

Club Director

WINTER 2022

PERSPECTIVES FOR LEADING PRIVATE CLUBS

PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL CLUB ASSOCIATION



2019 Winged Foot Award winners
Tony Bennett and Kim Mulkey



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LEADING

Dear Readers,

THIS IS THE 50TH ISSUE of *Club Director* of which I have served as editor. It is also my last issue. I am retiring from the National Club Association in January 2022 after 15 years of publishing magazines, newsletters, books and other resources for private clubs.

At NCA, nonprofit communications and publishing were not new to me, but it was my first introduction to the private club industry. From the first heartfelt welcome from David Chag at The Country Club, then NCA's chair, I experienced the warmest community of professionals in my career. In 2007, President & CEO Susanne Wegrzyn made sure I was initiated into this collegial environment of servant leaders, who not only lead stellar clubs across the country, but also give back to their industry by mentoring students, new hospitality professionals and trade association staff like me.

To work with general managers, COOs and CEOs of top clubs and to consult with a range of attorneys, consultants and accountants made my job much easier and more interesting. I was welcomed by some of the best: Bob James, Jeff McFadden, Tom Gaston, Kirk Reese, Kevin Reilly, Frank Vain, Robyn Nordin Stowell, Dan Denehy, Tom Lenz, Henry DeLozier and Dan Condon. Thank you for your guidance! To the current NCA board, led by Chair Mike Bruni, thank you for your support.

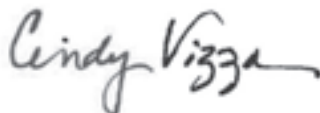
And, I have been inspired by and am grateful to some amazing women leaders in our industry, including recent NCA Chairs Terra Waldron and Christine Pooler, attorney Michelle Tanzer, General Managers Janine Budzius and Kristen LaCount and industry colleagues Teri Finan and Jackie Carpenter.

Creating interesting, educational and timely publications and resources is not a one-person task. Behind every issue of *Club Director* and *Club Trends* and every book, newsletter or website, there is a group of dedicated writers, editors and contributors who help produce the information critical for club leaders. I want to thank the NCA board members and corporate partners who write insightful content for each issue of the magazine and often provide the subject matter expertise on topics like trends, private status, governance and club data.

I have always been proud of NCA and the work it does, but never more than during the past two years. Led by President & CEO Henry Wallmeyer, NCA embraced its responsibility to inform and educate the entire private club community about the profound challenges caused by the pandemic. Joined by an extraordinarily talented staff—Joe Trauger, Phillip Mike, Denise Draper, John Good and Katina Cavagnaro—NCA produced an endless stream of vital information for club leaders. Though it was a difficult period, I was honored to have taken this journey with each of you. You are an incredible group of dedicated people and have my deepest thanks for your friendship.

There are many wonderful people I have met from the club community. With little space left to thank you individually, please know that I appreciate your support, guidance and friendship. I wish each of you continued success. Thank you for reading *Club Director*!

Warmest regards,



Cindy Vizza
Vice President & Editor



Vaccination at a Unionized Club

Know the Rules and Negotiate in Good Faith

The federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has issued guidance confirming that employers' mandatory vaccination rules against COVID-19 are lawful provided they meet certain criteria and allow exemptions for health/disability and good faith religious belief.

LET'S SAY EMPLOYEES at your club are represented by a labor union, perhaps it's the kitchen staff or the grounds crew. You'll typically have a wide array of employment terms and work rules spelled out in a collective bargaining agreement. For example, wage classifications and rates, benefit packages, payroll practices, a variety of work rules, a no-strike clause and a grievance/arbitration procedure would be common.

The agreement would result from negotiations between club management and the applicable labor union. Most agreements are drafted to last three years for a variety of reasons. Such reasons include the ability of management and the union to maintain a stable working environment without labor disputes while ensuring that the agreed-upon terms reflect current conditions each side believes are fair and appropriate. Additionally, the law recognizes a three-year agreement is appropriate to ensure labor stability while enabling employees to petition, if they so desire, to revisit via election whether they want a union's representation to continue.

Good Faith Efforts

Key to the success of a unionized operation, private club or otherwise, is acknowledgment and good faith effort to satisfy the legal bargaining duty under federal labor law (National Labor Relations Act Section 8(d)). Both unions and employers in this setting must bargain in good faith with each other over matters of wages, hours and a very broad concept called "terms and conditions of employment." This bargaining duty also enables unions and employers to request information

from the other regarding current wages, hours, working conditions, proposals to change current terms and conditions, etc. The underlying concept is informed discussion and each side's ability to stay informed and on point with issues of concern in the workplace.

Across the country, we saw, in response to the pandemic, that clubs sought to resume operations as broadly and as safely as possible for employees and members when circumstances allowed. Many employers grappled with questions of whether to mandate employee vaccination both as a matter of legal compliance and employee relations. In the unionized environment, the bargaining relationship and duty to bargain in good faith have been especially noteworthy. Bargaining, itself, has changed in that safety concerns have converted a process historically driven by in-person meetings and negotiations into one which is driven by Zoom and other virtual communications to keep business running in a safe and time-efficient way.

The federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has issued guidance confirming that employers' mandatory vaccination rules against COVID-19 are lawful provided they meet certain criteria and allow exemptions for health/disability and good faith religious belief. Where an employee seeks an exemption, the employer must engage in an interactive process to review the circumstances and whether there is appropriate accommodation for the employee in question.

"Unbargained" Mandates at Union Clubs

Taking unilateral action in a nonunion workplace may well be lawful, but having



What You Should Know About COVID-19 and the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and Other EEO Laws

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a union changes the chemistry and action plan. Labor practitioners have noted a National Labor Relations Board's (NLRB's) ruling in the *Virginia Mason Hospital* case, 357 NLRB 564 (2011), which addressed whether an employer could impose a vaccination requirement on union-represented employees. In *Virginia Mason*, a hospital initiated vaccination and other measures against the flu without notice or bargaining with the employees' union. In response to unfair labor practice charges, the NLRB determined that providing notice and an opportunity to bargain to employees' union were essential to the employer's compliance with labor law.

The Biden administration has expressed desire for vaccination and heightened safety requirements. The administration has also announced itself to be the "most pro-union administration" in U.S. history. Clubs should expect that the NLRB will have concern about management ordering unbargained requirements on unionized workers. This is regardless of whether OSHA's Emergency Temporary Standard requiring vaccination of employees at employers of 100 or more is accepted or rejected by the courts, where it currently is enjoined. However, the NLRB guidance on the bargaining duty is relevant and should be considered by clubs before they embark on vaccination mandates affecting union-represented employees.

This concern for bargaining relationships in the wake of an emergency temporary standard (ETS) issued by the OSHA led the NLRB to issue a guidance memorandum on how the ETS interplays with collective bargaining duties. The new guidance, in *NLRB Operations-Management Memorandum OM 22-03 (November 10, 2021)*, acknowledges that even with a government-mandated vaccination program, there is significant flexibility on some issues for management to determine. Where management has potential flexibility and discretion, the NLRB will expect

clubs and other employers to notify and bargain with a union before taking action. Where management has no flexibility or discretion in following some aspect of a vaccine mandate, management will be expected to notify the union and bargain over the effects of the decision. Failures to notify and bargain will be reviewed and likely prosecuted by the NLRB as unlawful refusals to bargain in good faith and are in violation of Section 8(a)(5) of the National Labor Relations Act.

The safest course will be for unionized clubs and employers in other industries to provide notice to the applicable labor union(s) before taking action. With a proposed vaccine mandate, clubs should expect to inform the union what is intended, how it will be accomplished, and when. Clubs should expect a union to be able to consider, discuss and respond to the proposal. This process may include meeting virtually or, if safe to do so, in person with appropriate precautions to discuss the proposal. It may be that a union requests information on details of what is proposed. Clubs should consider such information requests carefully. If sensitive information warrants disclosure, the club may wish to agree to protective terms with the union to prevent disclosure except as required by law. Similarly, how exemptions are handled should be discussed to ensure that both the club and union are in sync, even if that accord is simply to comply with applicable legal standards.

Clubs in the unionized environment may find that some unions are more eager for or opposed to vaccine mandates than others. Such positions may be driven by the nature of work they perform or by the feelings of specific members or union officials. Regardless, safety interests have reached a fever pitch in today's workplace. Shortages of skilled workers have also motivated how parties to such discussions will proceed. The safest course will involve dialogue and careful consideration




**NLRB Operations-
Management
Memorandum OM 22-03
(November 10, 2021)**

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Failures to notify and bargain will be reviewed and likely prosecuted by the NLRB as unlawful refusals to bargain in good faith and are in violation of Section 8(a)(5) of the National Labor Relations Act.

of the details to try, in good faith, to reach agreement on proposed terms.

Taking action without notice or bargaining, as with changes to wages, hours or other working conditions, will continue to be a high-risk venture for clubs and other employers. Acting without notice or bargaining raises the potential that the NLRB could take interest in an unfair labor practice charge and subsequent investigation leading to possible prosecution.

Clubs should seek advice from labor counsel as they encounter and deal with these issues. 



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What Moves the Election Needle: *Legislation, Campaign Spending or Polling Trends?*

WHEN 2021 BEGAN, there was great anticipation and some anxiety about the arrival of a new administration and new leadership in the Senate under the Democratic party. For the first time since 2009 there was unified control of Congress, the Senate and the White House with a dramatically different agenda from the previous four years. The margins in the House had narrowed considerably and the Senate was evenly divided. The tumult we experienced in 2020 with the election, coronavirus lockdowns, a wholesale shuttering of most of our economy, and social unrest in major cities around the country, including the Capitol building itself, raised questions about what and how much could really get done. The American Rescue Plan that passed in March continued ongoing efforts to provide support for an ailing economy, including two items of particular import to clubs: Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) eligibility and extension and enhancement of the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC). For many clubs, the ERTC was a tremendous boost that allowed them to keep staff engaged and working through 2020 and the first half of 2021. Since then, Congress has been mired in debates over how much to spend on infrastructure—which passed in November—and how far the budget reconciliation bill will go to enact key priorities of the progressive wing of the Democratic party. The reconciliation bill is currently in its third act and the ending hasn't been written yet, but with legislative days waning and must-pass measures like raising the debt ceiling and funding the government stacking up, it appears the final act will take place in 2022—if at all.

Campaign War Chests

As we begin the 2022 election year in earnest, in addition to the horse-race coverage over who's up and who's down, there will

be discussion about how much money is being raised by candidates. On the last point, the popular perspective is that there is too much money in politics and campaigns cost too much. I hold a different, somewhat unconventional view on the matter. According to a CNN report, campaigns for the U.S. House and Senate spent a combined \$5.7 billion in 2018. Campaigns for the Senate and House are indeed expensive, and we can count on those costs growing every cycle—yes, even politics is subject to inflation. Nearly \$6 billion is obviously a large sum of money when looked at singularly and without context. Consider that as a nation we spend more than \$6.5 billion on salty snacks every year—and that only includes the ones we purchase at convenience stores! The annual marketing budget for Coca-Cola, perhaps the most widely known brand in the U.S., is roughly \$4.3 billion with the aim to maintain market share and presence of mind among consumers.

The point I'm driving at is that when examined in context, one could make an argument that \$5.7 billion for 435 House seats and 33 Senate seats every two years is relatively inexpensive. In fact, it averages to roughly \$17.27 per person to determine who our elected leadership will be every two years. I'm sure some readers will guffaw, but when viewed with these points in mind, I would argue that \$6 billion every two years is a bargain.

Through its political action committee, ClubPAC, the National Club Association (NCA) is gearing up for the elections in 2022, and since September, the political landscape has shifted quite dramatically—as demonstrated by the elections in New Jersey and Virginia. It appears voters continue to be frustrated with Washington and increasingly believe Congress and the White House are not addressing the issues

they care about; inflation, the economy, education, crime and the border are the top issues according to recent polls. While the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill has a decent amount of support among the public, it's not likely to move the needle. Ten to 12 months is a political lifetime and Democrats will have to begin getting their message out to voters to turn things around, but the sentiment seems to be slipping away from them and toward Republicans at the moment.

Polling the People

One of the key indicators I like to watch is the generic choice for Congress. The gist of the poll is if an election were held right now, would the voter's choice be for a Democrat or a Republican. Historically, if the results of this poll show Republicans down between 4 to 5 points it will be a good year for Republicans. Democrats typically need to be above 7 or 8 points ahead in order to maintain or improve their numbers in the House. Recent polling shows Republicans leading the generic ballot by an average of 3.4 points and one poll, Rassmussen Reports, has Republicans up by 13 points among likely voters. This large a lead for Republicans has never been recorded since this poll began 40 years ago—not even in 1994 when Republicans took control of the House for the first time in 40 years. Again, we are a long way from November 8, 2022, but Republican leaders I've talked to in the House are increasingly confident they will be wielding the gavels in 2023. Only time will tell and NCA will be on top of it all as things unfold. [CD](#)



Joe Trauger is NCA's vice president of government relations. He can be reached at trauger@nationalclub.org or 202-822-9822.

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upward bounce in tennis participation was realized in the U.S. More than 21.6 million people played the sport in 2020, with more than 6.7 million being either completely new players or those returning to the sport after having been away for a while.

Tennis balls and big box sales of racquets hit all-time highs in the entry-level racquet market. Lesson and clinic revenue also grew to new levels and the need for certified teaching professionals in the industry was in high demand.

In conjunction with the TIU Appreciation Tour event, a continuing education day for professional development was held in the Atlanta Athletic Club indoor tennis facility with 80 local tennis professionals teaching classes, including cardio tennis with Michele Krause, injury prevention with Dr. Neeru Jayanthi of Emory Sports Medicine, and how to promote, introduce and retain players to the sport with local pros.



TENNIS INDUSTRY leadership gathered for the first of four Tennis Industry United (TIU) “Appreciation Tours” on September 30, 2021, at the historic Atlanta Athletic Club in Johns Creek, Ga. The tour is the brainchild of industry leaders to show their appreciation to all those associated with the growth of tennis during the COVID-19 restrictions.

The Atlanta Athletic Club hosted the event, which included an evening cocktail party in their beautiful 1898 clubhouse with representation from the leadership of the United States Tennis Association (USTA), United States Professional Tennis Association (USPTA), Professional Tennis Registry (PTR), Intercollegiate Tennis Association, Tennis Industry Association and major tennis equipment manufacturers. TIU partners, led by USTA representative Glenn Arrington and I hosted the evening event for the attendees.

USTA Director of Engagement and Services Mickey Maule, reported on the growth of tennis since COVID-19 restrictions were put into effect. In 2020, a 22%

The Participation Challenge Ahead

There are two pressing issues for the tennis industry as it moves forward with its growth following the COVID-19 bump. The first issue is the disruption of the supply chain and second is the lack of teaching experience getting into the profession. One will have a short-term effect; the other may have a long-term effect on the game’s stability.

The industry, just as all consumers, is currently in short supply of tennis products and the outlook does not look favorable for 2022. Demand for racquets, tennis balls and other tennis items have been in short supply since early 2021. Production of tennis balls, a vital product for



Top: Dr. Neeru Jayanthi (right) demonstrates pre-match warm-up techniques to prevent tennis injuries

Middle: A cocktail party was held at Atlanta Athletic Club’s 1898 House

Bottom: Industry Leaders from USTA, Wilson Sporting Goods and area tennis professionals

league, tournament and recreational play, is in short demand due to the lack of production of rubber during the global shut down. Rubber is used in so many products that the prioritization of rubber supply continues to lean toward crucial needs versus sports equipment. Ramping up production may not impact availability until late 2022 or on into 2023. Pricing of these products have already begun to increase and could deter participation.

The second major concern, and one that can affect the stability of tennis, is the lack of young tennis professionals getting into the job market. Understandably, the hospitality business has been one of the hardest hit industries for staff since the county's re-opening. The hospitality industry is not a "9 to 5, Monday through

Friday" profession. This holds promise for tennis teaching professionals.

The number of tennis professionals reaping the benefits from the 1970s boom are beginning to look past their court days and are weighing retirement. Industry leaders are concerned and looking to where the next generation of teaching professionals can be found. The USPTA, PTR and USTA have developed programs and certification to attract new, young professionals. These programs have potential to bring a new generation of well-rounded tennis pros into the market. The tactics that will help attract this group of new professionals will come from employers and consumers as compensation for this cohort will need to be addressed in a new competitive market. The next generation of teaching

professionals will have an opportunity to build on a stable foundation and to enhance all players in their tennis hours.

A Bright Future

The Atlanta event was the first of four events to be held in the United States. The next stops on the Tennis Industry United Tour include Dallas, Denver and Scottsdale. The tennis industry will continue to showcase the game's health and social benefits as the sport has a bright future for players and those in the industry. **CD**



Jeff Chandley is director of tennis at Atlanta Athletic Club in Johns Creek, Ga. He can be reached at jcc@aac1.org.



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Considerations for Bylaws Amendments

Proceed Carefully

The following provides a basic overview of how to make changes to your club's bylaws.

CLUB BYLAWS are living club documents that should be reviewed by the board annually to ensure the club is evolving with the times while preserving its culture and traditions. Numerous clubs have undergone this process; however, there are careful considerations clubs should make when reviewing and changing these governing documents. Club boards should consider the legal and practical issues of a proposed bylaws amendment and how to maximize the chances of bylaws amendment approval. The following provides a basic overview of how to make changes to your club's bylaws.

The Amendment

Club board members and club managers should first decide on the specific amendments to propose to the bylaws. The bylaws may be amended solely to revise a single provision or multiple provisions, or the board may decide to adopt comprehensive amended and restated bylaws. Some clubs have trouble in obtaining quorums for member meetings, so the members voting on several amendments at one time avoids the need for the club to try to reach a quorum at multiple meetings. A club board must also decide whether members vote on the entire set of amendments as a single vote or present individual amendments as separate votes.

The board may consider amendments for different reasons, including:

- *Updating Bylaws to Reflect Actual Practice.* Clubs often issue memberships in new categories without a bylaws amendment or adopt important policies that should be incorporated into the bylaws.
- *Creating a Unified Bylaws Document.* Many club bylaws have inconsistent or

redundant provisions, and do not read like a cohesive, organized document. Such inconsistencies and redundancies may even result in ambiguity regarding members' rights, privileges and obligations.

- *Updating Bylaws to Reflect Industry Trends and Practices.*
 - *Family Privileges* – More clubs are expanding the definition of family to increase the age of included children and to recognize significant others. Some clubs in resort areas provide vertical family privileges that afford privileges to adult children, parents and grandchildren when they visit the member's home. Expanding the family definition may result in increased membership sales and improved member retention because members and prospective members may find that the ability of their family members to enjoy the club justifies the purchase of a membership or continuing to pay dues.
 - *Spouse Membership* – Some clubs title memberships in both spouses, welcoming women and recognizing the leadership roles that they play on committees and as board directors. If membership is restricted to a single member—often the male—bylaws amendments are often required for spouses to serve on the board.
 - *Junior and Legacy Programs* – Clubs are increasingly adopting junior or young executive programs for members below a certain age, with reduced dues or installment payment financing of the membership purchase, to attract younger members. Similarly, more clubs are offering

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members legacy privileges, which afford the member's adult children facilities-use privileges upon payment of dues only. Legal counsel should be consulted regarding the potential application of age discrimination laws to invalidate such programs.

- Meeting Requirement Provisions – Many clubs learned during the pandemic that bylaws provisions do not permit electronic voting and member attendance at member meetings by videoconference. In addition, many clubs find bylaws quorum requirements difficult to attain. Clubs should consider amending these provisions to make it easier for clubs to have official meetings and elections.
- Addressing Access and Use Issues. Bylaws provisions may create or

exacerbate access and use issues. Liberal guest and entity designee use privileges may permit persons to frequently use the membership of a friend or colleague without purchasing a membership or paying dues and may create compaction issues.

Legal Considerations

The club and its legal counsel should confirm that the proposed bylaws amendment is consistent with the bylaws amendment provision and is adopted in accordance with applicable legal and contractual requirements, including:

- Consistency with Corporate Statute. The proposed bylaws amendment should be reviewed for consistency with state corporate statutes. State corporate statutes often govern matters

that are also addressed in club bylaws, such as member and director meetings and voting, membership transfer and member discipline.

