



A ROAD MAP FOR EXCELLENCE IN CLUB MANAGEMENT

Great Clubs are distinguished by their defined uniqueness and warm personal service, from initial greeting through to departure. Each staff contact point along the Club journey of a member represents a 'moment of truth' and an opportunity for management to establish a professional rapport and understand individual expectations. This can only be delivered by staff who are continually trained, educated and motivated.



Happy New Year and welcome to 2009, a year which undoubtedly promises to provide both challenge and opportunity for the Golf and associated Club industry. Over the course of this year, this column will feature some of the core operational and strategic areas, or more simply 'Best Practices', proven integral to delivering a 'great' Club.

Having had the privilege and rewarding experience to work in the Club industry across three continents and diverse cultures over the past 23 years, I firmly believe that the Asia Pacific region has the potential to be the benchmark for eminent Clubs globally. However, this will only be achieved through diligent implementation of the various 'Best Practices' which will ensure that such an accolade is merited on a daily basis.

As an introduction to this regular feature in Asian Golf Business, I will briefly outline what I regard to be the 10 'Best Practices' which define the best and most successful Clubs operating today.

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1. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The foundation of any quality Club stems from in-depth business planning and the simple philosophy of revenues generated from regular dues and usage of facilities being sufficient to cover operating expenses. Far too many Clubs still rely on membership entrance fees or associated joining fees to fill this revenue gap. Entrance fees should be utilised for necessary annual equipment replacement or long term facility improvement as a capital expenditure.

2. GOVERNANCE

This is a much debated and written about topic and one which could no doubt fill all the pages in this publication with respect to Board structures. However, the key to successful governance whether it is in member owned or commercially owned entities, remains the same. Boards must have continuity planning in place, must conduct regular Board member orientations, must introduce quality induction programs for new Board members and must establish facilities, services and policies which provide the type of Club that the majority of members or potential members' desire. They must also be business minded when making decisions and be continually progressive.

BEST PRACTICES IN CLUB MANAGEMENT

3. MANAGEMENT

The most significant **'Best Practice'** in leading Clubs is the recognition of the necessity to hire good quality pro-active Managers and the adoption of the 'Chief Operating Officer' concept to manage staff, facilities and services. In simple terms this allows the General Manager the total responsibility, authority and accountability to implement the Board's objectives and direction. The Board must have the wisdom to take a step back and allow management the time and space to manage. Regular reviews of progression will ensure everyone is comfortable and motivated.

4. LONG TERM PLANNING

Long and short term 'strategic planning' determines where a Club or company is going over the next 1 to 5 years, how it is going to get there and how it will know if it got there or not. This annually reviewed **'Best Practice'** ensures both Boards and Management are continually focused and guarantees that the ever demanding needs of Club members are being met and evaluated.

5. SERVICE

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6. OPERATING PROCEDURES

Consistency of service and facilities is the greatest challenge in the hospitality industry, so how do the 'best' achieve the highest level of service every single day? Standard operating procedures (SOP's) across all departments is the single most important ingredient in this achievement, from the preparation and presentation of a dish in the restaurant to daily presentation standards on the golf course. The 'best' detail and reinforce this continually.



Hire good quality pro-active managers and the adoption of the 'Chief Operating Officer' to manage staff.



Communication — informing players of changes to conditions, marketing e-mails informing members of upcoming events through to publications explaining the Clubs progress and financial status.



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7. COMMUNICATION

This is an undervalued and often misunderstood aspect of great Clubs. Communication can take many forms ranging from notices on the golf course clearly informing players of changes to conditions, marketing e-mails informing members of upcoming events through to publications explaining the Clubs progress and financial status. The key, whether these be in hard, soft or verbal formats is regularity and quality of presentation. A well constructed communication and marketing plan is an absolute must in order to ensure high usage of facilities and a contented, informed membership.

8. GREAT GOLF COURSE

For those Clubs with Golf as an offering, a good course layout with high quality playing surfaces, well presented on a daily basis coupled with an excellent superintendent who is continually being given opportunities to further his knowledge is a cornerstone trait of the 'best'. No facility other than Food and Beverage attracts more opinion and comment.



Excellent superintendent translate to quality playing surfaces.

BEST PRACTICES IN CLUB MANAGEMENT

"... an ongoing exercise of support and cooperation through donation, awareness of and attendance at community initiatives and compliance with 'Best Practices' in environmental management."

9. GREAT FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Always the most challenging aspect of any Club operation, for many reasons, not the least of which is the requirement to provide a high quality creative kitchen which is able to satisfy the sophisticated expectations of regular patrons across a wide variety of menu themes at prices considerably lower than restaurant levels. However those Clubs that can provide consistent quality of food, with exceptional service in a unique appealing environment will generate much positive comment and repeat business.

10. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Again an often neglected area of Club strategy is to engage the support of the local community and environment. This is an ongoing exercise of support and cooperation through donation, awareness of and attendance at community initiatives and compliance with 'Best Practices' in environmental management. Both the real and 'feel good' benefits of Community Outreach programs to a Club should never be underestimated in the long term growth of an organization.



Community engagement

Over the next few months, I will explore in more detail some of these 'Best Practices', which I hope will provoke discussion and opinion on what makes a truly great Club.

With this in mind I have listed below some of the next issue topics and would encourage reader input on your 'Best Practices', which I will include or reference as appropriate in future articles, providing you with a little exposure for your individual Club. These suggestions can be sent directly to my desk at paul@leisurestrategies.com.au

- Great Service
- Great Recruitment and Retention
- What Makes a Great GM
- Great Communication in Clubs

LEISURE STRATEGIES

