

Club Director

FALL 2022

PERSPECTIVES FOR LEADING PRIVATE CLUBS

PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL CLUB ASSOCIATION

The Beauty of the Club

Meet the people behind clubs' great art.



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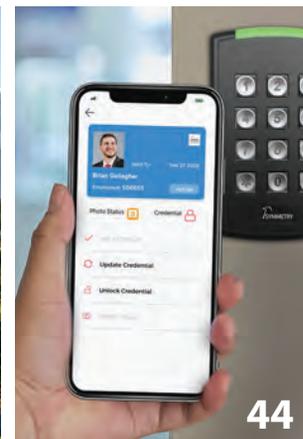
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Joe Trauger
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Advertising & Sales

DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Blue House Design

CLUB DIRECTOR

National Club Association
1680 Duke Street, #420
Alexandria, VA 22314
202-822-9822

LEADING

Leading and Listening



THE TERMS “leading” and “leadership” are words you hear quite a bit living and working in Washington, D.C., whether it is in the context of Congress, the Executive Branch or advocacy organizations like the National Club Association (NCA) and many others.

In the short time I have been at the helm of NCA, it has been my pleasure to hear from so many members who all have valuable lessons and experiences to share, not only with me and the NCA team, but all NCA members. In the last several months, we have held some of our most popular webcasts since the beginning of the pandemic and I’m excited about the programming we have set for the fall. This edition of *Club Director* is a great example of the issues and opportunities NCA is highlighting for our members. It’s my belief that NCA has the leading club publication in the industry and our aim is to continue providing a quality magazine that covers the challenges, opportunities and trends private club leaders need to be aware of as stewards of their clubs.

Providing a forum to work together and learn from each other is an important role NCA plays in the private club community and you can see in this issue how sharing this information can help clubs create an even better experience for their membership. The commitment to inclusiveness and diversity demonstrated in the creation of Old Barnwell in South Carolina, ensuring a safe and secure environment without alienating members and guests, and building effective member communications strategies are just a few areas we cover in this edition that offer insights club leaders can use to inform the decisions they make at their clubs. The latest information on club governance practices, labor recruitment and retention, federal regulatory actions impacting private clubs and more await you in this edition of *Club Director*.

As I mentioned above, since moving into my new role with NCA, I’ve had the benefit of hearing from many NCA members and appreciated the insights they have offered. It’s been my experience that one of the best things the leader of any organization can do is listen intently to those you aim to serve. In that spirit, I invite you to contact me any time to share your thoughts on NCA’s publications, webcasts or other programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Trauger'.

Joe Trauger
NCA President & CEO

Teeing Up the Mid-term Elections

NCA joined other allied organizations opposing changes to the independent contractor rules earlier this year and it is likely this rule has been published between this writing and publication of *Club Director*.

Water

Congress adjourned for its annual August recess period after a flurry of negotiations and successfully passed significant legislation including the so-called “Inflation Reduction Act,” which most would admit does little, if anything, to reduce inflation. While on the surface, it may seem the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) had little effect on clubs, there were provisions in it related to drought mitigation efforts in the Southwest. I had the opportunity to visit with the Greater Southwest Chapter of CMAA in August and water issues were front and center during the meeting. It just so happened that the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation announced the day I spoke that water allocations to Arizona would be reduced by 21%. The National Club Association (NCA) will be engaged with clubs in the Southwest as negotiations continue between upper and lower basin states that depend on the Colorado River for much of their water.

Funding

With the number of legislative days before the mid-term election dwindling, it doesn’t appear Congress will be doing much other than making sure the lights stay on in the federal government, and even that will be on a temporary basis. In what has become tradition, Congress will pass a continuing resolution (CR) to fund the federal government, but the question is how long that resolution will last. My sources on the Appropriations Committee tell me the CR is likely to get us to early December with a deal being reached later that month.