- Amendment Approval Requirements. The bylaws and sometimes the state corporate statutes establish requirements for approval of bylaws amendments, including whether a member vote is required and if so, what percentage of members is required to vote for the amendment.
- Consistency with Membership Agreements. A bylaws amendment may not amend express provisions in members' membership agreements. Therefore, a club should confirm that the bylaws amendment does not change a bylaws provision that is repeated in membership agreements.

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■ **Lender Approval Requirement.**

If a club loan is outstanding, the loan documents could give the lender the right to approve bylaws amendments, either generally or as to specific provisions.

■ **Consistency with IRS Code.**

For tax-exempt clubs under IRS Code Section 501(c)(7), the bylaws and amendments should be reviewed for compliance with IRS regulations, rulings and guidance.

■ **Caselaw.**

Courts in some states have invalidated bylaws amendments even if the club followed the mandated bylaws and statutory requirements on the grounds that the amended provisions take away or materially adversely affect the complaining member's vested rights or violate the club's duty of good faith and fair dealing. Below is a summary of *Share v. Broken Sound Club*, a Florida appellate court decision that provides insight on potential challenges to a bylaws amendment and how a court considers such challenges.

Share v. Broken Sound Club

In *Share v. Broken Sound Club*, in March 2021, a Florida appellate court rejected a club member's challenge to club bylaws amendments to the method of calculating dues for each category and the assessment and reserve fund use provisions, which had been adopted by the club board. The case began when the club sued Marla Share, a club social member, for unpaid dues. Share filed a counterclaim asserting that the board lacked authority to adopt the bylaws amendments and the club breached an implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing.

When Share joined the club in 2004, the board apportioned dues increases among each membership category by allocating costs to each category. In 2007, the board adopted a policy of charging an equal amount of dues

increases across all categories. In 2016 and 2017, the board adopted several amendments, including removing the requirement that dues increases be in an equal amount for every category, and allowing social members to access dining facilities to which they previously had no access. The amendments also allowed the club's reserve funds to be used to pay capital expenses for facilities used only by golf members and required social members to be charged for capital and operating expenses for the golf courses to which they do not have access. Share argued that the board, which Share alleged was controlled by golf members, breached its contractual duty under the implied covenant of good faith "when it unilaterally changed the bylaws so that it could disproportionately increase social membership dues to the direct benefit of [the golf members] and to her detriment" and amended the bylaws in an unreasonable way that favored golf members.

Before addressing Share's challenges to the bylaw amendments, the court first noted that Share entered into a membership agreement consenting to be bound by all the terms and conditions of the club bylaws. The court then noted that the bylaws in effect when Share joined the club gave the board the power to amend the bylaws, prepare and amend budgets and determine the amounts of dues, fees and charges.

The court next addressed Share's claim that the club breached the implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing. The court indicated that although every contract imposes an obligation of good faith and fair dealing, it cannot be used to vary the terms of the contract, which in the case of the Broken Sound Club, gave the board the power to establish dues and amend the bylaws. The court concluded that Share failed to demonstrate that no reasonable club board would have made the same operational decisions.

With respect to Share's other claims that the board did not have the authority to adopt the bylaws and breached the bylaws and the member's membership agreement and the board's actions were arbitrary, capricious and in bad faith, the court determined that the trial court correctly rejected such claims based on the business judgment rule. With respect to Share's challenge to the board increasing the dues on all membership categories by the same amount, the court noted that golf members still paid significantly higher dues than social members and that social members benefitted from revenue generated by the golf facilities. The court explained, "[i]t is not our role to second-guess or micromanage the dues structure of a private club simply because a new rule for dues increases may slightly benefit one membership class over another."


Share also argued that she was not bound by the bylaws amendment because her membership agreement did not qualify her agreement to be bound by the bylaws with "as they may be amended in the future," which was in other forms of membership agreement. The court responded that Share's agreement to be bound by the bylaws included being bound by its amendment provisions.

Covering All the Bases

Club management and boards should fully consider not only the bylaws amendment itself, but also possible bases to challenge the amendment, and consult with legal counsel regarding bylaws amendment requirements and whether the amendment is consistent with state corporation statute and IRS guidance in the case of a 501(c)(7) organization. **CD**



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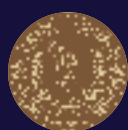


AWARD-GIVING CLUBS

By Phil G. Mike

How Clubs Celebrate Excellence in Amateur Athletics

Since their inception, private clubs have showcased the best in the country—whether it’s golf courses, facilities, architecture, amenities or art. Clubs have also showcased and honored the best in their class with some of the nation’s most notable awards, such as the former Downtown Athletic Club’s Heisman Trophy, which annually honors college football’s top performer. The National Club Association (NCA) interviewed several clubs to learn more about their most prestigious and nationally recognized awards as well as their origins, selection processes and their significance. Interviewed clubs are:



The New York Athletic Club, New York City (NYAC) – Winged Foot Award. Given to winning coaches from the NCAA Division I Basketball Tournament. Roger Simon serves as NYAC general manager.



The University Club of Washington DC (UC) – The Tewaaraton Award. Given to the best male and female college lacrosse player. Brian Donohoe serves as UC general manager.



The Missouri Athletic Club, St. Louis (MAC) – The Hermann Trophy. Given to the top college male and female soccer player. Wally Smith serves as general manager and CEO at the MAC.

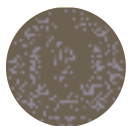


Colonial Country Club, Fort Worth, Texas (Colonial) – The Ben Hogan Award. Given to the nation’s top collegiate male golfer based upon all amateur competitions during the previous 12 months. Frank Cordeiro serves as Colonial’s general manager and COO.



The Ben Hogan Award banquet at Colonial Country Club hosts 230 attendees.

How the Awards Came About at Clubs



The NYAC Winged Foot Award first came into being in 1996, the brainchild of then-NYAC Vice President Jim O'Brien and the club's Athletic Director Ray Lumpp. Lumpp was a gold medalist in basketball from the 1948 Olympic Games in London, following that success with a professional career in the NBA with the New York Knicks. O'Brien and Lumpp's concept was to pay tribute to the winning coaches from the NCAA Division I Basketball Tournament while simultaneously illustrating the NYAC's support of amateur sport at the highest level. The first recipient of the Winged Foot award was Kentucky Head Coach Rick Pitino. In 1999, the scope of the Winged Foot Award was expanded to also recognize the winning coaches from the burgeoning women's tournament. The first recipient was Carolyn Peck from Purdue. In the years since, many of the most celebrated coaches in NCAA history have been honored at the NYAC, among them Geno Auriemma, Mike Krzyzewski, Kim Mulkey, Jay Wright and Pat Summitt.



Lacrosse is one of the oldest team sports played in North America. Rooted in centuries of Native American tradition, the game took on many variations before reaching its present-day form. "Tewaaraton," is the Mohawk name for their game and the progenitor of present-day lacrosse. The game is commonly viewed as founded by the Iroquois Nation, or Haudenosaunee. The Iroquois say that lacrosse was a gift from the creator. They believe lacrosse is a holistic process that binds communities and the nations of the Haudenosaunee together. Lacrosse is also considered a "medicine" game because it promotes the health and strength of the Nation, ensuring a continuance of tradition and an understanding of their ways.

In 2000, a group of members from the University Club came up with the concept for the "Heisman Trophy of Lacrosse." They enlisted the assistance of Tom Vennum, a lacrosse historian, and several top NCAA coaches. They commissioned the trophy design to Fred Kail, a renowned sculptor. The first award was presented in 2001.



The MAC has a storied history of celebrating athletic excellence dating back to its founding.

- In 1903, in preparation for the Olympic Games to be held the next year in St. Louis, members helped officiate the games and MAC athletes even participated in them.
- In 1970, MAC member and Hall of Fame Sports Broadcaster Jack Buck created the Sports Personality of the Year Award to honor the best St. Louis-area sports figure as voted on by MAC members. The award's banquet is held at the club, and now in its 52nd year, the Jack Buck Sports Awards Banquet is regarded as the "Oscars" of St. Louis sports. Distinguished athletes and coaches like Bob Gibson, Joe Torre, Jackie Joyner Kersee, Ozzie Smith, Albert Pujols and Kurt Warner are just a few who have been in attendance.
- In 2018, the United States Basketball Writers Association's (USBWA's) basketball player of the year award selected the Missouri Athletic Club to host their award banquet. In prior years, the USBWA awards were announced at the Final Four, but typically there was not an awards banquet. Established in 1959, the Oscar Robertson Trophy has been presented to some of the biggest

names in basketball including Lew Alcinder, Bill Walton, Larry Bird and Michael Jordan. Over the years, the USBWA has voted and presented additional awards including the female player of the year, freshman of the year and coach of the year awards.

The Hermann Trophy, celebrating college soccer's best player, was established in 1967 by Bob Hermann, president of the National Professional Soccer League and future Chairman of the Executive Committee for the North American Soccer League.

In 1986, the MAC expanded its sports banquets with the creation of the National Collegiate Soccer Player of the Year Award. Dennis Long, president and COO at Anheuser-Busch and a MAC member, was instrumental in the creation of the award. Fittingly, St. Louis has a strong soccer tradition with St. Louis University winning the most collegiate soccer championships with 10. Long envisioned the award was most suited to be hosted at the MAC, similarly to the Heisman Trophy at the Downtown Athletic Club in New York.

However, after years, it became clear that two "player of the year" awards for college soccer were unnecessary. The Hermann Award did not have an awards banquet or any presentation, so over time the MAC award was held in higher regard, even though the Hermann had more history.

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Two-time Olympic gold medalist, FIFA Player of the Year and Women's World Cup champion Carli Lloyd autographs books during festivities at the MAC.

The National Soccer Coaches Association, who represent Division I soccer coaches, encouraged both parties to merge into one award. Since the MAC was already hosting a banquet, it didn't change the club's preparation. And for Hermann, it let them keep that name on the Player of the Year trophy and honored their long-time commitment to college soccer. Both organizations coincidentally were based out of St. Louis, and the merger was seamless.



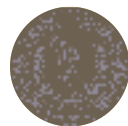
The Ben Hogan Award was created in 1989 by Tom Harmon, a Friends of Golf (FOG) board member and 1940 Heisman Trophy winner, and golf legend Ben Hogan to recognize the collegiate golfer who exhibited excellence in academics and in the game. The following year, FOG and Golf Coaches Association of America (GCAA) began presenting the award. Unfortunately, the Ben Hogan Award did not have the prestige it set out to achieve as, in some years, the winner would not show up to receive the trophy.

In 2001, then-Chairman of Colonial Charities and current Chairman Emeritus of the award Bill Barnes began inquiring whether there was a golf award that was an equivalent to the Heisman Trophy. Barnes was put in touch with Golf Coaches Association of America (GCAA) President Greg Grost, who introduced him to the Ben Hogan Award. Barnes made the case that the

Ben Hogan Award would be a great fit for Colonial. Fort Worth is Hogan's hometown and the golf legend won five times at Colonial, Colonial is home to Hogan's Alley, and a statue is there in his honor. Grost was receptive to the idea and felt it was a good fit with FOG.

Barnes received approval from the Colonial board to pursue the award and created a partnership between Colonial, FOG, and the GCAA to sponsor the award and formed the Hogan Award Committee.

How the Award Came to Prominence



The NYAC Winged Foot Award is recognized in the world of collegiate basketball as one of the sport's premier accolades. Among Division I coaches, it has become coveted, and a highly anticipated complement to the winners' trophies. This renown has come about due to the unstinting volunteer work of the Winged Foot Award Committee, spearheaded by the aforementioned Jim O'Brien, plus Gene DeSoiza and Milton Lee, all former NYAC board members and each of whom gives freely of their time to ensure that the Winged Foot Award retains its prestige. Throughout the year, the committee strategizes for the coming collegiate season, with arrangements

moving into high gear during March Madness. At the Final Four, committee members work tirelessly to engage with coaches and administrators from the attending colleges, with a view to solidifying arrangements for the impending Winged Foot Award Banquet while also reinforcing and heightening the profile of the award for the years ahead.



The Tewaaraton Award sought approval from the Mohawk Nation Council of Elders for the use of the word Tewaaraton for its award. This relationship is critical to the ongoing recognition of not only the top players but also the heritage of the game. The award is now in its 22nd year and integrated other elements, including The Tewaaraton Legends, which celebrates great players who would have won the award prior to its founding, and The Spirit of Tewaaraton, which recognizes individuals who have lived the values on which the game was built.

The selection committees, which are made up of the top college coaches, are responsible for the quality of selection that has gained great admiration and respect. The Tewaaraton Foundation has been instrumental in defining and maintaining the guidelines

for selection. The lacrosse world pays close attention to the winners, and also the finalists and nominees, as a measuring stick for the game's top players.



The MAC has honored some of the biggest names in American soccer history. Tony Meola, John Harkes, Claudio Reyna and Alexi Lalas are a few of the past winners to claim the prestigious crystal soccer ball trophy. In 1991, the Missouri Athletic Club became one of the first national collegiate awards sponsors to also recognize a female recipient with the creation of the Women's National Player of the Year Award. The legendary Mia Hamm, Kristine Lilly and Tisha Venturini, who helped grow the popularity of women's soccer in the U.S. in the 1990s, all won the MAC Award. A new generation of female soccer stars including Kelley O'Hara, Crystal Dunn and Christen Press have won the trophy before going on to lead the U.S. Women's National Team to World Cup and Olympic championships.

In 2003, following the merging of the MAC Player of the Year Award and the Hermann Trophy, the banquet format expanded and was patterned after the presentation of the Heisman Trophy. Since



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The Heisman Trophy: Downtown Athletic Club

The Heisman Trophy, awarded annually to college football's most outstanding player, is one of the country's most prestigious athletic accolades. Formally known as the Heisman Memorial Trophy, the award was created by the Downtown Athletic Club (DAC) in New York City in 1935 to recognize the best college football player east of the Mississippi River.

Heisman's History

The award was conceptualized by John Heisman (born in 1869), who, among many things, was a football pioneer and coach. Among his many contributions to the game, Heisman introduced the center snap, handoff and the "hut, hike" cadence and separated the game into four quarters. In his 27 seasons as a football coach, he had only one with a losing record.

In 1930, Heisman was named the first director of the DAC. In his time at the club, Heisman developed the system that would recognize college football's best player east of the Mississippi. The award was called the Downtown Athletic Club Trophy and was first given to Jay Berwanger of the University of Chicago. Heisman passed away before the second trophy could be awarded. In his honor, the club renamed the accolade to the Heisman Trophy and broadened the criteria were to include the entire country.

The Trophy

The 25-pound, 13.5-inch, bronze trophy is one of sports' most widely recognized. The sculpture is of a football player running with a ball in his left arm while stiff arming with his right. The club commissioned Frank Eliscu, a 23-year-old recent graduate of the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn to design the trophy. The club approved Eliscu's design and the sculptor modeled the trophy after poses from Fordham University football players.

The Ceremony

The award presentation, now known for its drama and pageantry, has dramatically changed since its inception. From 1936 to 1976, the winning player was brought to New York City with his coach and university representatives for a special convocation with college football's biggest names with press, radio and television coverage that was only locally and modestly publicized. About a week later, a gala would be hosted for former Heisman winners, with celebrities in sports, entertainment and politics in attendance. At the gala, the award was formally presented to the winning athlete. The Downtown Athletic Club hosted the gala until 1973, when the event's popularity outgrew the club and was moved to the New York Hilton.

In 1977, due to a strong campaign from club members, the DAC decided to reach a much larger audience and present the Heisman in a primetime television event. The club sought to elevate the trophy and the club's role to a higher level and the event began to look much like how it does today. Beginning in 1982, multiple finalists were invited to take part in the live television broadcast that announced the winner.

DAC's Closure and Present Day

The Downtown Athletic Club hosted the Heisman announcement until the tragic events of September 11, 2001, which, due to its proximity to the World Trade Center and financial issues, forced the club to permanently close. The presentation moved to the New York Marriott Marquis that year and subsequently was hosted at the Yale Club of New York City in 2002 and 2003. The presentation is now hosted at the Lincoln Center in New York City. Following the club's bankruptcy, the trophy was distributed by the Heisman Trust.

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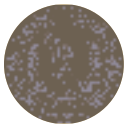
then, the top three male finalists and top three female finalists are invited to the MAC. The winners are announced at a press conference prior to the awards banquet. The head coach of each finalist is also invited to speak at the banquet. Both the male and female award recipients are voted on by the Division I college coaches.

For Alexi Lalas, the 1991 winner, the MAC Award was an important boost heading into the start of his professional career. "It made me feel good to leave college with that prestigious award. My being named the top college player really helped me prepare for my role with the U.S. National Team by giving me confidence that I could excel at that level."



Colonial's rebranding and undertaking of the award has helped elevate and rejuvenate the Ben Hogan Award to its proper standing in the golf world. The strong partnership with FOG and the GCAA, as well as Hogan's connection to Colonial, solidifies its stature. The award has been given to many of the most prominent names in golf, including Jon Rahm, Rickie Fowler and Patrick Cantlay, and the ceremony keynote speakers are among the most reputable associated with the game.

What the Award Means to the Club and its Members



Since its inception, the Winged Foot Award has been embraced by the NYAC's members as a unique element of club life, one that reflects the prestige of the NYAC as well as the club's steadfast support for amateur sport. It is hardly a surprise, therefore, that each year, the awards banquet sells out with more than 500 attendees. It is one of the few events at the NYAC that is so large that it can only be accommodated in the club's expansive gymnasium, which is transformed into an elegant—and appropriate—banquet space for the evening.



UC has long been established for its focus on education, history and athletics. The award fits this in every way and, therefore, is a unique extension of the club's key attributes and enhances its reputation. The Tewaaraton Foundation has given more than 30 scholarships and its alignment with the award makes it appealing for younger prospective members to stop in and check out the club. This has resulted in new memberships and access for these members to experience the award ceremony annually.



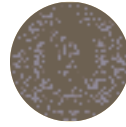
The club has a strong sports and athletics culture that members embrace. The Hermann Trophy banquet consistently sells out and represents an important facet of club membership and the soccer world. Additionally, the club's expansive awards programs continue to be a focal point for members. The USBWA banquet has been a hit as the club has a lot of basketball fans in its membership and features a vibrant basketball program with several leagues. MAC membership support the USBWA awards with purchased sponsorships and tables. The event is in high demand and sells out quickly.



The membership has been very supportive and proud of how the Ben Hogan Award has been accepted in the golfing world. They have enjoyed following the Hogan Award winners on the tour and seeing their accomplishments. During the last 21 years since the Hogan Award was brought to

Colonial Country Club, the prestige of this award has risen to the top. It is truly the Heisman Trophy of golf.

How Winners Get Selected



As the Winged Foot Award is presented to the winning coaches of the NCAA Division I Basketball Tournaments, they are “recipients” of the award rather than winners. Further, unlike some other awards, subjectivity is not a factor in which recipients are selected. The NYAC Winged Foot Award goes to the top coaches in that year's tournaments. It is unequivocal: the award goes to the best.



The selection committees are made up of 36 college coaches: 18 each from the men's and women's selection committees. The Tewaaraton Foundation oversees the selection guidelines and monitors changes in conference realignment to assure that each player will be seen throughout a given year. The process begins with 100 “watch list players” (50 women, 50 men—none of which are freshman) prior to the season's first games. As the season progresses, players are added on three occasions (including freshman). Three weeks prior to the season concluding, 50 nominees are selected (25 women, 25 men). Then, at season's end, and prior to the playoffs, 10 finalists (5 women, 5 men) are announced and invited to the ceremony in Washington, D.C.



The MAC Hermann Trophy watch lists are compiled by members of the United Soccer Coaches Men's and Women's NCAA Division I All-America Committees. Fifteen semifinalists are named for both the men's and women's MAC Hermann Trophy in mid-November. From those candidates, Division I soccer coaches select the three men's and women's finalists and winners of the coveted award.



