**Case 31 IRTRA—Recreational Park XETULUL**

Amazing, unbelievable, fantastic! These are words commonly used to describe XETULUL, a Guatemalan recreational park developed and operated for private-sector workers by their employers. This park is located in the province of Quezaltenango (pronounced “kay-sot-in-al-go”) near the town of San Martin on the Pacific Coast Highway about 50 miles south of the Mexican border and 100 miles from the capital city of Guatemala City. The park is owned and operated by IRTRA, the Institute of Recreation for Workers of Private Companies in Guatemala, and opened in June 2002.

The XETULUL park instantly reminds one of Disney World with hotels, restaurants, individual cabanas, and three theme parks: an aquatic park with wave pool, superslides, and swimming pools; a sports park under construction; and a theme park. The theme park combines beautiful buildings that replicate historic sites of Europe and the Americas. Gift shops feature quality Guatemalan and imported products including clothing, cosmetics, footwear, and gifts. Restaurants are sparkling clean and feature Guatemalan, U.S., and European menus. Cafeterias, sit-down restaurants, and snack areas are open to serve 12,000 visitors per day.

A variety of rides include roller coasters, bumper cars, a train, and water rides including replicas of Venetian gondolas and a waterfall drop.

The park was developed in a former coffee plantation and tropical forest. Huge trees, grass, and shrubs provide shade for tropical birds and animals that share the park with human visitors.

Most Guatemalan workers might never be able to visit the recreational/theme parks of the United States or Europe, but they can enjoy an affordable and unique Guatemalan version.

None of this would be unusual if one of the traditional theme park operators such as Six Flags or Disney owned the park, but instead a unique organization known as IRTRA is the owner/operator. IRTRA was established by the private industry of Guatemala to provide affordable recreation for employees and their families as well as owners and managers of the companies.

The Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Agriculturalists, and the Association of Industry in Guatemala petitioned the Guatemalan Congress to pass a law permitting the establishment of IRTRA the right to fund it with tax-exempt monies. Thus, the theme park was built and continues to be supported totally by monies from Guatemalan private industry. A small fee is charged for entrance to the park but is purposely kept low. Other costs such as meals and beverages are reasonably priced.

The vision and mission statements of IRTRA include the following:

* •To develop a recreation opportunity for Guatemalan workers and employees at international standards.
* •To create parks and gardens using the latest technology for the benefit of Guatemalan workers and employees.
* •To provide employees opportunities with educational/training to improve their professional and personal lives.
* •To assist in the development of Guatemala.
* •To create recreational parks that are designed according to the latest technology and operated by the most competent individuals.
* •To preserve the ecology of our places of recreation.

Although IRTRA is a secular organization, it has a creed that expresses a faith in God, a belief in serving one’s fellows, a belief in work based on courtesy and cleanliness, a belief in working with nature rather than against it, and a belief in the need to inspire and motivate others to achieve happiness.

(Kotler 654-655)

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