Labor

The regulatory calendar has been picking up lately and the Department of Labor’s

(DOL’s) Wage and Hour Division has most likely issued updates to the overtime threshold and independent contractor status between the writing of this column and when the magazine goes out. NCA met with the DOL to explain how increasing the overtime threshold could negatively affect some club employees, particularly those who earn commissions on instruction. Current rules allow only 10% of earnings from commissions to count toward the overtime threshold, which could mean some relatively high earners at clubs could be reclassified as non-exempt workers and eligible for overtime. This reclassification could actually lead to reduced hours and reduced income potential for these employees. NCA joined other allied organizations opposing changes to the independent contractor rules earlier this year and it is likely this rule has been published between this writing and publication of *Club Director*. We will continue to stay on top of regulatory action and provide NCA members with the latest information.

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) recently proposed changes in determining joint employer status that, if finalized in their current form, could have a significant impact on businesses. The proposed rule appears to make it much easier for the government to determine that a company jointly employs another company’s workers and rescinds the joint employer standard adopted under the Trump Administration, which NCA supported. Employees would be considered jointly employed if the two businesses co-determine the essential terms and conditions of employment, such as scheduling, wages and benefits.

The proposed rule was published on September 7 and will be open for public comment for 60 days. NCA will join with allied organizations in filing comments on the proposed rule.

Mid-terms

The mid-term elections are finally upon us and my how the landscape has changed since the summer edition of *Club Director*. Although President Biden's approval ratings remain low, congressional Democrats have been outperforming the head of their party in the generic ballot. As I've mentioned in previous columns, the generic ballot is one of the tools I use to get a feel for the direction the electorate is heading. The poll gives likely voters the choice of either a Democrat or Republican if the election were held today. Democrats have slowly eroded the Republican advantage in the poll for the last several months. In fact, this erosion effectively began after the Supreme Court issued its ruling overturning *Roe v. Wade* and returned the question of abortion back to state legislatures. The Democrats' recent legislative successes can also account for some of their recovery, but the abortion issue seems to be giving them the most traction. Whatever your position on the issue, it is a motivator in elections on all sides and will no doubt be featured in many campaign ads. All things considered, it still appears likely the House will be under Republican control in 2023, but unless things change substantially, their margin in the House is likely not to be as wide as it could have been. The Senate is a completely different story.

Key Senate Races

Generally, candidates for elective office need to be affable, knowledgeable and relatively good on their feet. This is doubly true for Senate candidates. Unfortunately for Republicans, a few of their candidates in key states are coming up a bit short.

In what should be a very winnable race in Georgia, Republican Herschel Walker is underperforming and doesn't appear to be ready for primetime. As an ardent Minnesota Vikings fan whose beloved franchise suffered for years due to a bad trade with the Dallas Cowboys to acquire the running back, this is not entirely surprising. I've often said being a Vikings fan is committing oneself to a life of chronic disappointment and unless Walker can gain some yards after contact, Georgia Republicans are going to question whether he was ready for the starting lineup.

In Pennsylvania, Republicans are trying to hold the seat currently occupied by Senator Pat Toomey (R) and once again have a candidate in Dr. Mehmet Oz, whose polling numbers are showing weakness. Questions about his candidacy began immediately upon his announcement and appear to be sticking. True or not, Democrats have done a good job of defining Oz as an out-of-touch carpetbagger and the non-traditional, seemingly anti-Trump Democrat Lieutenant Governor John Fetterman has done his best to portray himself as an everyman candidate for the Senate, connecting with voters despite some pretty out-there views on issues and strange background. The lieutenant governor had what appears to have been a fairly serious stroke earlier this year that still seems to affect his cognition and speech. Fetterman was off the campaign trail for a couple of months and is back campaigning at press time, so time will tell whether voters will have the confidence to give him a promotion to the Senate. Dr. Oz will need to connect with voters outside the metropolitan areas of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh and trim the margins in those cities and suburbs to have any chance of getting the votes he needs to prevail in November. A recent Trafalgar Group poll had Fetterman leading Oz by four points.