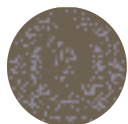
Colonial changed the selection criteria to identify the top collegiate golfer by considering their collegiate/amateur record. A selection committee of 30 individuals involved in collegiate golf vote in January to identify the top 30



2021 Tewaarton winners Charlotte North (left) and Jared Bernhardt (right) holding the women's and men's trophies. Due to the unavailability of the normal award venue, the 2021 ceremony was held at Gillette Stadium in Foxborough, Mass., during the opening weekend of the Premier Lacrosse League season. Photo credit: David Silverman.

collegiate golfers nationwide. On April 1, a vote is held to create a semifinal list of 10 and on May 1, a vote that also includes the former Hogan Award winners vote in the final round to select three golfers. On the third week of May, the selection committee sends their secret final vote to KPMG CPA for certification.

Recognition, Awards and Honors for Recipients



The recipients of the NYAC Winged Foot Award receive a VIP membership to the New York Athletic Club, entitling them to many member privileges, including access to club events and facilities, as well as charging privileges. Additionally, the club donates to the Jimmy V Foundation in the names of the winning coaches.



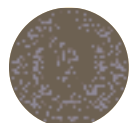
The winners receive The Tewaarton Award Trophy, which was created by renowned sculptor Frederick Kail. Each winner receives a trophy and each winner's university is allowed a replica trophy for display. The club welcomes the finalists each year, providing overnight accommodations while they are in Washington, D.C., for the ceremony and also hosts a dinner for the finalists and their families.



The Ben Hogan Award winner is presented \$30,000 in scholarship money for the golf program at his

university and an exemption into the Charles Schwab Challenge tournament on the PGA Tour held annually at Colonial Country Club. The two runners-up receive \$17,500 each to their respective golf programs at their university. In the 21 years at Colonial Country Club, the Hogan Trophy Award Foundation has distributed \$860,000 to support collegiate golf.

The Awards Ceremony



The NYAC Winged Foot Awards Banquet is an unparalleled club event. With more than 500 attendees, among them many guests of the colleges, the banquet is a vibrant and uplifting display of collegiate sports. The event's master of ceremony is Billy Packer, whose irrepressible style, coupled with the testimonies of players, administrators and friends of the coaches, creates an alchemy that is impossible to adequately describe. NYAC's members look forward to this event as a highlight of the club's annual calendar.



The annual Tewaarton Awards recognition begins with a dinner at The University Club for all 10 finalists—including the recipients of The USA Lacrosse Tewaarton Scholarships—and their families, as well as several special guests that will receive recognition for The Tewaarton Legends and Spirit of Tewaarton. The awards ceremony then takes place the next evening at The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, which is a short ride down the road near the

U.S. Capitol. This draws nearly 600 people each year and has recently been televised nationally.



The Ben Hogan Award banquet is a black-tie event held annually at the club with 230 guests in attendance. It coincides with the PGA Tour's Charles Schwab Challenge, first known as the Colonial National Invitation, for 75 years, making Colonial Country Club the longest continuous host of a PGA Tour event. The event has had notable keynote speakers from the sports world to celebrate the event including sports broadcasters Jim Nantz and Pat Summerall, as well as pro golfers and legends John Rahm, Dave Stockton and Ben Crenshaw, among others.



In 2003, the Hermann Trophy awards banquet format expanded and was patterned after the presentation of the Heisman Trophy. Since then, the top three male

finalists and top three female finalists are invited to the MAC. The winners are announced at a press conference prior to the awards banquet. The head coach of each finalist is invited to speak at the banquet. Both the male and female award recipients are voted on by the Division I college coaches.

The Hermann Trophy is open to the public and includes young soccer players. The awards banquet hosts 450 guests and features a high-profile guest speaker from the world of soccer. Some of the biggest names in the sport including Brandi Chastain, Bob Ley, Brian McBride and Carli Lloyd have helped make it an event to remember at the MAC.

"The MAC has created the perfect formula for presenting college soccer's national awards," said Bruce Arena, the most successful coach in U.S. National Team history. "The MAC does an excellent job bringing in the players, their families and coaches to St. Louis for the national press conference and the prestigious awards program." **CD**

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MAJOR OCCASIONS

Hosting Championship

The National Club Association (NCA) will be well-represented at professional golf's marquee events in 2022, with all three of the majors held in the United States taking place at an NCA member club. It's no surprise that NCA member clubs would be attractive venues for PGA major championships. NCA's membership includes many of golf's most storied clubs, and member clubs have been hosting PGA tour events for more than a century.



Golf

By Bill Smith



The major tournament schedule kicks off, as always, with the Masters in April. Augusta National Golf Club is one of the jewels of golf, and for many golf fans, the Masters serves as the unofficial start of spring—in 2022, that will be April 4–10. Golf fans don’t care about groundhogs and shadows; they know that when Masters weekend arrives, springtime has finally arrived with it. An NCA member for 40 years, Augusta National Golf Club is the permanent host of the Masters.

The PGA Championship, the second major of the year, will be held at Southern Hills Country Club in Tulsa, Okla., May 19–22. Southern Hills has hosted 17 championships including three U.S. Opens and four PGA Championships. The club hosted its first major championship in 1958. As club General Manager Nick Sidorakis boasts, “We host championships.” In recent years, the club has hosted seven championships, the 1994 PGA Championship, the 1995 and 1996 Tour Championships, the 2001 U.S. Open, the 2007 PGA Championship, the 2009 U.S. Amateur Championship, and the 2021 Senior PGA Championship. This will be a record fifth PGA Championship for Southern Hills, which has been an NCA member since 1998.

The final major to be held on American soil will be the 122nd U.S. Open, which will be held June 16–19, 2022. The championship will be hosted by The Country Club in Brookline, Mass, which has been an NCA member since 1999. One of the oldest country clubs in the United States and one of the USGA’s founding five members, The Country Club has hosted 16 USGA championships, plus the 1999 Ryder Cup Matches. The club’s celebrated past includes hosting “The Greatest Game Ever Played,” the 1913 U.S. Open Championship in which amateur Francis Ouimet defeated past champions Harry Vardon, John McDermott, Alex Smith, George Sargent, Alec Ross and Fred McCleod. The match is often credited with sparking the birth of modern golf.

Years of Preparation

As you might expect, hosting a major championship requires years of preparation. The course itself must be made ready to host the best players in the world. Courses that typically serve weekend golfers must be set up to test the world’s longest hitters, best ball strikers and most precise putters. For one weekend, each club must be converted to a golf course that can provide challenges of which members and their guests could never dream.

Of course, Augusta National is always prepared for championship play. As the permanent host of the Masters, the course is always ready to challenge the game’s best players. But for Southern Hills and The Country Club, special preparations had to be made.

The Country Club’s history and location close to downtown Boston combine to make it a regular championship stop. Still, it was up to the club to initiate the opportunity by sending an invitation to the United States Golf Association (USGA) asking to host the championship. The process began even before the invitation



The 18th green of the Championship Course and the clubhouse at The Country Club in Brookline

was sent, however, with the club working closely with board members and the membership to assure that they were supportive of the bid. Hosting a major championship impacts the club and its membership for several years, and it's important to make sure that everyone is on the same page.

In 2015, The Country Club won the right to host the 2022 U.S. Open, and the club took full advantage of the seven years between the announcement and the championship to prepare. The process began in-house, with club leaders educating members and staff about what it would take to host a successful championship.

"We held off on doing planned golf course improvements after 2013 anticipating that if we had another championship on the horizon, we would have work to do," said The Country Club General Manager/COO Kristen LaCount, CCM.

The process began with construction of tee boxes for the championship, later to include some of the club's priorities for green expansions and bunker work. An expanded driving range to accommodate the full field for the U.S. Open was also required. Since the Championship Course is a composite course of the Main 18 and the extra 9 known as the Primrose Course, the 9th and 10th holes of the Main Course will be used for that driving range.

"With the club closed in March and April 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic, we were able to use that time to do a considerable amount of golf course construction without any impact on our members," said LaCount.

The Country Club's experience preparing for the U.S. Open was typical. Southern Hills', on the other hand, was far from normal. The 2022 PGA Championship was originally scheduled

to be held at Trump National in Bedminster, N.J. However, in January of 2021 the PGA board of directors voted to move the tournament. With a little less than a year and a half to prepare, it was necessary for the PGA to find a host that could ramp up quickly.

Southern Hills provided the perfect solution. The club has a long history of hosting PGA Championships. Most importantly, the course was already in championship form, having hosted the Senior PGA Championship in 2021.

"Having the 2021 Senior Championship was beneficial in many ways," said Southern Hills General Manager/COO Nick Sidorakis, CCM, "The PGA staff was in place for the Senior PGA and the site plans of the two championships are somewhat similar, but different because the PGA Championship is five times larger. In terms of infrastructure, it's night and day, but the same base map is there."

Selling Corporate Sponsorships

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges facing the club was corporate sponsorships. Corporate hospitality is an essential element of hosting a tournament, particularly a major championship. Typically, host clubs turn to local businesses to purchase sponsorships and hospitality tents, but Southern Hills had just done this for the Senior PGA Championship. In fact, they sold \$5 million in sponsorships for that tournament. How could they turn to the same companies one year later, asking for even more support?

But that's what they did, and the response was overwhelming. Even before Southern Hills was awarded the 2022 PGA Championship, the club went to the companies that had sponsored the 2021 Senior PGA Championship and asked them if they would

do so for the PGA in 2022 if it was awarded. By the time the 2022 PGA was awarded to the club, it had already raised approximately \$8 million in sponsorships. Even more impressive, 75% of all corporate hospitality sold was to members.

“All of the legwork that would usually take 12–18 months was done in two days,” said Sidorakis.

While The Country Club didn’t face the same time limitations, the club did have the same corporate sponsorship responsibilities. The club’s membership came through in a big way, selling all the sponsorship opportunities. According to LaCount, 60% of the sponsorships were sold to New England-based companies and 30% were sold to member-owned or operated companies.

Infrastructure Considerations

Even though Southern Hills had recently hosted a PGA Senior Championship, accommodating the PGA Championship is another thing entirely. The land needs to support the required infrastructure are enormous.

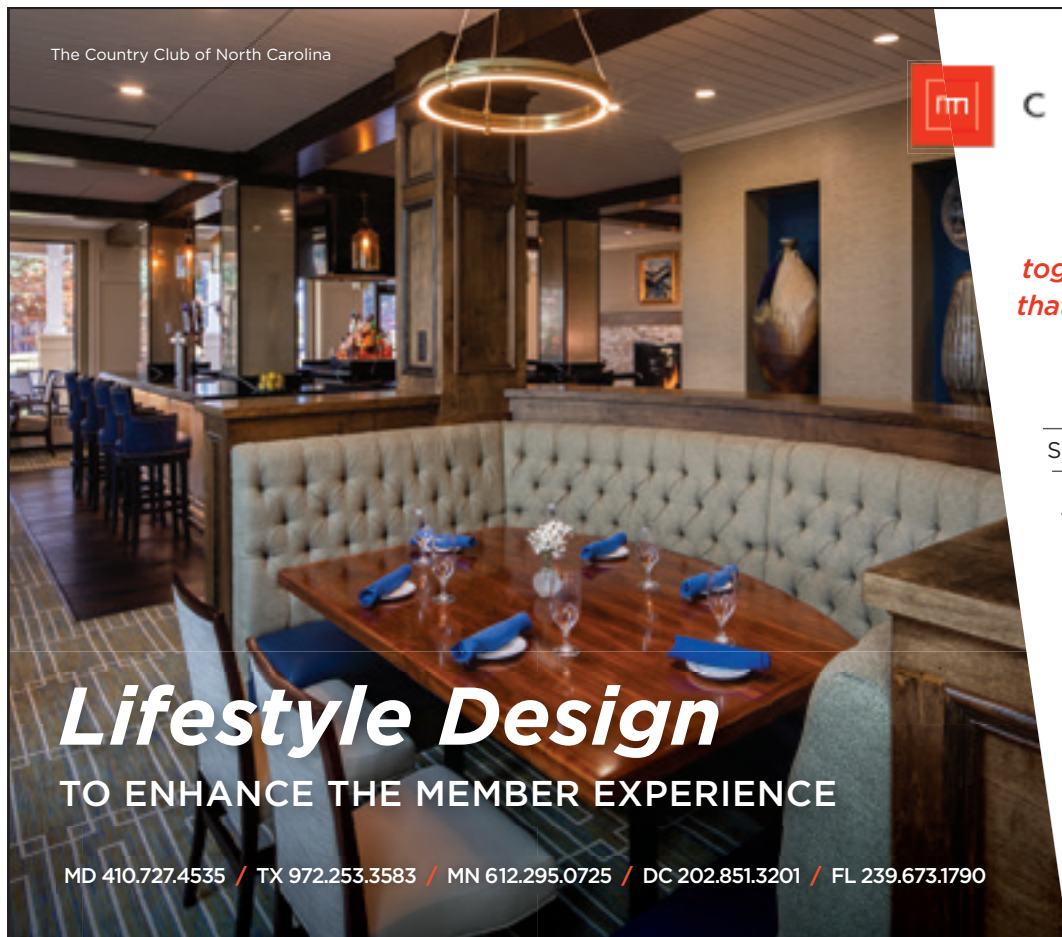
“The television compound alone will require eight acres,” said Sidorakis. “Then there is the merchandise facility, which will

Corporate hospitality is an essential element of hosting a tournament, particularly a major championship.

take up another 55,000-plus-square-feet. Altogether, there will be more than 575,000 square feet of flooring and more than 350,000 square feet of tenting installed. The build will start in February 2022 and take 12 weeks.

“In a sense, our club is going to become a city from May 16–22,” continued Sidorakis. “We are going to have 40,000 to 45,000 patrons attend the championship each day, Thursday through Sunday.”

When it comes to the physical requirements of hosting a championship, Southern Hills’ preparations for the PGA Senior Championship also served the club well. The club underwent an intensive restoration of the golf course and practice facilities in 2018



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and 2019. As part of that restoration, an extensive hydronic system was installed beneath all the course's greens to regulate the subsurface temperature of the greens. With this system, the club can change the subsurface temperature of the greens by as much as 17 degrees when it gets too hot or cold.

"We are basically fooling mother nature to help the grass on the greens grow whether it's very hot or cold," said Sidorakis. "This allowed us to install premier greens with bent grass in the transition zone where it is extremely difficult during the summer months. The system assures the best playing condition possible on the greens, regardless of the weather."

Because of the extensive nature of the restoration, minimal improvements were required to host the PGA Championship. In fact, there were only three changes required for the entire course, the most significant of which was to build a new tee box on the 13th hole.

Member Benefits

Of course, one of the primary concerns of any club that hosts a tournament, particularly a major championship, is how it will affect members.

"Whether you are hosting a PGA or USGA event, you try to limit the impact on your membership," said Sidorakis. "Members want to know how long the golf course will be closed because of the tournament."

In the case of Southern Hills, the course will be closed to member play three weeks before the tournament. The course will remain closed for a couple of days after the tournament to permit Southern Hills golf course staff to do some agronomic work.

"We host majors," said Sidorakis. "This will be our record fifth PGA Championship, and we are very proud of that. While there's inevitably some sacrifice involved, the excitement level that the championship brings to our members and the city of Tulsa is huge."

LaCount is also focused on the member benefits.

"There's just an electricity," said LaCount, "a shot of adrenaline for members, staff and even the USGA staff. It's a strong partnership."

As preparations ramp up next spring, The Country Club members will be able to continue to use the course as USGA staff begin erecting corporate and merchandise tents. In May and June, the club will eliminate early tee times, which will allow



Hole 18 at Southern Hills, the most difficult par on the golf course, looks up to the clubhouse for a dramatic finish.

the USGA agronomy team to prepare the course with championship length rough and other playing conditions. Also, the entire Primrose Course will be closed and unavailable for play in 2022, though the club's primary course (the outbound nine holes are known as the Clyde Course and the inbound holes are known as the Squirrel Course) will be available until about two weeks before the championship. A few weeks before that, guest play and cart use will be put on hold.


"Even though we'll have a few weeks without member golf, the benefits greatly outweigh any inconvenience," said LaCount. "Our members get an earlier crack at tickets than the general public, and they also have a chance to volunteer to help out with the championship. In fact, more than 1,000 of the volunteers who will be helping run the championship will come from our membership."

After the championship, LaCount expects the golf course and clubhouse to reopen in just a few days. The USGA agronomy team will repair the fairways and greens and break down and remove all their structures.

"At the end of the day, my priority is the club," said LaCount. "I'm focused on our members and employees, and our neigh-

Of course, one of the primary concerns of any club that hosts a tournament, particularly a major championship, is how it will affect members.

bors in Brookline and other towns in the area. We need to make sure that we remain a great neighbor before, during and after the U.S. Open."

"Our members and staff and the USGA are working so hard to make this championship a success, and I'm excited for them," continued LaCount. "And I'm excited for the town of Brookline and the whole state, that we will be hosting the first normal U.S. Open post-pandemic. It's going to be awesome." 

Bill Smith is president of Smith Phillips Strategic Communications. He can be reached at bsmith@smith-phillips.com.

As the economy continues to experience labor shortages and COVID-19 vaccine mandates, private sector unions that for decades saw membership declines had gains in 2020. The Bureau of Labor and Statistics reports that the percentage of American workers who belong to a union showed an uptick in 2020 to about 11%, which is still below the 2000 rate of 13% of all wage and salary union workers age 16 and older.

Clubs



The labor shortage is creating additional pressure on employers with unions, who are more vulnerable to union demands for pay increases and better benefits. Workers, with increased risk for exposure to the coronavirus combined with severe understaffing, have experienced a perfect storm for organizing and bargaining. The nation has seen an increase of large-scale work stoppages involving 1,000 or more workers in recent months. John Deere had 10,000 members of the United Auto Workers walk off at its plants and 1,400 cereal factory workers at Kellogg and 2,000 workers at Buffalo Hospital went on strike. In addition to increased strike activity, the pandemic has also heightened workers' awareness of job expectations, with new attempts to form unions at Amazon, Starbucks and various universities.

This article looks at the current landscape of unions in private clubs and how the pandemic has affected the club workforce.

The Political Perspective on Unions

It is important to understand what the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB or Board) is and how it shapes labor laws and

regulations. Regardless of their political views, most employers—whether unionized or not—are bound by the NLRB and need to follow its guidance and the respective collective bargaining agreements (CBA), when applicable.

Thomas Lenz, partner at Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud & Romo, and National Club Association (NCA) board member and on faculty at University of Southern California Law School, notes that political tides affect how labor law is interpreted and enforced. In 2011–2012, the Obama Administration appointed a five-member Board with a majority of Democrats (3 to 2) and the General Counsel. Under the Biden Administration, we see a comparable situation with a 3 to 2 Democratic majority Board and can expect a different direction from the previous Trump Administration as they decide cases and direct regulations.

The new general counsel is Jennifer Abruzzo, who most recently served as special counsel for strategic initiatives for Communications Workers of America (CWA). Prior to her work at CWA, Abruzzo served as Acting General Counsel and Deputy General Counsel at the NLRB. She spent almost 23 years working in different capacities for

Unions

The 2022 Landscape

By Anne Catherine Nielsen, SPHR, SHRM-SCP

the NLRB. She plans to change the legal standards developed in the last four years and will target certain issues for attention.

The General Counsel sets the day-to-day direction that the agency will follow. What that means for clubs will be determined by the issues raised by employees, and charges filed with the NLRB. The General Counsel will use those issues to make any changes to the law. Under this Board, expect to see a more aggressive approach in terms of expanding employee rights, expanding union rights and limiting what employers can do.

The NLRB, unlike other agencies, generally does not pass a lot of regulations. The political ties of the NLRB and historical practice show that changes in the law occur through litigation and Board rulings. So, what the General Counsel chooses to prosecute—and the Board's ruling—will become law.

New Legislation: The PRO Act

Protecting the Right to Organize Act of 2021 (PRO Act) is pending legislation that expands labor protections related to employees' rights to organize and collectively bargain in the workplace. In

The labor shortage is creating additional pressure on employers with unions, who are more vulnerable to union demands for pay increases and better benefits.

addition, it includes issues related to independent contractor status, the union-organizing process and rights of employers like clubs to speak to employees about these issues.

