, if you just do one week with us, and there are not a lot of families that do that, the price is \$625. If you do 8 or more weeks, the price comes all the way down to \$565 per week. So the more weeks you add on, the cheaper the price gets over the course of the summer. This is not just based on one camper in the family. It is based on the total number of camp weeks that a family is doing. We also discount our busing and lunch services based on the number of weeks that you do. All of this is always based on availability. We make sure we meet the camper staff ratio requirements so we have nice small intimate groups to get a quality experience. We don't push the limits at all.

Me: Does the availability of the one-week option play a role in a family's decision-making process?

Josh: Absolutely. Finding that one-week program that meets the child's specific interests and needs is a huge upside and benefit to a family. And while a lot of places might offer just one week of specialty soccer camp, one week of lacrosse camp, or one week of dance camp, we offer over 30 specialty camps for 6 to 8 weeks of the summer so families can pick and choose what works for their schedule. Parents love the flexibility.

Me: How does this feature contribute to the overall success of LINX Camps?

Josh: When we launched LINX Camps 8 years ago, we made the critical decision to offer the one-week camp model with extreme flexibility, and it has proven to be very successful. It has proven to be exactly what the parent community was wanting. We have kids here an average of 6 weeks, so they are coming for 4 to 8 weeks. It's just

broken up, so I think if we opened our programs at the start and said hey, here is a 4-week session, here is an 8-week session, I don't think we'd be where we are today. We've made it so camp works around the family schedule. It's camp a la carte. You pick and choose what you want and when you want it. I think having the one-week camps made us a viable option for families and put us on the map. More importantly, we did it while building community, offering traditional values, and building a strong sense of individuality as kids learn how to function and work in a group setting.

Me: I hope this interview has provided you with more information than you had before about LINX Camps' one-week sessions. We're always at your service as we strive to permanently eliminate camp headaches for Metrowest families!

For more information about LINX Camps, visit www.linuxcamps.com or email information@linx-usa.com.