The one bright spot for Senate Republicans is in Nevada, where Democrat incumbent Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto is polling well below 50% against challenger Adam Laxalt. One recent poll had Laxalt leading Cortez Masto by three points. Nevada has been a tough state for Republicans in recent elections and the fact that an incumbent is below 50% shows the race is winnable for a credible challenger, a category Laxalt fits. It's difficult to beat an incumbent, but if Republicans take control of the Senate, Nevada figures into the math on getting to a majority.

Usually by this time in an election year, I have a pretty good feel for which way the tight races are going to tilt, but there are issues these campaigns are going to face this year that could completely change the momentum, because the electorate is so evenly split. One snide remark, a gaffe in answering a question on a sensitive topic, poor debate performance, or a really bad television ad can change the complexion of a campaign in an instant, particularly when candidates who have never before run for office are on the ballot. After all, there's a reason we're not talking about the reelection of Sen. Christine O'Donnell (R-DE) who (in)famously had to run an ad to proclaim she was not a witch.

Caveats aside, Democrats have a chance to increase their number to 52 seats and a clear majority if their incumbents hold. All they need after that is to defeat Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wisc.) and flip the seat in Pennsylvania, which is a very realistic scenario. It would be a rare occurrence for the party occupying the White House to pick up seats in the Senate, but it is very possible this year based on candidate quality alone. [CD](#)



Joe Trauger is NCA's president & CEO. He can be reached at trauger@nationalclub.org.

The latest news from around the club community.



James Passante Celebrates 25 Years

Farmington Country Club, Charlottesville, Va., recently celebrated Events Server James Passante, who marked 25 years of service to the club.

Passante started as a busser in Taproom Restaurant in 1997, then became a server at The Grill and then moved to being an attendant at the 10th Tee Snack Bar before being promoted to his current position. He has witnessed and adapted to the many transformations across the Club, and has continued to provide members with quality attention and service. He is an integral component of food and beverage operations and is consistently recognized by club members and guests, management and colleagues for his dedication and hard work. Congratulations, James!

St. Andrews Country Club Selects Marc Ray as General Manager/COO

St. Andrews Country Club, Boca Raton, Fla., appointed Marc D. Ray, CCE, CCM, CHAE as its new GM/COO. Ray began his career as assistant general manager at Oakland Hills Country Club in Detroit, where he put on the U.S. Amateur and Ryder Cup, and has advanced in management at private clubs and communities throughout the country. He is a long-time private country club industry leader, serving more than two decades as GM/COO at clubs including the Vintage Club, the Hammock Dunes Club and the Metairie Country Club.

“Marc understands the importance of food and beverage in a club environment and that services provided are just as important as products served. He has developed strategic plans, overhauled IT systems and navigated through hurricanes and natural disasters,” said Mike Leven, president of the St. Andrews Country Club Board of Governors. “His success in building and enhancing teams in diverse, transformational environments fits well with our club’s long-range strategies, our membership and our strong staff culture. We look forward to his expertise elevating our executive leadership team and welcome his innovative perspective as our new general manager and COO.”





Glen Oak Country Club Unveils New Sports Complex

Glen Oak Country Club, Glen Ellyn, Ill., recently celebrated the opening of its new Sports Complex, the result of a long-range plan to build a new, state-of-the-art facility for paddle tennis and golf simulators. The Sports Complex at Glen Oak is a two-level building situated off the club's No. 9 Fairway. The main level of this new venue contains a bar, fireplace and viewing area that overlooks the four courts surrounding the complex as well as the 9th fairway. Though primarily used for paddle tennis, two courts will be converted for pickleball play during summer months.

The facility's lower level features three Full Swing golf simulators along with comfortable seating for interaction and camaraderie between shots. Both levels also enjoy adequate outdoor space with additional accommodations for entertaining, including an outdoor fireplace on the upper level and large fire pit and sitting area on the lower level.