The legislation has passed the House of Representatives and is pending in the Senate and President Biden has vowed to sign it as written. Currently, there has been an effort to incorporate parts of this legislation into budget talks. It may not affect the PRO Act itself, but there are issues that could come from the budget process, such as fines for employers who violate the law (in the past there were none). This would be the first labor law reform of statutes if it were to happen.

Protecting the Right to Organize Act of 2021 (PRO Act) is pending legislation that expands labor protections related to employees' rights to organize and collectively bargain in the workplace.

Quick Election Process

The NLRB will likely maintain the quick election process, also referred to by some as “ambush election” regulations enacted in 2015, which significantly sped up the timeframe from when a union requests an election to when the vote is held.

When Lenz worked for the NLRB in late 1980s and early 1990s, union elections were typically held within 49–56 days; under the Clinton administration, the process sped up to approximately 35–42 days; and under the Obama administration, elections averaged about 23 days. Why does that matter?

It is critical for clubs to make sure that their management teams act lawfully and know the dos and don'ts of this process. Managers have the right to communicate with their workforce about the club's position on having a union and what they believe it would mean for the workers and their experiences. Noncoercive, nonthreatening and nonintimidating communications have been considered for decades by the courts to be lawful free speech by employers. So-called “ambush election” rules limit time and opportunity for employers to ensure management teams are in sync on dos and don'ts as well as in communicating lawfully with employees about these legally sensitive issues.

There is also discussion about electronic voting versus in-person paper balloting for elections. With the safe distancing requirements enacted during COVID-19, the NLRB ruled that balloting by mail would be prudent and employers did not object to that as they wanted to observe the safety protocol. Whether or not the NLRB will return to in-person balloting as the pandemic winds down, or will move to electronic voting, which is currently being considered for the transportation industry, or keep elections by mail is still up for discussion.

Micro-Units

The topic of micro-units may also surface again. As an example, in a union election, small subsets of workers may choose to organize and leave out similar workers from another department to keep their numbers small. The Obama NLRB allowed each

union to choose which workers could join, and allowed different unions for various workers (e.g., groundskeepers, kitchen workers, servers). This creates more fragmentation, which makes it harder on employers having to deal with several unions and contracts, instead of setting the work rules and compensation practices for the business. The Trump NLRB wound that back to give employers more say. Moving forward, this topic of micro-units may gain more traction.

Workplace Rules and Policies: Applicable to all Employers

Clubs maintain a pleasant, collegial environment without conflict. However, the Obama NLRB—and signals from General Counsel Abruzzo in the current Biden administration—have expressed a view that rules requiring civility, working in harmony and being collegial might be viewed as interfering with employees' rights under labor law.

The view that the Board took has been that conflict is expected under labor law and people will disagree so you cannot make rules to take away people's right to disagree, or to complain about working conditions—and it is critical to remember that law applies to the nonunion environment.

The Board may find other ways that nonunion clubs violate the law. One of the risk issues with the general counsel and the PRO Act legislation involves independent contractor misclassification.

If you operate a club with golf pros, tennis pros, fitness center instructors and others that you consider independent contractors, the Board may be suspicious. If an employee performs work of the same type that the hiring entity performs, and if that employee is working predominantly for that entity and not working elsewhere, classifying the employee as an independent person with an independent business can be challenged. That raises other issues like wage and hour, payroll tax, insurance and workers compensation; but the unions and NLRB will look from the standpoint that the club is depriving these individuals of the rights of employees.

This is an issue the NLRB wants to prosecute: Calling someone an independent contractor is a violation of the law because it deprives people of rights, including the rights of forming a union.

Increased Remedies

If you have a unionized club, the Board expects the club to bargain over anything that affects the workplace. The Board is looking to enhance the remedies, so mistakes may well increase if a club gets it wrong or fails to notify the union on things such as a vaccination requirement or new work rules. Anything that may be considered a violation of the law would need to be presented to the union to bargain before being implemented.

During the pandemic, bargaining changed. Typically, people would meet in person but because of physical distancing and for efficiency, discussions happened by Zoom, phone or email exchanges. Whether that continues or parties resume meetings in person is still to be seen.

Best Practices for Leading a Unionized Workforce

If clubs are concerned about organized labor, it is important to develop a game plan and be mindful that the rules keep changing not only in the labor law but also during the pandemic.

Clubs with good employee relations and HR practices, respectful and regular communication with their workforce, management team training, and regular employee surveys to identify issues of concern often remain union-free. (Note, if employers conduct employee surveys after union organizing discussions begin, it is a potential violation of the law.)

The pandemic has affected many of these issues, especially how people relate to each other and as some work remotely.

Clubs with good employee relations and HR practices, respectful and regular communication with their workforce, management team training, and regular employee surveys to identify issues of concern often remain union-free.

Having civil communication with your workforce and checking in on them is critical. If employees feel they can come to their employer with their problems, they are less likely to need to reach out to a third party, such as a union.

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A certain level of service is expected, and clubs will face new duties and new liabilities with the current administration and an energized labor movement.

It is a good practice for clubs to update their employee handbooks every one to two years to make sure the content is current and includes any changes that pertain to employee rights. Solicitation and distribution policies, dress code, conflict of interest, email and other means of communication, social media, confidentiality and workforce investigation should be reviewed and updated regularly.

It is also important for clubs to know that employees' rights—even to walk out on strikes at nonunion clubs—are still significant and if employees are punished for protected activity, that there could be liability.

There should be a safety protocol in place where employees feel comfortable in the workplace.

A certain level of service is expected, and clubs will face new duties and new liabilities with the current administration and an energized labor movement. Even for employers who are trying to be fully compliant, there is still potential for liability.

Best Practices in Working with Unions

According to Lenz, unionized clubs have potential benefits because they can stay out of court by working with the union through the grievance-arbitration procedure. If the relationship is productive and not contentious, it can be beneficial and the club can set standards for how they treat employees, how they pay them and so forth. That not only provides stability but might also help the club be a leader in the market.

Chris Colley, General Manager at the National Democratic Club (NDC) in Washington, D.C., embodies that strategy and also stays in constant contact with the union representative, so they are never surprised by any stance or position the club takes. Colley offers that it is possible to have a mutually beneficial relationship with the union, for the benefit of your employees and your organization. Marlena Navarro, assistant general manager at NDC, is knowledgeable in the intricacies of the union and contract. Colley relies on her expertise and offers that it is critical clubs have an HR person or department head that is well-versed in the union contract.

Some clubs that have had contentious relationships with the union in the past have created an informal internal grievance

process and encourage employees to speak to management first before reaching out to the union. This type of relationship with the staff takes time to establish. Clubs will take the position not to settle and work through grievances by educating their managers on the union contract and decide when to push back. Most work rules are established during union negotiations, and it is important that the managers are educated on their collective bargaining agreement.

In union negotiations, Chief Operating Officer Tim Muessele, CCM, CCE, at The Olympic Club in San Francisco, shared that everybody at the table has different motivators and emphasized to be thoughtful and keep in mind the importance of the union's desires.

Negotiations and arbitration are time consuming and expensive propositions to any organization and having the support of the club board and ensuring management education and alignment is important.

Lessons Learned during the Pandemic

Many clubs had no other option but to furlough their staff for a time during the pandemic when clubs were closed or only able to offer limited services. Many union employers furloughed employees in phases and started with union and line-level employees. Other clubs tried to keep their entire staff for a period of time with a stipend in addition to maintaining club benefits and unemployment compensation. Clubs typically furloughed their nonunion employees in following waves with similar benefits. The groups were addressed separately, and general managers and human resources orchestrated the strategic layoffs and the direct managers helped manage the process.

In retrospect, many club managers indicated that the key to a smooth process was proactive planning and direct and regular communication with the union.

At the Union League Club of Chicago, General Manager/COO Mark Tunney and his team worked with the union and the staff to maintain as many positions as they could. As an example, they tried to maintain the banquet staff by asking them to take a la carte shifts. The jobs they had were no longer available in the way they were before; the staff was given a choice and some accepted and some did not. Prior to the pandemic, there was a clear separation of duties for these positions.

The club also has a self-funded medical plan for union and nonunion employees, which has allowed some union employees to take nonunion positions, like a bellman position, for instance. Employees working at the club, even in a different capacity, will have a greater chance of getting their previous union position back when it reopens, based on their seniority. A key aspect to maintaining staff engagement during this challenging time was

Survey Findings

2022 Outlook for Clubs and Unions

The National Club Association (NCA) recently surveyed clubs to learn more about unions at clubs. Of the responding 14 clubs with unions, 70% were golf or country clubs, 20% city or athletic clubs and 10% yacht or other specialty clubs.

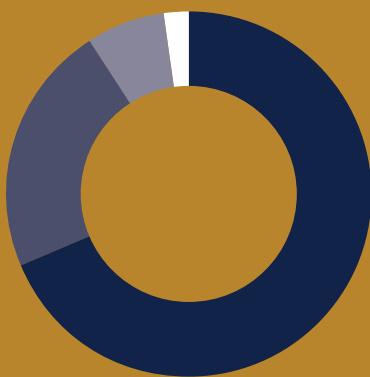
Top issues identified by unionized workers during negotiations or collective bargaining are ranked in the second chart to the right.

Going into 2022, the key concerns shared by those employers revolve around labor shortage, lack of a skilled workforce, pay compression associated with minimum increases, followed by an increase in benefit costs and lack of management due to labor shortage.

Given the recent pandemic, furloughs, layoff clauses and severance based on seniority may come to the forefront. Clubs will have to navigate local and state labor laws and see where there is flexibility.

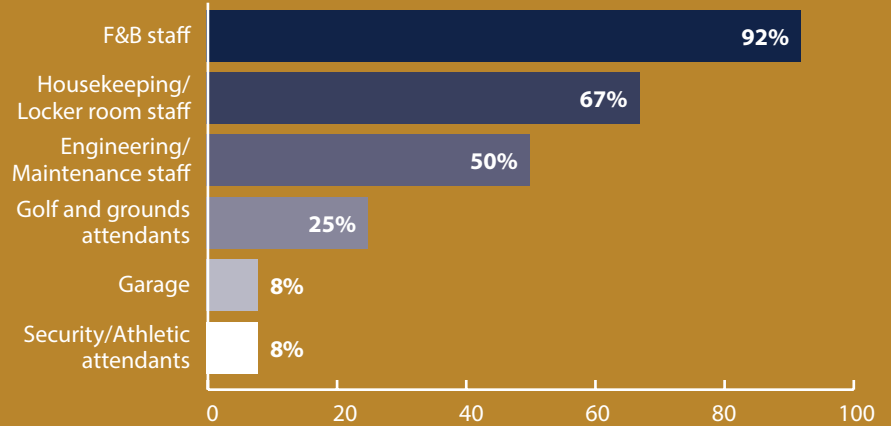
The other side of the equation is increasing club revenues. Clubs need to regain their pre-COVID member usage to staff up and cover vacation time for employees that have been working. For many clubs, the goal is to get back to normal operation levels, with employee celebrations and appreciations while operating in a fiscally responsible way. Employees will need to understand new efficiencies and managers will need to be focused on employees to ensure a safe and caring work environment.

Responses by club type

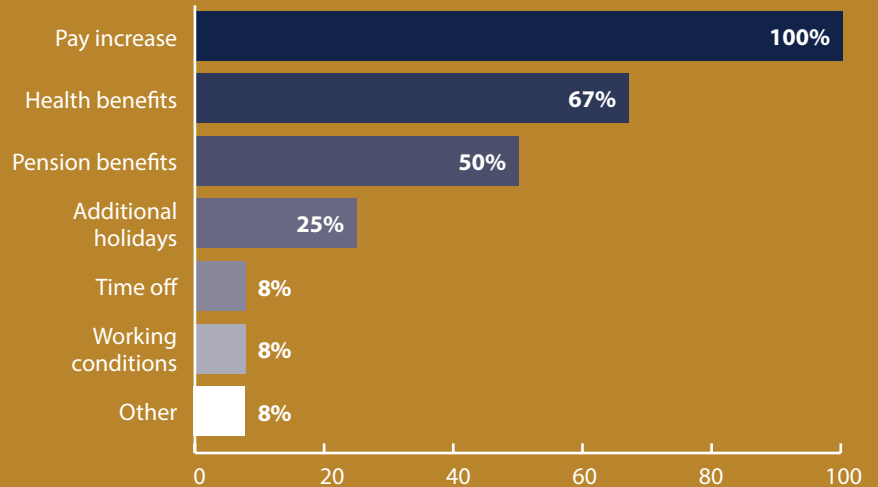


- Golf or country club (68%)
- City or athletic club (22%)
- Yacht club (7%)
- Specialty Club (2%)

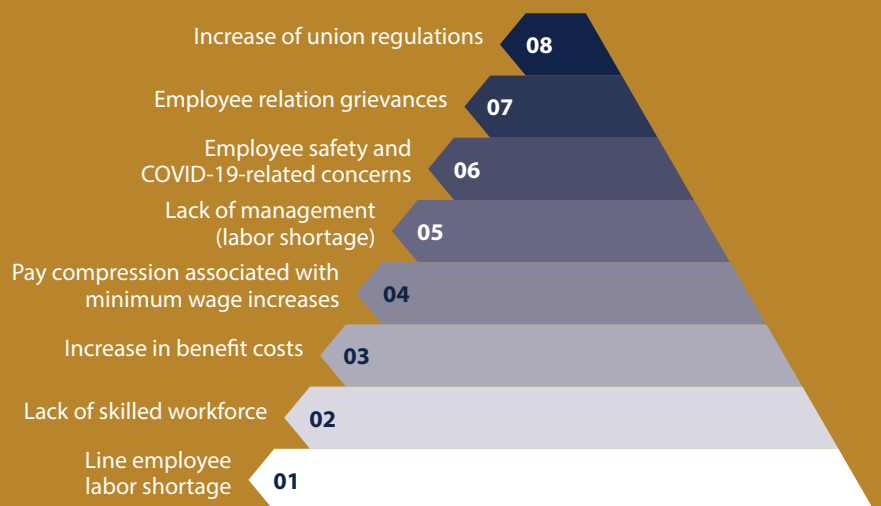
What types of unions are represented at your club?



What are the top issues identified by your unionized workers during negotiations or collective bargaining?



One a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being low, 10 being high), rate these labor concerns going into 2022



Staffing the club is easier with a union, because even after being furloughed, employees are more likely to come back because of seniority.

through regular, weekly communication with the staff that was staying on, as well as with the members.

Many clubs have since hired back their staff: some are at 50% capacity, and many are back to 90% of their pre-COVID-19 operations. Most clubs have had to elevate pay for their staff and some are still struggling to bring back both union and nonunion employees, despite COVID-19 unemployment benefits ending in September 2021.

In some cases, having a unionized workforce has helped the club. Tim Muessle found that one of the benefits of having a union in this market is that most clubs right now are looking for staff. Staffing the club is easier with a union, because even after being furloughed, employees are more likely to come back because of seniority. General Manager John Dorman at The University Club of New York feels lucky to have a stable employee base with a well-trained union staff that stays for years and does their job well. It is harder to bring in new employees and train them to get to the same standards.

Vaccination Mandates

The Olympic Club hosted the Women's USGA championship in June 2021, so everyone on property that week had to show proof of vaccination: employees, members and guests alike. In San Francisco, law dictates people must be vaccinated to come into a building and work. There is no testing—it is a hard mandate. For the past two months they have collected proof of vaccination through the club app for their members. They have implemented a strict check-in protocol for their members every time they come in. The vaccination proof for employees is collected separately and the clubs have not lost any employee due to the mandate.

Given Chicago's city-wide mandate, Tunney implemented a similar vaccination mandate for all its full- and part-time employees who were informed in the summer and started the implementation in September. Their members are required to wear a mask if not vaccinated. They also did not lose any staff because of the vaccination mandate.

In New York City, The University Club of New York employees were happy to be back at work after their furlough. COVID-19 testing for employees was implemented twice a week, then once a week for those that were not vaccinated, and once a month when vaccinated. By March 2021, 75–80% of the staff was vaccinated. A

strict vaccination mandate has now been in since November 2021 for staff and members due to New York City law, which mandates vaccinations for dining establishments. It has worked well with little attrition of staff and members.

The club stepped up their testing due to the variants. They work with an epidemiologist and test twice per month and whenever there is a COVID-19 scare. The cost is fully covered by the club and staff feels better getting tested ahead of big events to make everyone at ease. This has provided peace of mind to members and employees alike.

None of these mandates were challenged by the unions, who were either neutral or favorable to the extra safety precautions taken by employers.

Initiatives to Become a Preferred Employer and What has Changed


In these tough times, to keep the staff engaged and performing at their best, clubs have recognized staff with regular celebrations, prizes and employee of the month programs. Many have offered weekly calls with staff during furloughs and extended mental health programs through their employee assistance program as well as supported employees grieving the loss of a relative or family member due to COVID-19.

The impetus for taking care of your employees so they will take care of your members has never been more relevant than now. Some clubs have even changed their policy regarding not hiring relatives to allow additional referrals.

“To be a preferred employer in this economy, it is critical to offer good wages and treat people in ways that makes them want to work for you and stay with you,” says Dorman. “NYC employers have been tremendously affected and many people have left the hospitality industry. It is important for leaders to ensure people feel rewarded for the work they do. Educating management is also of foremost importance to establish a culture of great service and fiscal responsibility.”

Looking Ahead

Understanding the NLRB's upcoming agenda and planning accordingly through handbook updates and working with your HR team, management and legal counsel will prove essential in the years to come.

Now more than ever is an unprecedented opportunity for employers to assert themselves as a preferred employer whether they have a union or not, by leveraging their value proposition and promoting the uniqueness of their workplace, to current and prospective employees. 

Anne Catherine Nielsen, SPHR, SHRM-SCP is the founder and principal of EquaMagna Corp, Mindful People Solutions, a boutique human resources consultancy. She can be reached at annecatherine@equamagna.com.

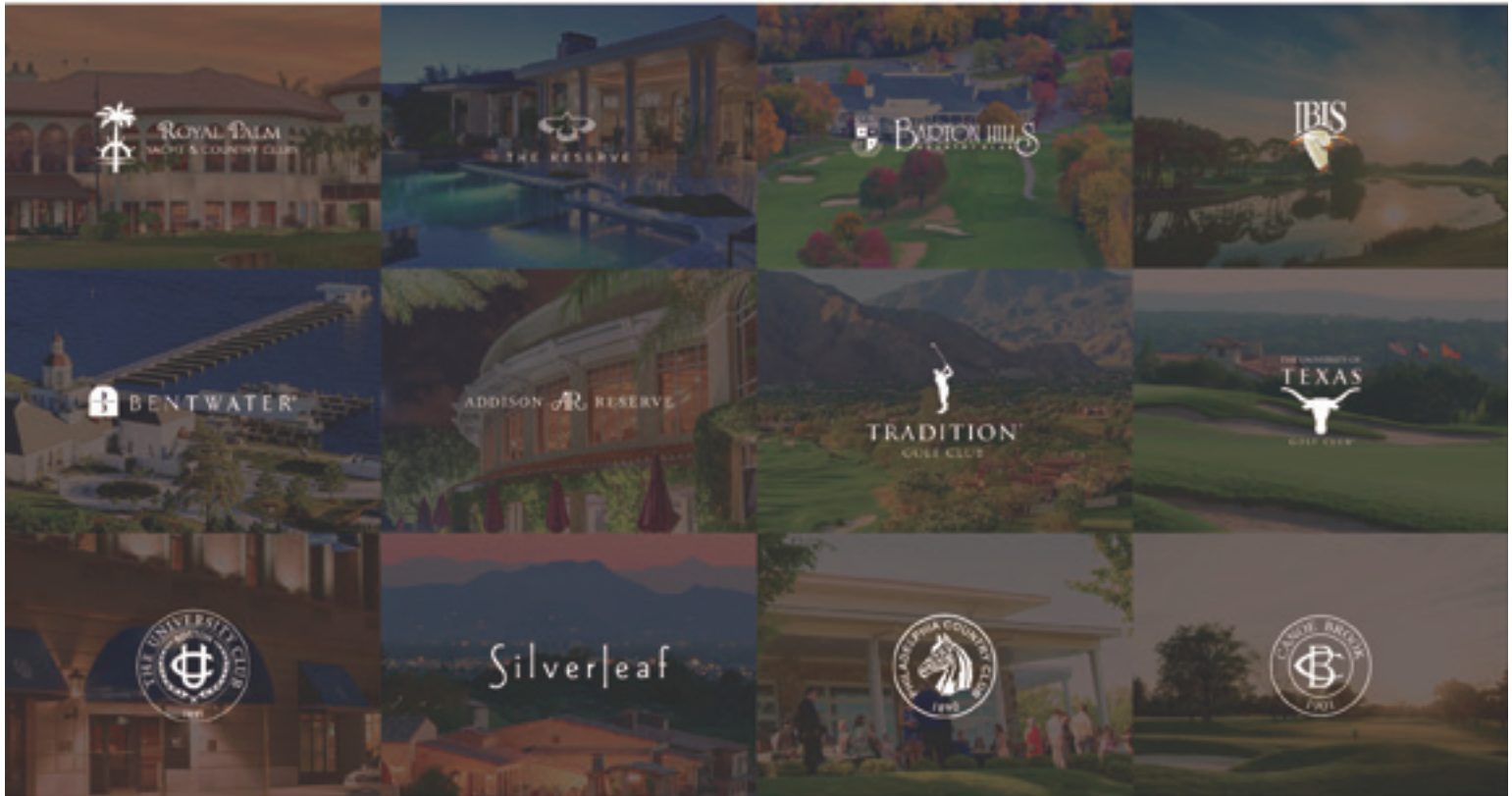
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MEDJET
medjetassist.com



Minnesota Golf Association
mngolf.org



mpr Group
mprgroup.info



MTI International Work & Travel
mtlint.com



Nelson Mullins
Broad and Cassel
nelsonmullins.com



Northstar
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OKW Architects
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National Club Association

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A ROADMAP

for Attracting and Retaining Talent

**Flexible
Technology
Solutions
for Hourly
Workers**

By Steve Anevski

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The labor shortage threatens private club operations to provide a robust workforce. This section features several articles that look at the labor outlook and offer ideas, solutions and ways to compete for the best workers.

There has been a lot of talk about inflation since the passage of the recent stimulus measures injected trillions of dollars into the economy. Workers are demanding higher wages and can do so due to the sharp increase in demand as the economy recovers and with a record number of Americans sitting on the sidelines. Enhanced unemployment was a boon and saving grace for many hourly American workers and families, and with its abatement, many have demanded wages closer to what they received while unemployed earlier in 2021. These demands might not be met if the labor market were not as tight, but with many Americans choosing not to work for a variety of concerns surrounding COVID-19, such as familial responsibilities as schools remain closed or health concerns, the labor market has continued to tighten even as demand increases.

This wage inflation has not been apparent yet for salaried roles but has had a huge impact on the hourly workforce. At Upshift, a company that connects businesses with workers via technology, we compared wages paid to our employees in hospitality roles in July/August 2020 and July/August 2021. We saw an almost 50% year-over-year increase in the average wage for hourly roles as reopening employers compete for a smaller pool of available labor.

This level of inflation presents a unique challenge for employers of hourly employees, but there are a few methods of mitigating these wage increases and finding other ways of attracting and retaining talent if raising pay rates isn't an option. While having market-matching or outdoing pay rates is essential (especially for private clubs, which need high-quality staff), there are a few other ways that you can solve for the current talent shortage:

Reducing screening requirements

Many companies have screening requirements that have not changed with the times for hourly workers. It is still common for some employers to require a drug screen, reference check and education/employment verification for both their new full or part-time employees and temporary workers. These requirements generally provide little value other than ticking boxes but can reduce the flow of talent significantly.

Take pre-employment drug screening for example

Upshift has found that when companies require drug screening, it significantly reduces the number of applicants they receive. This is not because those applicants who don't apply are utilizing drugs, but often because a drug screen takes a few hours, including travel to the screening facility and home, and then you must wait for the results before starting the position. When most employers don't require this, why would you work for the one that does when jobs are plentiful?

Additionally, most drug screens are largely ineffective as they're only able to detect certain drugs and only if they were used within 48 hours or less of the test. This is easy to game, even without the use of workarounds readily available online. With many positions offering immediate starts and with today's labor market, few are willing to wait. Eliminating this tedious and ineffective screening measure could boost your pool of talent exponentially without affecting safety as you can still test randomly or based on suspicion after hiring someone.

Increase flexibility

The second method of increasing talent flow, besides raising pay, is increasing flexibility. There is a small pool of people in today's labor market who are available to work 40 hours per week on short notice, as most people who can and want

to work 40 hours per week already have a job. To tap into the latent workforce, employers need to offer flexible hours.

This means allowing people to work full hours on only a few days a week, as well as allowing people to work half-shifts and other creative methods of scheduling. By increasing flexibility, you can access a labor pool not available to those who don't offer the same level of flexibility, and many people are willing to trade a pay rate increase for a position that works better for their schedule.

Transparency

You should be clear in your job postings what you offer. Call out your pay rate, hours and benefits directly—those are the most important things to employees. Many employers don't tell someone what they will make, the hours they will work or their benefits until they give them a formal offer, which is not ideal. You should also stay away from offers that can be perceived as insincere, like offering a signing bonus that is received after 90 days. This may get people in the door for an interview, but they won't stay after they get their bonus unless the rest of the package is competitive.

Trial periods

Allow applicants to work in their new positions for a few days or a week at a time before committing to a set number of hours. When you allow for this, you can access more of the available labor pool as you can get people who already have jobs to work for you on a flexible basis. If you're unsure of how to offer trial periods in a way that's sustainable and scalable for your club, one way to create this offering is by partnering with an on-demand staffing platform. What inevitably happens—if you have a great working environment—is that many of those who came in thinking they would only work a few days end up getting hired full-time after they realize they love working for you.

Partner with a digital staffing platform

Staffing platforms generally have a pool of high-quality talent who would not onboard with a traditional temporary agency or apply to a position directly for a variety of reasons. Staffing platforms are bringing in a wider and more robust pool of talent because they can offer choice and flexibility.

Platforms like Upshift (my company) have tens of thousands of workers available to work on short notice who have already been vetted—and you can see their working history. Hiring through a platform allows you to skip the investment in resume screening and interviews and instead just see how someone does when they are on-site working. When speaking to hiring managers we found that the real predictor of success was how someone did once they started the job, which indicates that the interviews and resume screens are not always a good use of hiring managers' time.

Choose the Right Staffing Platform

Technology options are overwhelming and choosing an option that is right for your club can sometimes seem like guess work. When choosing a staffing platform, consider the evolution of the market and select one that fits the changing workplace. Transparency, flexibility and accessibility are not only key elements that are important to employees, but also employers. Your platform should allow you to search for talent, understand your costs, tailor your needs to maximize your budget, and communicate the benefits of working with your business all in real time.

The platform should also offer true automation—not simply a portal for manual work. Look for solutions that offer digitally native interfaces that always work for you. These platforms give employers the ability to create shifts that fit clubs' needs and budgets and also alter them as your demand changes. Employers can see who will be coming to work, their work history, their rating from other employers, and even their email and phone number. This can all be accomplished on the mobile or desktop app without having to wait to hear back from your account manager or representative. The technology you choose should be an actual solution that delivers results and creates value for your business.



See other staffing apps in this Club Director article

Scan the QR Code to Read the article

What's Next?

Businesses without well-defined employment strategies are bowing to inflationary market pressures and simply raising rates to a point that is not sustainable. However, tactics like the ones mentioned above will provide a roadmap for attracting and retaining talent. It is no longer feasible in many cases for employers to rely on direct hires alone, or simply treat agency labor solutions as temporary. Businesses need a mix of direct hiring and strategic labor partnerships to mitigate the impact of economic and social conditions.

Successful employers will target technology solutions that provide them with the flexibility, function and freedom to operate transparently and in real time to meet their financial goals. Solutions that combine talent, technology and transparency will help ensure that businesses can thrive regardless of the economic conditions. **CD**

Steve Anevski is CEO of Upshift, a company that connects people with businesses in need of extra staff. He can be reached at steve@upshiftwork.com or visit upshift.work.

Visa Worker Outlook The Future is Tight

By Keith Pabian, JD

Clubs are struggling with an unprecedented labor shortage. As a result, more clubs are turning to foreign nationals to fill vacancies.

It was not long ago that the only clubs that utilized foreign nationals were larger ones in traditional seasonal areas (e.g., Southeast Florida, Nantucket, Michigan's Upper Peninsula, etc.). Now, clubs large and small, seasonal and year-round, rural, suburban, urban and everything in between are considering visa holders to fill otherwise empty roles.

Let's Start with the Basics

There are two primary visas that clubs utilize to fill roles during their busy seasons.

J-1 visa

The J-1 visa was created as a cultural experience opportunity to allow recent foreign national university graduates to come to the United States to work in a role related to their education while learning about the U.S. culture. There are two subcategories of J-1 visas: the four-month summer work and

travel J-1 (typically utilized by summer-season clubs) and the 12-18-month trainee J-1 (typically used as a management training tool by winter-season clubs).

H-2B visa

While this is a cost to the club—the club must pay all costs related to the program other than housing—the H-2B visa was created as a work visa and the workers are expected to work. A club can apply for H-2B visas for the duration of their season for a period of up to 10 months.

Outlook for the Upcoming Winter Season

Many clubs are already well into their current winter seasons. As they are seeing, things can be quite frustrating when it comes to U.S. visas.

Clubs that utilize J-1 visa holders are experiencing consulate/embassy delays and, most recently, issues surrounding the new vaccination mandate. J-1 holders seeking to enter the U.S. must obtain their visa at a U.S. consulate or embassy outside the United States. Due to COVID-19, staffing shortages and recently expired travel restrictions in some countries (e.g., South Africa), there are major delays at many consulates and embassies. Additionally, those entering the U.S. must be fully vaccinated due to the recent White House mandate and getting vaccinated can be difficult in some countries.

H-2B visas have also experienced consulate and embassy delays; although, in most cases those delays have not been as significant as those for J-1 visa holders. The biggest issue for this season has been the numerical cap for later-season start dates and recruiting struggles for in-country workers.

Regarding the cap, H-2B visas are numerically limited by law. Thirty-three thousand H-2B visas are available from October 1 to March 31 and another 33,000 are available from April 1 to September 30. The cap only applies to workers coming in from outside the country. Historically, the cap was not a problem for winter-season clubs. However, due to unprecedented demand for H-2B visas, the cap was reached in 2021 earlier than ever before and impacted clubs with December 1 start dates and later. This

Due to COVID-19, staffing shortages and recently expired travel restrictions in some countries (e.g., South Africa), there are major delays at many consulates and embassies.

With the staffing crisis affecting seasonal industries coast-to-coast, it is not just clubs that are experiencing shortages.

left some clubs scrambling to find in-country workers. Finding in-country workers can be difficult, as there are only so many available. This has unfortunately left some clubs with vacant positions heading into their busy seasons.

Outlook for the 2022 Summer Season

Summer 2022 is set to see the most applications ever filed for H-2B visa petitions. With the staffing crisis affecting seasonal industries coast-to-coast, it is not just clubs that are experiencing shortages. This is leaving more and more businesses to file H-2B visa petitions, and unfortunately, most businesses fall into the summer season. As a result, we anticipate that the odds of bringing workers into the U.S. under the summer-season cap is less than 50%. And for those turning to in-country workers, the demand is going to be at an all-time high. Clubs should be prepared to see H-2B workers asking for high wages and entertaining multiple job offers. Focused and customized recruiting is going to be more important than ever as you show the value of your club, its culture, and your commitment to your staff.

On the J-1 visa front, the same issues of consulate delays and vaccination requirements are certain to linger; though, as more time goes by, consulate and embassy delays will hopefully decrease.

Solutions

The good news is that there are solutions to help through these issues. Club organizations like the National Club Association provide you with a platform to connect with other clubs, understand advocacy efforts, and learn about pressing issues. There is also a new tool available for clubs, Seasonal Connect, to find H-2B, J-1 and American workers, and to find opposite season clubs and hospitality organizations to forge recruiting relationships.

Staffing is hard, but it can be easier with foreign workers. The key is to understand the landscape and that recruiting is still a tall task when it comes to international workers. [CD](#)

Keith Pabian is the Founding Partner of Pabian Law, LLC, and Seasonal Connect. He is an NCA board director. He can be reached at keith@pabianlaw.com. For information on Seasonal Connect, visit seasonalconnect.com.

Creating Awareness about Your Club's Workplace

How to Use Public Relations to Tell Your Story

By John Maroon

Baltimore Country Club (BCC) in Maryland was experiencing an all too familiar problem: too many job openings with too few applicants. While being incredibly active with online job sites, the needle wasn't moving, and the staff was growing tired.

BCC COO and General Manager Kent Johnson, CCM, reached out to the club's public relations firm to help raise awareness and garner more interest in working at BCC. An initial meeting was held at the club with me and club leadership as well as internal communications and human resources staff. In that meeting we discussed the need for BCC, and all organizations for that matter, to utilize the three components of public relations: earned, owned and paid.

An explanation of each:

Earned Media.

Some refer to this as traditional public relations or media relations. This is where media outlets are contacted in hopes of earning a story with their outlet that is compelling for their audience.

Owned Media.

Social media platforms, digital newsletters and website—things that you control and can use to tell your story as you see fit.

Paid Media.

Advertising—and this comes in many forms, from affordable social media ads to digital, radio, TV, print/online and outdoor ads and direct mail.

Getting BCC's Story Out There

Our initial effort for the club was through its social media channels. The internal team created compelling videos—shared on all club channels—showcasing their diverse workforce and talking about why BCC is a great place to work. In addition, the posts were reinforced with social ads to make sure they were reaching the desired audiences.

The idea then shifted to earned media. This tends to give many organizations pause, and private clubs are no exception. These are the stories in which you have very little control of the outcome. The upside is that when they turn out the right way, it is a third-party endorsement that goes farther than most owned and paid initiatives. The risk is that your story is in someone else's hands and when it airs or is written you may not like the result because you lack approval rights.

With some trepidation, Johnson allowed us to pursue earned media to tell the community that BCC is a great place to work and there are plenty of opportunities. We seized on a few key points. One is to dispel the false narrative that you cannot work at a club unless you are “connected” or know the right people. The other is to stress that private clubs have influential membership that can help—and have helped—employees as they advance in other career pursuits. And the last point is that employees are treated with great respect at private clubs. Unlike most bars and restaurants where anyone can walk in and occasionally behave poorly, clubs do not tolerate this behavior and it makes for an outstanding work environment.

The result was two local television stations shining a light on Baltimore Country Club and the opportunities to work there. The local CBS affiliate liked the story so much that they aired it again the following week!



Baltimore Country Club and the opportunities to work there

Scan the QR Code to watch the news story

While the struggle to hire remains for everyone, efforts continue to be made through earned, owned and paid media to make prospective employees aware of all BCC has to offer.

As your club endeavors to tell its story effectively, consider all aspects of public relations and make sure that you are active in each of the three PR buckets for the most effective means of communication. **CD**

John Maroon is owner of Maroon PR, based in Columbia, Md. He can be reached at john@maroonpr.com or visit maroonpr.com.

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CLUBSHELP SPOTLIGHT

The Els Center of Excellence

ClubsHelp, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that helps clubs to fundraise to support deserving local charities, was started in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, and got off the ground due in large part to the support of two World Golf Hall of Fame legends—Jack Nicklaus and Ernie Els. Rob Goulet, who has been Els' longtime manager, watched a news story on television in which a New Jersey golf club (Spring Brook CC) stepped in to donate sandwiches to workers at a local hospital. Goulet contacted David Bachman, general manager at Spring Brook and suggested this display of generosity could be extended into a national program.

From that discussion, ClubsHelp was formed. Goulet is the organization's Founder/CEO and Bachman serves on the Board.

When ClubsHelp had the opportunity to support and contribute to Els' great initiative, Els for Autism, it sponsored a hole-in-one contest at the charity's regional tournament series and finale.



Activities at the Els Center include yoga and fun games to play



By Jeff Babineau

There is little more that Ernie Els can accomplish as a golfer. The South African-born Els has competed around the world since he was a teen and always was destined to become something special as a golfer. By age 24, he won a U.S. Open at Oakmont Country Club, and three years later, he would add a second U.S. Open title at Congressional Country Club. Els owns two prestigious Claret Jugs for capturing the Open Championship, becoming “the champion golfer of the year.” In the 2003 Presidents Cup at Fancourt in South Africa, amid the backdrop of his home country, Els was front and center in one of the most thrilling playoffs in the history of the game, dueling Tiger Woods into the darkness trying to secure the Cup for his International team. (The two competitors tied, as did their teams, and they would share the Cup.)

Els was enshrined with a golden bust in the World Golf Hall of Fame years ago. So, yes, he has golf accomplishments covered. At 52, he continues to chase glory and trophies on the PGA Tour Champions. For all the worldwide victories and accolades, Els may make his biggest impact along a road that he never expected to travel. Els and his wife, Liezl, through the Els for Autism Foundation they created in Jupiter, Fla., have watched a bold vision rise from the ground with the Els Center of Excellence. Widely applauded as the leading facility in providing programs and services for young men and women on the autism spectrum, this mission has been personal for Ernie and Liezl. Their son Ben, now 19 and thriving at the Center, was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) when he was 5.



Samantha Els' support for her younger brother Ben inspired a popular siblings support group

A Sister's Loving Gesture

The Els family commitment to autism runs deep

By Jeff Babineau

Ernie Els always has been a global player, winning golf tournaments from South Africa to the United States. So, it is really no surprise that his Els Center of Excellence has produced programs and practices that have resonated around the world.

His #GameON Autism Golf Program, which started with one-hour clinics at Els for Autism Golf Challenge Series events, have introduced golf professionals and instructors around the world to a standardized program to introduce golf to individuals on the autism spectrum. A multi-site study on the program is taking place in South Africa, Ireland, England and the U.S., with a report to follow.

Now Ernie and Liezl's daughter, Samantha, is in the act as well. She is serving as a global ambassador and is one of the founders of Sam's Siblings Stick Together, a support group for siblings around the world who have family members with autism. Sam's younger brother, Ben, was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) when he was 5. Marlene Sotelo, executive director of the Els for Autism Foundation, said the SSST program was inspired by Sam's time at home from college during the pandemic.

"They really are oftentimes the forgotten family member," Sotelo said of the siblings. "The parents are working to pay for therapy, and one of the parents is taking the child all the time and is dealing with the school. So, it's the sibling that can be left behind. And then they are also worrying about when mom and dad are gone . . . Who is going to take care of my brother or sister?"

Samantha and others have hosted panel discussions on different topics that relate to autism and share thoughts, ideas and emotions among a group of fellow panelists who can understand the conversation. The program has a dedicated website: SamsSiblingsStickTogether.com and offers a wealth of resources. There are online webinars offered in four languages (English, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese) and there are free training videos on subjects ranging from medications and therapy to recreation and how to pursue a correct diagnosis—and even addressing the question, what is autism?

"Sam is one of the ambassadors, but she is also a panelist and interacts beautifully with the rest of the panelists," said Caitlin Carlson, marketing specialist for Els for Autism. "They form this really great bond together."

For Ernie and Liezl, the initial goal was a simple one: What could they do to help Ben and aid his development? They knew next to nothing about autism but dived in to create something that would help their son. Their simple quest has transformed the lives of not just their family, but many, both on site and around the globe. Many programs at the Els Center of Excellence have had global impact as best practices and effective therapy—a terrific surprise.

"This is something that happened to us, and something where we felt we wanted to help our son," said Els at the PGA Tour Champions' TimberTech Championship in November 2021, played near to his home in South Florida. "We just had this desire to build something really proper for Ben and for autism. We looked around the world, and there is nothing that's comparable to what we had envisioned, and ultimately built. That is gratifying to see. Anyone looking to do anything (in autism), take a look at our place, and if you do better than this, brilliant. But we really feel that this is the benchmark."

The Campus

The Els Center of Excellence is an 84,810-square-foot facility that rolls across 26 acres. There are two education wings on Campus: the Rupert Education Wing hosts The Learning Center, a nonprofit, tuition-free school serving students with autism ages 3–14; the Shanken Education Wing hosts The Learning Academy, which serves students with autism ages 14–21. The O'Donnell Pavilion is a classroom and studio for art shows and has a catering kitchen; an administrative building is home to the Els for Autism Foundation offices, as well as a 300-seat auditorium and meeting rooms for training and educational sessions. The campus, which has a small university feel to it, is bustling with activities that keep the students busy and engaged. There are yoga classes and music classes in



the afternoon as well as a par-3 golf course, with nine holes on three greens, and play courts for basketball and tennis court. Kickball was a popular and trendy sport last autumn, played on the golf course until funding is secured for the gymnasium and sports field.

“There is something for everyone, and I think each participant really finds his or her niche here, and what their activity is,” said Caitlin Carlson, a marketing specialist working for the Els for Autism Foundation. “I’m thinking of one person right now who loves yoga and is really great at it. Who knew? There are so many programs and services here, from early intervention to adulthood. There is always that opportunity for growth.

The Fundraising Machine

Els is quite proud of what the foundation, and what The Els Center of Excellence has been able to accomplish in a little more than a decade. He also has learned this: It truly takes a village. Running a world-class operation, and longing to grow and expand The Center, is hardly an inexpensive exercise. Fittingly, the foundation’s main fundraising arm has been through golf and the Els for Autism Golf Challenge regional event series, which in late Oc-

“Anyone looking to do anything (in autism), take a look at our place, and if you do better than this, brilliant. But we really feel that this is the benchmark.”

tober concluded with a celebration for top fundraisers and sponsors from across the U.S. and Canada. Golfers played the same golf course (PGA National’s Champion) that is host to the PGA Tour’s Honda Classic. There were 19 regional events staged throughout the U.S. and Canada beginning in April 2021, leading into the Grand Finale at PGA National.

The Golf Series has raised just less than \$30 million, with \$3.4 million raised in 2021. Els also hosted his annual Els for Autism Pro-Am on December 6, sponsored by Wine Spectator and Cigar Aficionado, an invitation-only event at Old Palm Golf Club in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. The pro-am, which includes PGA Tour,



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(TOP) Family Moment: Golf legend Ernie Els is flanked by his wife, Liezl (left), their son Ben, and their daughter Samantha

(BOTTOM) At the 2021 Grand Finale Gala, Ernie and Liezl Els saluted Isabelle "Izzy" Piwnicki as the year's inspiring Els for Autism Spectrum Award honoree

(RIGHT) Ernie Els (left) with NCA President & CEO Henry Wallmeyer, who played in an affiliate fundraising tournament and attended the gala at The Pelican Club.

Champions Tour and LPGA pros, was expected to deliver more than \$1 million. At this event several years ago, Rickie Fowler borrowed a club and ball and took a swing at a par-3 contest. His ensuing ace resulting in a \$1 million windfall for the Els Foundation, earning Fowler a bear hug from Els.

“We raised \$3.4 million this year (with the Golf Challenge Series), and last year, during the pandemic, we raised \$2 million,” Els said. “The people who have supported us, it’s been amazing. People all over the country. Unbelievable. All that effort from everybody, and it goes straight back into the school, into the Center.”

Private Club Affiliate Events

Playing a key role in the foundation getting to \$3.4 million in 2021 were the many private clubs choosing to conduct their own Els for Autism fundraisers, known as affiliate events. Affiliate events are often golf tournaments, but also can include charity auctions, 5k walks/runs, casino nights, fashion shows, galas and more. Leading the way for successful affiliate fundraisers in 2021 were Black Di-

Affiliate events are often golf tournaments, but also can include charity auctions, 5k walks/runs, casino nights, fashion shows, galas and more.

among Ranch in Lecanto, Fla., (\$123,571); Princess Anne Country Club in Virginia Beach, Va., (\$118,890); and famed Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck, N.Y. (\$73,125). In all, affiliate events would help the Els for Autism Foundation raise \$445,910 as the organization soared past its goal of \$2.7 million. A nice perk: Affiliate events that raise \$15,000 or more qualify to send two people to the year-end Grand Finale and gala.

At a recent gala at The Pelican Club, in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., Ernie and Liezl Els saluted Isabelle “Izzy” Piwnicki from White Plains, N.Y., as the 2021 Els for Autism Spectrum Award Winner.

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“Together, they lift each other up . . . the tutelage that they get there, the people are amazing with the kids . . . there is a lot of love there. It’s a good place.

—Ernie Els, Els for Autism Foundation co-founder

Piwnicki, 25, was diagnosed with autism at age 2, and worked hard to get through high school and to attend classes at Westchester Community College. She and her mother created a New York boutique called GirlAGain that has helped women on the autism spectrum train for employment in areas from inventory to bookkeeping. Currently, Isabelle works at Sephora, and her brief acceptance speech was the biggest hit of a great night at The Pelican Club.

Next Up: The Adult Center

At the Els Foundation, there are always next steps, big goals and work to be done. The next big project at the Els Center of Excellence will be to construct and open an Adult Services building. Most programs that deal with disabilities take a student up to his or her 21st birthday, and then many of the programs end. It’s an abrupt halt to a student on the spectrum who suddenly is missing a routine that he or she has known for years.

“After 21, there no longer are any services,” said Marlene Sotelo, executive director of the Els for Autism Foundation. “A lot of these individuals, they’ve been in school for their entire lives, they turn 21, and now they are sitting at home without anything to do, or they are going into programs that aren’t specialized for people with autism.

“That’s what makes our program so unique. Everyone here specializes in autism and understands the communications deficits that these individuals have. We also train them in vocational skills and find them jobs. We send job coaches out to the work site to be able to support them and train the employer on how to continue to be natural support to them so that they can be independent.”

The yet-to-be built 20,000-square-foot Adult Services building will be dedicated to those who age out of school and are seeking employment training as well as recreational and social activities. Sotelo said there will be a café with a working drive-through and adults with autism will be trained in the food industry. The foundation has a capital funding push to get the Adult Services building started. High costs of construction and labor shortages during COVID-19 have increased the original construction projections by 30 %; though \$3.7 million for this project already has been raised, the foundation needs additional funds to break ground. The architectural designs are complete, and all the required permitting is being processed.

“When we get the money, it’s green light, go!” said Sotelo. “The [overall] facility is beautiful, and that’s the way that Ernie and Liezl wanted it. They wanted a place that is special, that afforded all the high-quality services, equipment and buildings for all these individuals to thrive, including the staff that support them and teach them every day, to feel that they are coming to a place that has state-of-the-art technology and state-of-the-art materials. With that comes high costs of operations, and so we are always fundraising to be able to continue having this facility.”

A Light in Ben


Liezl Els can remember days when her son didn’t want to go to school. But now that he can attend a specialized school in a place that understands him so well, and where he has so many friends on the spectrum, Ben gets excited when morning breaks and another day at school beckons him.

“He is with his people, and I see all the kids, all their friends there,” Ernie said. “It’s life changing, it really is, not only for the student, but for the family.

In November 2021, 287 students were enrolled at the Els Center of Excellence, nearing the capacity of 300. The Center has been life-changing for lots of people, not just the Els family. Ernie sees it in the faces of parents all the time, and not a word needs to be spoken. “They know they are in the right place,” he said.

Golf has given Els a global audience and a platform to speak up and help Ben and others on the spectrum. Through him, a good deal of the funds to make the Center run are raised. But he is quick to celebrate his wife as the one who had the vision to create something so special, so magical. Ernie’s early intuition was to invest in autism research. He wanted to know the science of it all. *What is going on with autism, and why does it continue to happen, affecting so many families?* Liezl had a different vision. She was driven to find a place where Ben would feel safe and be surrounded by others that he could relate to. Her idea: Build a school where all can thrive. She has been hands on, starting with the beautiful architecture one finds when walking through the campus. Even during the pandemic, the Center has found a way to be impactful. Through teleconferencing, Ben was able to sing along with his chorus, and have meaningful interaction with a music teacher of whom he is quite fond.

“Now you have a child who is at his comfort level,” Ernie said of Ben. “Together, they lift each other up . . . the tutelage that they get there, the people are amazing with the kids . . . there is a lot of love there. It’s a good place.”

“To be around there, you just feel . . . happy. That’s the only word for it.” 

Jeff Babineau handles communications for ClubsHelp. He can be reached at jeff@clubshelp.org.

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*An Excerpt from a
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Prioritizing Decision-Making

Chapter 9

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

By Herb Lipsman

As managers and leaders in our organizations, we are placed in positions where we make hundreds of decisions each and every day. Decision-making and judgment, therefore, are two of the most critical measures of the value we bring to our clubs or organizations. Self-awareness and mindfulness are essential ingredients for effective decision-making and leadership.

Self-awareness is defined as having a deep understanding of our own strengths, weaknesses, biases and paradigms (how we see the world based upon everything that has happened in our lives up to this moment in time). Mindfulness is defined as a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique. Mindfulness means the ability to step out of our own mind and body and observe objectively the thoughts and emotions that are flowing through our minds and the validity of these thoughts and emotions.

We face decisions, large and small, throughout each day, week, month and year. Each of these decisions takes us in one direction or another and all have implications for the performance of our businesses. Some of the smallest decisions, which may not seem like decisions at all, are decisions pertaining to whether we respond to an email, pick up a ringing phone, stopping to chat with a member or employee, stooping to pick up litter on our way into the club or heading out for the day, whether to get a workout today or not, what to do for lunch. While these seemingly routine

and unimportant decisions all have far more impact on where our day may lead us than many of us ever stop to realize.

It has taken me decades to fully comprehend how easily I get sucked into answering meaningless emails, allowing myself to be easily distracted by unimportant tasks or failing to make time for the people who truly need my ear to listen to them on topics important to them at a particular moment in time. Every time that I “choose” to answer one email message, I am “choosing” to not engage in some other task or thought that may be far more consequential at that particular moment.

Here are a few examples that the typical club manager faces each day:

You show up for work with your to-do list of important tasks, meetings, reports, etc., that you hope to get done. Upon reaching your desk, you fire up your Outlook inbox, check your in basket on your desk, and contemplate what you will do first. Should you walk the club to eyeball any defects or issues that may result in member complaints? Do you dive into the report due today for your boss(es)? Do you allow yourself to get sucked into answering the hundreds of never-ending and mostly meaningless emails that flow into your inbox each and every day? Do you choose to spend time visiting with staff to see how they are doing and to ask whether they need your assistance?

Each of these choices is like a fork in the road. Each choice or decision will change the direction your day will go. Most of us simply react to all of these seemingly insignificant decisions all day long every day. Imagine if we were more mindful when making each of these choices. How would it change the direction of our day, week, month, year, career, life? For instance, what if the one employee that we failed to make time for decides to quit? What if this was the last chance to save them and you didn't even know it?

“Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least.”

—Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

What if instead of going through emails one by one, you develop a way of prioritizing email messages such that they are automatically flagged as critical or not so that you respond to the essential messages first, thereby preventing fires from flaming out

of control? What if instead of rushing through your facility walk-through each day, you take the time to investigate a funny sound or smell near a piece of expensive equipment? You might find that immediate attention from a technician is needed to save the equipment from a major breakdown or failure. What if you took the time to do a little symbolic cleaning in high traffic areas of the club to show the members and your staff that you care deeply about the cleanliness of the club and want to set a good example?

Here's another example of a minor decision that could actually be a major decision:

You are scheduled to attend a chamber of commerce luncheon, but you also have a deadline on a financial report for your boss. You choose to skip the luncheon because they are typically just schmoozing events with no significant value. However, on this particular day, a major new company in your area had several of their key executives attend – you missed out on meeting them and possibly sitting with one or more of them through lunch. Your choice might mean you passed up a tremendous business opportunity for the club, and you may never even realize that you missed it.

Here's a third example of the choices we make:

Your workload has increased substantially due to external factors beyond your control. Weather events, new competition, COVID, all have served to make your life more difficult, requiring you to work more while possibly earning less. You convince yourself that you no longer have time for your daily workouts. Your job comes first. But, what if by making this choice, you find yourself more stressed, gaining weight, feeling fatigued frequently and your attitude deteriorating? Was working longer hours to the detriment of everything else the best choice for you? For your family? For your company? Months or years later, that heart attack, Type 2 diabetes or cancer, may be traced back to one or more of these unconscious decisions with serious, life-threatening repercussions.

Suppose you are the owner or chief executive of a club or company, and you have one of your crazy fitness professionals wanting an appointment with you to share something of importance to them. Do you blow it off because they are far down on the corporate ladder, viewed as too artsy to pay attention to, simply a pain in the neck?

You ignore these requests to your detriment. In over 40 years of managing clubs, I can confidently tell you that virtually none of the innovations driving our businesses today came from the

Each choice or decision will change the direction your day will go.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following chapter is an excerpt from Herb Lipsman's book, "Caring (The Sequel): Valuable Insights Into Effective Club and Hospitality Management," which offers wisdom and experiences on club management topics like conflict management, membership retention, board messaging, handling stress and more. Lipsman is a longtime club and hospitality leader, managing clubs since 1993. He currently serves as vice president/general manager at Riverbend Club and The Reserve at Lake Travis in Spicewood, Texas.

managers in our industry. Consider these major innovations over the past few decades:

- Spinning
- Step
- Pilates
- Cross-Fit
- Pickleball
- Zumba
- Body Pump
- Over-sized Tennis Racquets
- Barre
- Hot Yoga

Each of these ideas came from the front-line fitness enthusiasts who had a cool idea. Fitness professionals and enthusiasts exist in each of our clubs. They are creative by nature. They are also passionate about what they do. This can, at times, make them hard to manage. However, managers and owners do themselves and their businesses a huge disservice by ignoring this steady flow of ideas. You never know when the next big thing is going to be presented to you by someone on your existing staff. All you have to do is listen and pay attention on a daily basis.

I personally learned this lesson while managing The Houstonian Club. One day, one of our group ex instructors by the name of Sasha came to see me with a request. Sasha was a professional ballet dancer who was recommending we offer Pilates Reformer instruction at the club. I had not previously been exposed to Pilates, but Sasha was so persuasive, I agreed to purchase one reformer and provide Sasha a small storage room to offer these private lessons.

Soon after Sasha began teaching Pilates, her clientele grew from one to a few to several clients and Sasha (and her students) came to see me begging for more space. So like any brilliant manager, I gave her a larger storage room with two Pilates Reformers. I doubled her space and productivity. I was a hero!

You guessed it. The program took off and the demands for more equipment and space kept coming. This original Pilates program that began at The Houstonian in the mid-90s today has a state-of-the-art studio with every conceivable piece of Pilates equipment (actually, multiples of each) and has become a multi-million-dollar revenue source for the club, just as it has for clubs across the globe.

Imagine if I had ignored Sasha's request or decided against testing it out. Not only would The Houstonian have missed out, but Sasha would likely have moved on and potentially become a


competitor. How many of these episodes have played out in your world over the years? How many opportunities have you missed by being too consumed with your own views, unwilling to listen to and learn from those you employ?

Let's shift to risk management decisions. How often have you become aware of a safety issue in your club(s) and didn't take the time to address it promptly, only to have an unnecessary accident occur, resulting in serious consequences both in terms of injury, litigation and costs? That split-second choice to either drop what you were doing to have a look or to procrastinate by choosing to get around to it when you have more time often comes back to bite you in ways big and small.

When is the best time to fix that exposed wiring, slip-and-fall hazard, slippery tile, frayed pulley, broken gate, malfunctioning treadmill, etc.? The best time is obviously the moment that you become aware of any of these and many more common safety hazards in your club. Once you are notified of the hazard,

you have no choice but to have it repaired, taken out of service, or clearly marked by highly visible signage to prevent an accident that would likely end up being determined to have been caused by the club's negligence. Yes, this is decision, whether consciously or unconsciously made.

The purpose of this chapter was to get you thinking about your own judgment and the hundreds of unconscious decisions and choices you make every day. By being mindful of all of these choices, you might find yourself making better choices and improving your overall batting average.

In closing this chapter, I want to emphasize that one of the most important decisions you will make every day will be how you prioritize and re-prioritize all of the challenges, tasks, and responses to external stimuli that you face. If you are truly practicing mindfulness, you will develop the habit of stopping multiple times each day for a matter of seconds or a few minutes to reflect on the thoughts racing through your mind. Which deserve your immediate attention, and which can be put off to a later time or ignored completely? Instead of continuously reacting to everything coming at you in a repetitive game of "Whack-a-Mole," you choose which priorities to focus on right now and schedule those that can wait. 

In over 40 years of managing clubs, I can confidently tell you that virtually none of the innovations driving our businesses today came from the managers in our industry.

Herb Lipsman is vice president/general manager at Riverbend Club and The Reserve at Lake Travis in Spicewood, Texas. He can be reached at herbnlipsman@gmail.com. "Caring (The Sequel)" can be purchased on Amazon.com and Barnesandnoble.com.



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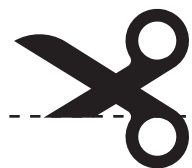
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Beating the Market Through GPOs

Opportunities to



CUT

COSTS

and Beat Inflation

By Mike Manion

With inflation rising, now is the time to look for ways to cut costs. A group purchasing organization (GPO) is

one way to realize critical savings at clubs and help club leaders beat the market.

A GPO combines the purchasing volume of a group of businesses (members) and uses that to negotiate better mark-up structures and discounts that result in item level pricing not attainable by most single businesses. There are four group purchasing organizations that are relevant to the golf and club industry:

ClubBuy (Premier), Entegra, Avendra and ClubProcure (VGM). Although there are additional GPOs available, these groups offer the most value to clubs.

These four GPOs each have annual purchasing volumes in the billions of dollars, and this purchasing power can have a significant savings impact on clubs. The club industry lags in its utilization of GPOs. The health care industry was one of first to develop purchasing groups and put their aggregated purchasing power to work for their benefit. Today, long-term care facilities, colleges and universities,

daycare centers, large resorts and many top multi-course operators (MCOs) utilize a GPO to assist with their procurement needs. Most of these industry groups have enough purchasing power to negotiate deals direct with suppliers, so why do they choose to utilize a GPO? A GPO:

- Works on behalf of their members to negotiate better programs with partnered vendors
- Follows a complete vetting process to ensure credibility and value
- Provides the utmost support for its members—without its members a GPO does not exist
- Delivers detailed reporting
- Reduces cost and provides access to pricing unattainable for independent clubs
- Ensures consistent mark-up and price protection
- Protects members against inflation
- Saves members time and increases efficiencies
- Sometimes offers an employee savings program for members to provide to their employees

The Food Distributor Relationship

Annual sales for most broadline distributors, or one-stop shops, in this industry are split between “street sales” (about 50% to 65%) and national accounts (about 35% to 50%). The more street sales outweigh national accounts, the greater net profits are for the distributor.

There has always been opposition between the national accounts and street sales departments within any broadline distributor. This isn’t expected to diminish any time soon; however, the pressure is increasing on these broadline distributors to increase profits. They are achieving this in many ways such as higher markups, switching quality but keeping the same price, offering smaller pack sizes at the same price, providing fewer split cases, demanding larger drop sizes, increasing fuel and delivery surcharges, and limiting

Selecting a GPO for Your Club?

Here are the Questions to Ask

What is their member base?

- Many GPOs promote having the best program; however, a limited membership will not deliver a competitive program.

Is there a membership fee for participation?

- Most GPOs do not charge for their services. Revenue is typically earned from fees paid by the approved vendors supporting the GPO and the foodservice distributor. If there is a charge to members, look elsewhere.

Is there a contract restricting your ability to purchase locally or outside of the GPO?

In addition to their broadline food supplier, does the GPO offer separate produce and beverage programs?

Do they offer savings on nonfood contracts like equipment, office supplies and services, facility and grounds maintenance, etc.?

Regarding their foodservice contracts, are you given the ability to view all pricing online?

- Watch out for GPOs that give you limited/no access to the prices you are going to pay for product. Many will provide access to contracted pricing for products you are purchasing but do not allow you to view the entire product catalog. If you must call a representative for pricing on an item you aren’t currently purchasing, it is an opportunity for that company to charge non-negotiated rates to earn a higher margin of profit than when it is published online.

Does the GPO directly negotiate with manufacturers?

- The four GPOs mentioned earlier have direct relationships/negotiations with manufacturers and do not negotiate with distributors. Participating in a GPO that negotiates pricing on behalf of their members will save you time and provide consistency in price.

Is the savings model provided by the GPO based on net pricing on the face of the invoice or rebates being paid back on a specified basis?

- Most customers prefer immediate savings on the face of the invoice, especially if there are incentives for chefs or F&B managers based on food cost. It’s very difficult to calculate food cost when most of your savings is paid back to you in a rebate well after the close of a month or quarter.
- Another advantage to immediate savings on the invoice is that you know precisely what you are paying for product each week. Unless your chef or F&B manager knows the case rebate on 100% of the items being purchased, it is impossible to calculate what your exact savings is with a GPO who only provides savings as a rebate.

Has the GPO provided an agreement in writing that details their programs and protocols?

- Are their requirements of the GPO members clearly explained?

Have rebates/incentives associated with their program been outlined in writing for you?

- If the GPO you’re considering is more rebate-oriented, have they detailed *all* rebates you will receive on each item?
- Is the rebate variable with the possibility to change over time or is it a static rebate structure?

the number of deliveries a customer can receive each week.

A common objection when considering a change to a GPO is that the club's salesperson is irreplaceable because "we love them . . . can't run our business without them . . . they deliver items to me in their own car in emergencies, etc." The general perception is that relationships with vendors are lost with the transition from a street sales account to a national account under a GPO program. This is far from the truth; in fact, in most cases, communication and service improve under the watchful eye of a GPO program. Workforce efficiency is also improved as the service a GPO provides on behalf of its members relieves your employees of additional legwork and increases time to focus on their job duties. Your GPO becomes your advocate. They negotiate cost savings in advance on your behalf, assist with

sourcing any needs that arise, and aid in resolving vendor-related issues. Clubs are no longer left to do all of this on their own as a standalone business or account. Participating in a GPO means the club is now supported by a company doing millions or even billions of dollars in business with any given vendor!

Nick Barrington, executive chef from East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta, mentioned how these benefits have impacted his business when he said, "I found my GPO program gave me more time to do my job in the kitchen, teaching and educating my staff, as opposed to talking to vendors and continually checking on prices."

Times have certainly changed and continue to evolve almost daily. The \$15+/hour minimum wage is here. We're already experiencing the effects of inflation and it is continuing an upward trajectory. Supply chain challenges will

continue well into 2022. What else is in store that hasn't come down the pike yet?

If you choose to partner with a national GPO program, keep in mind that many of the suppliers you are using likely have relationships with GPOs, so this does not mean you necessarily have to change suppliers to get better financial benefits and savings for your club. The average savings a club will realize from a GPO is roughly between 10% and 18%, and sometimes more. If your annual spend is, let's say \$300,000, you must consider the question: Is your current vendor worth \$30,000 to \$55,000 a year to you? Plug your own annual spend into that statement and calculate a 10% to 18% savings value, the question remains. **CD**

Mike Manion is national sales manager at Clubhouse Solutions. He can be reached at mike.manion@nbcuni.com.

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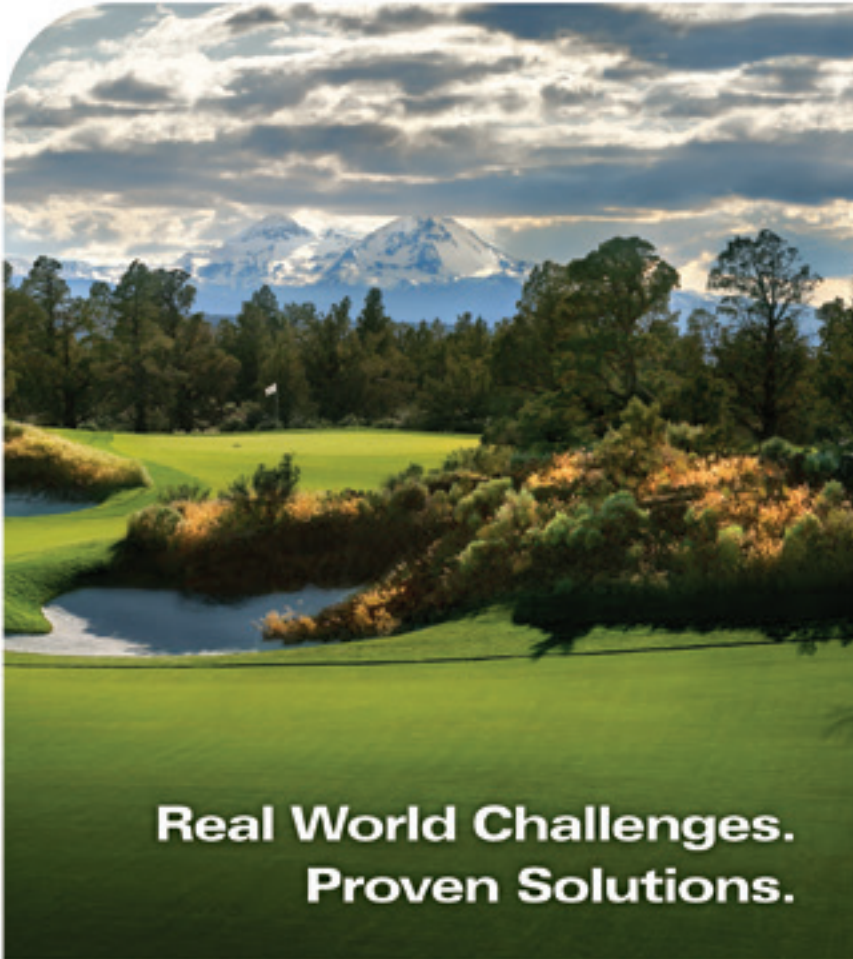


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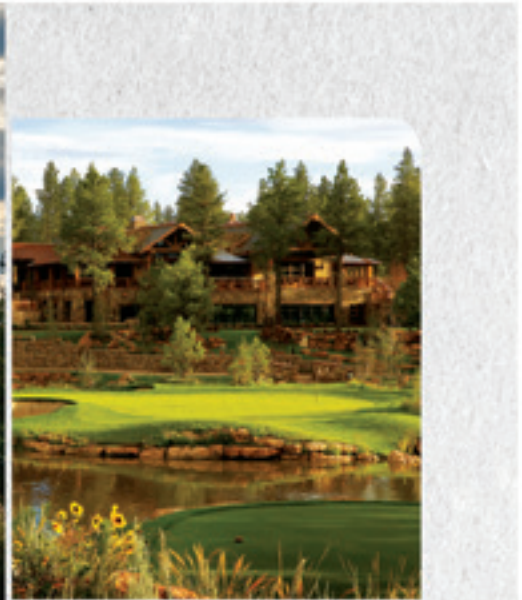
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Meet Congressman Thomas R. Suozzi (D-N.Y.)

Public service always seemed like a normal part of life. I am so glad I have devoted much of the past 30 years of my adult life to it.

Congressman Tom Suozzi represents New York's Third Congressional District, which encompasses most of the North Shore of Long Island and is the home of seven private clubs. The Congressman was born in Glen Cove, N.Y., in 1962 and is the youngest of five children born to Joseph and Marguerite Suozzi. Rep. Suozzi attended Boston College and Fordham University School of Law and is trained as a CPA and attorney. He served four terms (1993–2001) as the Mayor of Glen Cove, N.Y., a position his father also held from 1956–1960. Suozzi served as Nassau County Executive from 2001–2009 and was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2016. Suozzi is Vice Chair of the Bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus and serves on the House Ways and Means Committee. National Club Association Vice President of Government Relations Joe Trauger and Congressman Tom Suozzi spoke at the Metropolitan Golf Association's 2021 President's Council meeting at Glen Oaks Golf Club in October 2021, and Joe took the opportunity to interview him for this article. Since the interview occurred, Rep. Suozzi announced he is running for the Democratic nomination for Governor of New York. The primary election will be held in June and the general election on November 8, 2022.

What inspired you to get involved with politics and governance?

My dad, an Italian immigrant, and the best man I have ever known, lived a great American success story. The first one in the neighborhood to go to college, he fought in World War II as a navigator on a B-24, and then returned home and went to Harvard Law School. He became our local mayor and a New York Supreme Court Judge. He was always helping people. My mom, a registered nurse, was the same way—always trying to lift people up. Growing up there was a photo in the house of my dad with John F. Kennedy. Public service always seemed like a normal part of life. I am so glad I have devoted much of the past 30 years of my adult life to it.

The National Club Association (NCA) represents private clubs such as city, country, golf, yacht and athletic clubs. What's been your experience with clubs as a mayor, county executive and representative? In your view, what are some of the positive impacts private clubs have on their communities? Are there things clubs can do better?

One of my first jobs was as a caddie. I grew up around golf courses. As Mayor of Glen Cove and Nassau County Executive I oversaw several



Bipartisan solutions are necessary to achieve comprehensive and sustainable reform to the nation's most pressing issues—and this past November, our group helped negotiate and pass the largest infrastructure bill of the last 50-plus years.

municipal golf courses. In 2002, I helped save a Senior Tour Tournament by helping find sponsors and dramatically upgrading, to Tour standards, the Eisenhower Red Course, designed by Devereux Emmet. It was a great success for many years. In both 2002 and 2009, the U.S. Open was hosted at one of the greatest state-owned public golf courses—Bethpage Black, located in Nassau County. Public and private golf courses are a big part of the quality of life in the areas I represent in Northeastern Queens and the North Shore of Long Island. They are beautiful. They preserve open space. They provide entertainment, economic activity and jobs. Many are hosts for fundraising for charitable events and many of the courses in my area are steeped in history and tradition—you have all bet a \$5 Nassau from Nassau Country Club!

You are the Vice Chairman of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus. Why was the caucus founded and what is its purpose?

The bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus consists of 27 Democrats and 27 Republicans committed to working across party lines to try and find real solutions. The Caucus meets weekly and is not afraid to take on the tough issues such as health care, immigration, infrastructure and government reform. Bipartisan solutions are necessary to achieve comprehensive and sustainable reform to the nation's most pressing issues—and this past November, our group helped negotiate and pass the largest infrastructure bill of the last 50-plus years. It was *bipartisan*. Only by reaching across party lines can we get things done for the people we serve.

You serve on the House Ways and Means Committee, which has jurisdiction over taxes and many other major issues. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act passed in 2017 limited the deduction for state and local taxes, known as SALT. Restoration of this deduction has been a key priority for you and may be addressed in President Biden's Build Back Better plan. Why is this deduction

so important to you and what is the likelihood of a full restoration of the deduction?

The \$10,000 SALT cap has been a body blow to homeowners in my home state of New York, as well as other high cost of living states like New Jersey and California, who have been unfairly double taxed the past four years. Right now, I am leading the negotiations and debate over repealing the SALT cap, or at least lifting the SALT cap. A final agreement to address SALT will put hard earned dollars back into the pockets of millions of families and allow local communities to continue to fund programs that address people's quality of life.

NCA supports H.R. 3109, the Personal Health Investment Today Act (PHIT) and would like to thank you for cosponsoring this legislation that would allow taxpayers to use a small amount of their health savings account for fitness-related activity. What are the prospects of this bipartisan legislation being passed this Congress?

Physical fitness for America's children is one of the best ways to build a healthy lifestyle and prevent future health expenses. But unfortunately for many Americans, financial barriers exist that prevent participation in physical activities and youth sports. The Personal Health Investment Today Act is common sense legislation that has broad bipartisan support and will open the door for kids across the country to participate in sports. I will work to ensure this legislation will be brought to the House floor for a vote.

As a nation, what kinds of things do we need to focus on to maintain our competitive position relative to other economic powers in the world, particularly China?

China and similarly situated countries are boasting that they do not think democracy can survive in the current world of social media and the 24-hour news cycle. They don't think we can do big things anymore because we are too divided. But guess what? We just proved them wrong with the passage of the bipartisan infrastructure package that will put millions of Americans to work. To maintain a competitive position, we must empower American businesses, businesses must share their success and empower their workforce with good wages and benefits, and we must support critical supply chain manufacturing here in the United States and with our allies. We must recognize that China is our strategic adversary. We don't seek conflict, but we must acknowledge that they have serious human rights abuses in their own country, have been playing unfairly on the economic front, and they have a strategic plan to dominate the world economically, technologically and militarily. The sooner we accept that, the sooner we can win our future.

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Jack Kennedy, Theodore Roosevelt and my neighbor, Darrell Kestner. 

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How do top-tier clubs get ahead of their competitors and stay there?

IF YOU ARE A LEADER of a top-tier private club (or a club that aspires to be top tier), you understand that relevance is not just a buzz word—it is the key to long-term success. In addition to relevance, the industry's healthiest clubs share a common characteristic that we call “big picture thinking.” Their boards are far too busy planning for the future and executing on those plans to be distracted by operational issues. Their members recognize themselves as owners, and as such they willingly and continuously invest in the club's physical plant throughout their tenure as members.

That notion of willingness to invest is important. The financial reality of keeping your club relevant and competitive in a dynamic market is this: During the next decade, the club's members will likely need to invest a minimum of \$10 million in modernization and transformative capital improvements. Here's why:

- With depreciation running more than \$1 million per year at many top-tier clubs, you'll likely need to invest \$10 million over the course of the next decade just to prevent erosion of your capital base (i.e., deferred maintenance). Protecting and maintaining the club's physical assets is a primary responsibility of a club's volunteer board members.
- It's a safe bet that your competition is actively working to up their game. Like you, they understand that breadth and quality of club amenities, services and facilities matter now more than ever.

The longer you delay getting started, the further ahead other clubs will be.

- Capital investment must be recognized as a continuous, never-ending process. In 10 years, the “new” clubhouse, pool, fitness center, spa or any aspirational project you are building right now will be showing its age.
- Annual member attrition of 4–7% is normal, which means over the next decade you will need to replace more than 50% of your membership. Given that the average age of new members joining a club is 42 (approximately 60 in residential community clubs in retirement areas), the profiles of those new members will be very different than the profiles of those departing. Consumer tastes and interests are constantly evolving.

The Top-Tier Mindset

Among successful top-tier clubs, amenity trends include upscale spas, fitness centers and locker rooms, more child-friendly spaces, more options for casual dining and socialization, more racquet sport options, yoga and Pilates studios, golf training centers, outdoor lawn games and golf simulators set up for leagues and socialization (not just for training), and many other evolving innovative amenities.

To fund these improvements, top-tier clubs rely on members thinking and acting as owners and willingly contributing capital ideally through recurring capital dues to fund obligatory needs (repair and replacing what is owned)

and initiation fees and the judicious use of debt to fund aspirational investments (evolutionary investments to remain relevant). Capital funding must be comprehensively, precisely planned, separately from operational funds. It requires consistent, long-term thinking and careful proactive planning. It's also critical to think in terms of funding a cohesive long-term plan versus a project-by-project approach. And remember that successful implementation of large-scale capital improvements will almost always increase operating costs. Long-term operating budgets must be planned separately and simultaneously.

The club's long-term strategic vision should be distinct and well-documented with an unwavering commitment to

funding the vision. As new members join the board, a key piece of their orientation to club finance should be the understanding that funds for obligatory and aspirational capital investments or debt service will not and should not come from operating surpluses. Far too many clubs have seen long-term plans derailed by a failure to grasp that basic tenant of club finance.

Top tier clubs think big picture and long term. They keep their eyes on the horizon and think strategically about what it will take to make themselves the club of choice for the next generation of members. [CD](#)

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Capital funding must be comprehensively, precisely planned, separately from operational funds.



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FINANCE

How is inflation affecting the dues dollar?



Daniel T. Condon



Matthew P. O'Dell



James J. Hankowski

AS CLUBS CONTINUE to navigate through all the regulations relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, another obstacle has emerged—surging inflation. When businesses began to re-open, consumers returned in force to spend money. This, combined with federal stimulus programs, a low interest rate environment, a soaring stock market and supply chain issues to name a few, have caused a demand for goods and services that is outpacing the supply. Of course, inflation has its place in many economic recoveries, and this one is no different, but traversing any significant inflationary environment can prove difficult. So, how has this impacted clubs?

Prior to COVID-19, clubs and other small businesses in many states were already dealing with ongoing increases in labor costs because of an incremental increase in the minimum wage. Now tight labor markets are putting additional, significant pressure on wages. The cost of labor is not the only obstacle clubs are facing. Commodity prices (beef, chicken, bacon, etc.) have surged due to shortages caused by supply chain issues. Energy prices also are rising, coupled with skyrocketing prices of gasoline (over 40% since the beginning of the year), which are embedded in numerous operating costs for clubs. These rising costs, together with supply chain disruptions, do not appear to be slowing anytime soon.

Invariably the question arises, “How do we pay for this?” Understanding club politics as well as club economics and operations is no easy undertaking. Membership dues is a key component of any healthy private club and its correlation to payroll is quite remarkable. Generally,

Membership dues is a key component of any healthy private club and its correlation to payroll is quite remarkable.

labor costs consume more than 50% of the operating revenue dollar, and since membership dues is a major component of operating revenue, clubs focus on annual increases to offset these inflationary pressures. Therefore, clubs are evaluating their traditional dues increases, which have been relatively mild (roughly 3%) during the past decade. Increasing dues is never an easy decision but considering these inflationary demands, club board are finding themselves under increasing pressure to raise dues far more than previous increases to cover these costs. For the first time in many years, it appears that dues increases at many clubs in 2022 will far exceed the average 3% increase. Will this create a “sticker shock” for members who were previously on the fence for continuing their membership? Time will tell. Of course, best practices are for clubs to increase dues annually to keep up with normal inflationary factors—but 2022 may be historic! **CD**

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"Throughout the process, advice and counsel from Club Benchmarking gave our Board the confidence and buy-in they needed to bring the project to a vote that was overwhelmingly approved by the membership."

Eric Allain - General Manager



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"Club Benchmarking was there to guide our Board through every step of the process and the result was a master plan that received an 86% approval rating from the Club's Proprietary Members."

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"In approximately one year, we went from a very disturbed membership to gaining a clear endorsement for the changes of the future. I can say unequivocally that this would not have happened without the involvement of Club Benchmarking."

Tom O'Shane - Treasurer

LEADERSHIP



Bob James

As club leaders, we often hear more complaints than compliments. What is the best way to handle feedback?

Author and clinical psychologist Dr. Laura Markham recently wrote that when we listen to complaints, even our own, we become demoralized, which is picked up and shared by everyone around us.

ACCORDING TO RESEARCHERS in clinical psychology, the average person complains 30 times per day, and they are hurting themselves as well as those around them. Author and clinical psychologist Dr. Laura Markham recently wrote that when we listen to complaints, even our own, we become demoralized, which is picked up and shared by everyone around us. She goes on to say that too much of this leads to poor mental and physical health. Being positive and optimistic on the other hand, adds years to our lives.

In our governance work with clubs, too often we hear that the leadership, particularly the president or house chair, spends an inordinate amount of time dealing with complaints or disciplinary procedures. How often have you intentionally avoided cutting through the grill room or detour around the bar during mealtimes to avoid being stopped by an unhappy member? Or do you regularly field questions and complaints about pace of play or the speed of the greens while you are trying to enjoy your game? As a club leader, can you honestly say that you enjoy your membership as much now as before you became a leader? Does it stress you out? So why do you take it anymore? But before punching the next complainer, resigning your position, or worse, quitting the club to return to anonymity at the muni, seize the moment.

This is a leadership issue that should be rooted in general club and board

policy. Many clubs' bylaws state that complaints should be taken up with the general manager or submitted in writing to the board. When was the last time any member read the bylaws, much less had the patience to hold their tongue and seek out the appropriate person? Complaints are emotional and the first club leader (including the general manager—or God forbid—chef) who wanders by will likely get an earful. When does feedback become a complaint? Many people unfortunately don't know how to frame their feedback in a positive manner.

Immediacy is the secret to good discipline and the effectiveness of meaningful feedback, but too often club procedures have led to a culture that elevates small issues into a mountain and gives undue recognition to the complainer. One of the worst examples of this is the "gotcha" moments at the board or committee meeting when a director or committee member gets the floor to finally regurgitate the little tidbit or secret that they've been holding back from management and volunteer leadership for weeks, just to have something to say at the meeting or demonstrate their importance. Gotchas cannot be tolerated under any circumstance; they show disrespect towards those responsible and deter the timely addressing of important matters. If it is important enough to raise at a meeting, it should have been addressed already!

So, what are some of the solutions? Board and committee members should not view their role as the complaint department, and they must be proactive about maintaining a club culture whereby suggestions and complaints are directed to the right source in the correct and timely manner. Regardless of the importance or severity of such input, immediacy is crucial. It does the club no good for a disgruntled member to call or email the House Committee about the poor service or overcooked hamburger they just received. Those are issues that should be addressed at the time and with the management who can take corrective action. Thus, it is imperative that volunteer club leadership refer members with complaints and suggestions of noncritical importance directly to the manager on duty or head of the department where the issue occurred.

Refer them to the dining room manager about the overcooked burger, or director of golf for a slow play problem. Then thank them for their concern and keep on moving. If they have a serious issue, refer them to the general manager, and for very serious issues, to the president or Executive Committee. Then follow up to see that they have addressed the issue.

Deflect routine complaints. For the regular complainer, ask for complaint(s) in writing to the Executive Committee. Ninety-nine times out of 100, that puts an end to the issue. No one, particularly constant complainers, wants to go on record or expose themselves as a complainer. Unfortunately, many constant complainers don't even recognize that they are one.

It is necessary to maintain a civil culture whereby suggestions, complaints and other forms of member feedback

are welcome and encouraged, but with respect and a spirit of helpfulness. Regular membership satisfaction surveys are an effective medium for members to express their pent-up concerns, particularly when offering fields to type in those concerns. If you have developed a culture of complaining, this may be the best place to start.

Providing feedback in a respectful and helpful manner is an act of kindness toward your club, its volunteers and staff, all of whom are interested in improving the club. Welcome suggestions and complaints but manage them. When you create a culture of kindness you will lower the stress level, and everyone will live a more healthy and longer life. [CD](#)

Bob James, CCE, CCM, CHE is vice president, DENEHY Club Thinking Partners. He can be reached at bob@denehyctp.com.



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Henry DeLozier

Beyond the textbook matters of sound strategy, five strategic priorities have emerged as a part of the novel coronavirus pandemic.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

How has strategic planning changed since the start of the pandemic?

STRATEGIC PLANNING has become important in most leading clubs, riding the wave of membership growth across the U.S. Long a proven tool of the best-performing private clubs, strategic planning brings intention and clarity to the board's efforts. Beyond the textbook matters of sound strategy, five strategic priorities have emerged as a part of the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Regeneration of Members

Baby boomers, long the driving force in private clubs, are progressively aging out of many clubs. The youngest of the boomers were born in 1964 and are now 57 years old while their older siblings—born as early as 1946—are well into their 70s. Boomers are now being replaced by Generation X, who range in age from 57 (born in 1965) to 41 (1980). Each group has different needs and wants, requiring an understanding of the priorities driving the decision to become, and remain, private club members.

Generation gaps are appearing in clubs where the most tenured members—oldest by profile—do not wish to pay for capital improvements that younger members consider to be overdue. Most clubs are working through the generation gaps and all boards are faced with regenerative choices.

New Priorities in Clubs

The new wave of members introduces regenerative change in clubs' priorities and needs. Four new-wave points of emphasis in most clubs include:

- **Fresh-air Dining** – The onset of the pandemic caused the need for open-air dining options. Members' preference for fresh air and a sense of openness has persisted. New solutions for window treatments and patio spaces are taking the day.
- **Facilitated Lifestyle** – Members require more assistance to enjoy their clubs. Such matters as downloading and learning how to use the club app, meeting new members who have joined the club during the pandemic, and organizing emerging interest groups now require support from management and staff.
- **Pickleball** – Having swept onto the scene as an engaging and highly social activity, new demands for capital and square footage are popularizing pickleball.
- **Cybersecurity** – Reflecting the world around the club, cyber threats are more prevalent in private clubs. It is time to audit your club's cybersecurity.

Investment in Capital Assets

Most clubs have benefitted from increased capital funding as new members have restored capital reserves enabling many to address long-deferred capital needs.

New capital projects are usually considered to be funded from capital improvement accounts while replacing existing club assets are typically considered to be capital maintenance.

The prevailing trend is catching up on capital maintenance projects like new

roofs, patio upgrades, parking lot resurfacing and HVAC needs. Capital improvement projects include pickleball courts, swing simulators and sports training technologies and golf course improvements.

Importance of Transparent Governance

In these troubled times, some clubs have begun to act out the behaviors from the evening news: name-calling, stubborn resistance to needed changes and internal segmentation of member groups. It's time for open and transparent governance practices.

Topmost among the changes coming to club boards:

- Board Policy Manuals (BPMs) – Use of a BPM has spread actively into private

clubs where the backbone of transparent governance is a clearly stated method of governing. The BPM tells members how their board will function and holds boards accountable for their efforts.

- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) – Leading clubs have taken responsibility for making their leadership profile more diverse and inclusive. With a long way to go, clubs have begun to embrace the tenets of DEI.
- Robust Board Communications – Many club boards have increased the frequency and quality of content within board communications. Members now expect to know what matters are of importance to their board.

New Focus on Brand Management

Clubs are brands and most sophisticated board members recognize the necessity to manage the club's brand proactively and consistently. Many clubs enjoy solid brand ratings and have not understood the importance of projecting the club's brand intentionally. The evolution of brand management in private clubs requires thorough understanding of the U.S. Tax Code and the club's obligations therein.

Developing your club's strategic plan will ensure intention and clarity to your efforts to achieve success. [CD](#)

Henry DeLozier is a principal at GGA Partners. He can be reached at henry.delozier@ggapartners.com.

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TECHNOLOGY



Trevor Coughlan

Why should a club invest in staff knowledge and training for its technology systems?

CLUBS ARE UNIQUE within the hospitality world, offering a multitude of services under one roof that would normally be delivered by multiple stand-alone service providers. When you combine this specialized offering with the need to optimize and standardize service levels throughout an entire property, clubs often find themselves with a unique technology challenge. This challenge requires a vast array of specialized capabilities all focused on a single data point—the member.

Whether your club has sourced multiple systems or partnered with a single solution vendor to address your technology needs, the rubber meets the road when technology is placed users' hands. This is when technology either enhances or inhibits service and members are either delighted or disappointed. It's with this in mind that it's disheartening to know that most technology solutions in use at businesses are underutilized, and we don't need to look at club technology systems to find an example that we can all relate to.

Most of us would comfortably reply "yes" when asked if we know how to use Microsoft Excel. However, often when speaking at industry events, I use a simple example where an audience volunteer is asked to combine words in multiple cells into a

string of text in a single cell. The command in Microsoft Excel is "CONCATENATE" and it performs the function very well, but the knowledge of even this simple and very useful command is often unknown.

This example of Microsoft Excel barely scratches the surface of its available functionality, but it perfectly highlights how we all use technology. We typically only use the features and functions we need in order to accomplish our daily tasks, and rarely if ever do we examine the technology we use every day to try to find better ways to accomplish our tasks. What is worse is that many of us are never formally trained in the technology we use, instead relying on notes and crash courses offered to us by colleagues to get us through our days. But when the technology we are relying on is responsible not just for crunching numbers, but for enhancing or delivering service experiences, this underutilization can become very troublesome.

Much like the Microsoft Excel example, leveraging more of your technology feature set isn't about adding more to someone's daily tasks, it's about working smarter and allowing staff to optimize the technology features at their disposal. This often comes by way of ensuring that systems are configured to meet your current operations, not those of your club 10 years ago. Even in the case where systems have been in place for years, updates, enhancements and new configurations are likely available to unlock a host of new potential. This ongoing updating and streamlining of your technology is an


essential part of keeping staff on the cutting edge of service delivery.

This has never been more relevant than during the current staffing shortage. Right now, hospitality industry workers are leaving their jobs at twice the rate of other industries, and new staff are being asked to hit the ground running. Ensuring new staff receive effective technology training is vital as it ensures a high level of member service and will help prevent frustration in their new roles.

Annual and semi-annual staff training is becoming more popular as club technology stretches further from the back office and into members' hands. To compliment this training, many clubs are creating staff portals where team members can access HR and business documentation as well as resources from their technology providers. Lastly, adding new staff to your technology service providers' communication channels such as email, YouTube or LinkedIn is effective for getting up to speed and staying informed.

Often, only those of us who work for technology companies who wake up every day thinking about how to optimize technology, but a small, regular investment of time can make all the difference at your club.

As for myself, now that I've given away my long relied upon Microsoft Excel example, I'm off to find another example for my next presentation.

Can anyone show me how to do a VLOOKUP? 

Trevor Coughlan is vice president, marketing at Jonas Club Software. He can be reached at trevor.coughlan@jonasclub.com.

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BRANDING

How can a private club market its F&B?



Ed Doyle

A SCAN OF ANY metropolitan area will usually reveal a cluster of private clubs offering many of the same amenities and benefits—top-rated golf, racquet sports, fitness, swimming, social programming, events, dining and more—in addition to individual details on location, history and culture. While each club should be leveraging its own uniqueness, qualified prospective members might struggle to note any differentiation when looking from the outside in. They may often unknowingly rely on brand to differentiate between clubs when making a joining decision, however, the lasting loyalty of active members is also routinely influenced by branding.

The same is true for food and beverage (F&B) marketing. In fact, marketing has everything to do with brand and very little to do with F&B. The most important component for successful F&B marketing within a private club is understanding the club's identity and vision, and then delivering on its brand promise.

The F&B program has become far more important in the storytelling of a club's brand and member experience, especially since member priorities have shifted to a holistic view of a private club's lifestyle. The club's brand informs both operational

and marketing decisions within the dining venues, from what goes on the menu and how the menu is packaged and designed, to member communications, online presence, staff uniforms and the range of events hosted.

With the club as the master brand and each dining venue as a sub brand, a club can create an ecosystem of brands that work together harmoniously. Developing a unique marketing plan for each dining outlet is an activity that supports operations. This annual process comprises the plan that not only plots the future, but also provides the team a shared goal to work toward and parameters from which to work. Practicing intentionality with the “little things” matters:

- Break down the silos. Marketing professionals and F&B leaders should work together as partners to find a balance between what is communicated and how often. Simpler is better—especially when communicating operational changes.
- Establish a brand voice to ensure that all club communications—not just F&B—are conveyed in a singular voice to help maintain brand consistency.
- Sales activities require a quick response, especially for event inquiries. The time and money invested in lead generation can quickly be lost when inquiries linger. Alternately, when response time is reduced, conversions will increase exponentially.
- Menus are marketing tools, inside and out, online and in-person. A menu should tell the story of the dining experience in a singular, packaged piece. Check for accuracy, grammar, typos and consistency. Think beyond food with the adoption of thoughtful beverage and

Developing a unique marketing plan for each dining outlet is an activity that supports operations.

cocktail inclusions that reflect seasonality and trends.

- Strengthen connections and the club's F&B brand by inviting back-of-the-house leaders to meet and mingle with the members when appropriate.
- Because tastings are an expression of expertise, wedding and event tastings aren't just a best practice in sales but also a brand opportunity. Treat them as a way to showcase the chef's expertise, the service team's skills and the club's hospitality competence.
- Make photography and video a priority. The way of communication today is more visual than written.
- Use technology to enhance operations and maintain relevance. Online ordering, online reservations, electronic contract signing and mobile apps will streamline interactions and enhance the member experience.
- When the food and beverage operations work in service to the overarching club identity and vision, every F&B touchpoint becomes a marketing opportunity that reinforces the global message and the club's brand. **CD**

Ed Doyle is president of RealFood, Hospitality, Strategy and Design, a Tron Company. He can be reached at eddoyle@rfhsd.com.

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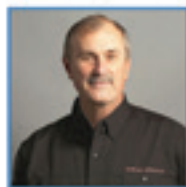
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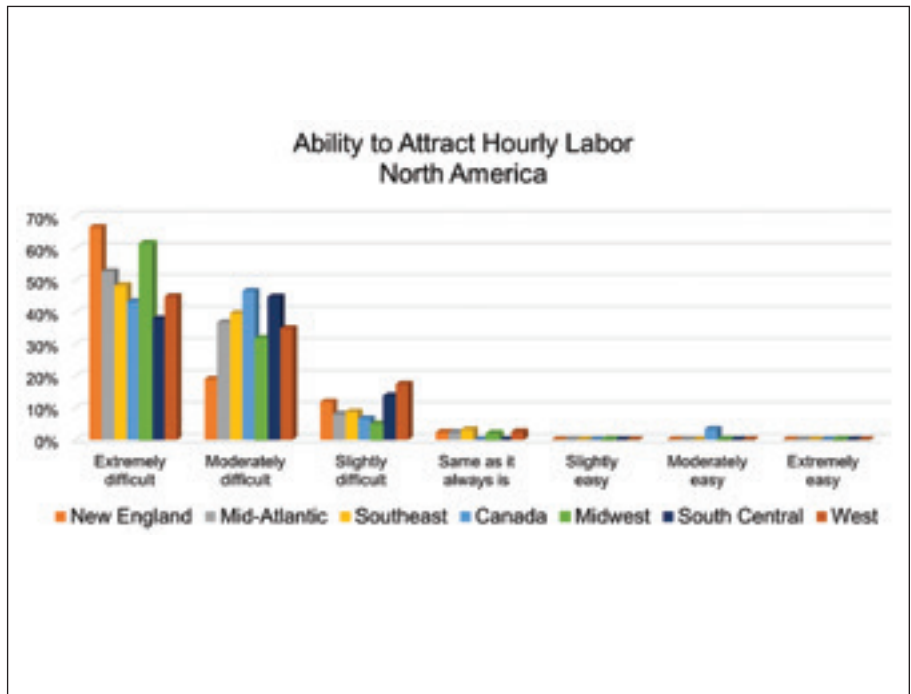
Labor and Wage Pressure on 2022 Club Budgets

IN OCTOBER 2021, Club Benchmarking conducted a survey aimed at quantifying the impact of labor shortages, hourly wage inflation and other economic pressures on 2022 club budgets and dues rates. More than 540 clubs responded, and the study findings were compiled in an industry report which was distributed to participating clubs. The charts excerpted below focus on a single area of the study—the impact of the tight labor market on the club industry.

Staffing Struggles

The first survey question asked respondents to describe the relative difficulty of attracting hourly labor. Possible responses were laid out on a seven-point scale.

Nearly all responding clubs (97%) reported increased levels of difficulty attracting hourly workers and 52% identified their staffing challenges as “Extremely Difficult.”



Across the industry, Club Benchmarking survey data indicates 70–80% of clubs are unable to fill all of their F&B positions, with 15–35% of full-time slots staffed below ideal levels and part-time slots 30–50% below ideal levels.

Fill Rate for Full Time Positions	National Shortfall	% of Clubs Filling All Open Slots
A La Carte Servers	-34%	16%
Course Maintenance Laborers	-20%	22%
Banquet Servers	-47%	23%
Cooks	-23%	25%
Bus Staff	-41%	29%
Dishwashers	-32%	34%
Bartenders	-32%	35%
Housekeeping	-21%	51%
Lifeguards	-19%	56%
Building Maintenance	-17%	62%
Average	-29%	35%

Fill Rate for Part Time Positions	National Shortfall	% of Clubs Filling All Open Slots
Banquet Servers	-49%	13%
A La Carte Servers	-30%	24%
Bus Staff	-38%	28%
Cooks	-38%	29%
Course Maintenance Laborers	-22%	32%
Bartenders	-35%	35%
Dishwashers	-38%	38%
Housekeeping	-42%	42%
Lifeguards	-14%	49%
Building Maintenance	-41%	63%
Average	-35%	35%

The survey report is available to every club that completes the survey. For more information about obtaining a copy for your club, email Club Benchmarking Research Coordinator Mike Morin at mmorin@clubbenchmarking.com.



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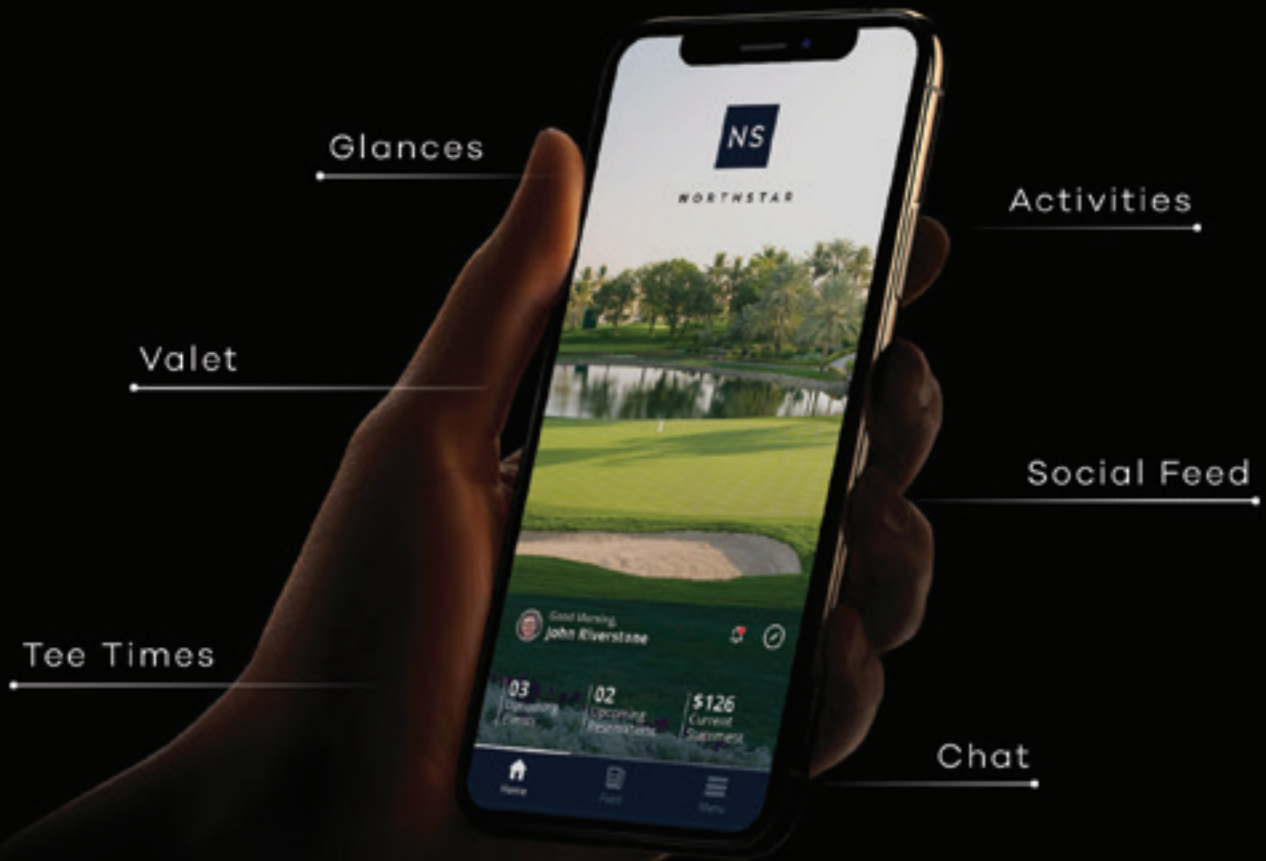
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