The newest amenities have answered the call from members for added space to gather and enjoy the club's wonderful community year-round. With an attractive and contemporary design, the facility will encourage members to spend more time at their club and interact with others in new and exciting ways, even as Chicago winters hit the golf course. The Sports Complex checks the box on many fronts and is a welcome new addition to Glen Oak Country Club.



Roger Kennedy, Jr., PGA, Qualifies for Senior PGA Professional Championship

Roger Kennedy, Jr., director of golf at The Country Club at Mirasol, Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., recently qualified for the 2022 Senior PGA Professional Championship, Oct. 13–16 at Twin Warriors and Santa Ana Golf Clubs in Santa Ana Pueblo, N.M. This is Kennedy's fourth consecutive year qualifying for the tournament—he finished in a tie for seventh place during the South Florida PGA Section Senior PGA Professional Championship.

Kennedy has been with Mirasol for 20 years and the club's director of golf for 12. Well done! 

HAVE GREAT NEWS FROM YOUR CLUB?

Submit your news with a photo or graphic, preferably in JPG or PDF format, to fernandez@nationalclub.org for consideration for the next issue of *Club Director*. There's no charge—it's a benefit of NCA membership.



The Beauty

13th Hole, "Azalea,"
Augusta National Golf Club,
by Linda Hartough



of the Club

Private clubs collaborate with artists and photographers to commemorate and celebrate their beautiful properties, much to the delight of members.

L Hartough AGA © 2009

Art depicting private clubs has for decades been woven into the fabric of the club world. Many private clubs, including many National Club Association (NCA) members, have commissioned accomplished painters and photographers to memorialize their clubhouses, facilities and most storied holes. Others have turned to photographers who specialize in club photography to shoot their clubs. The resulting artwork can be found in clubhouse foyers and boardrooms as well as members' homes. Photographs and paintings of the most famous clubs are also often purchased by fans of the game who cherish time spent there or by those who just love the courses.

Golf and club art is so popular that a vibrant industry has grown around it. Artists devote entire careers to producing it and clubs seek out those artists to produce one-of-a-kind artwork for their facilities. There's even an Academy of Golf Art (academyofgolfart.org), which was created to promote awareness and appreciation for golf art as fine art. The Academy is an educational body that uses art to promote the game of golf, its environs, participants, and traditions, and it sponsors artistic demonstrations and artistic competitions.

Fairways & Greens Presented in Oil

One of the most prominent members of the Academy of Golf Art is Linda Hartough, a founding trustee and well-known painter who has devoted her career to painting the world's most iconic golf courses. After beginning her career as a traditional landscape painter, she focused her skills on creating oil paintings of some of the world's greatest courses. She is the only artist ever commissioned by the United States Golf Association and the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews to create the annual paintings and prints for the U.S. Open and British Open Championships. Her paintings are in the collections of such famous clubs as Augusta National and Pine Valley, as well as the private collections of Jack Nicklaus, Robert Trent Jones and Rees Jones.

"I've been painting all my life," said Hartough. "I got my start in golf art in 1984 when Augusta National commissioned me to paint the wonderful 13th hole, which became the first commissioned painting that Augusta National ever sold prints of. Soon thereafter I was also commissioned by The Country Club in Brookline, Mass., and by 1988, I was painting nothing but golf."

Painting for a club, or painting one of its landmark holes, is an enormous undertaking. Hartough's paintings are very large—

paintings measuring 40 by 60 inches are common. One of her paintings that hangs in Augusta National is an impressive 33 x 78.

"They take so much work that I can only do two or three paintings a year," said Hartough. "A large painting can take up to six months to complete. And that doesn't include the prep work, which includes taking photographs at different times of day, in different light, and at different times of the year. I do so much prep work that by the time I start, I know exactly what I'm going to paint."

Hartough doesn't attend major tournaments anymore. She says tournament weeks are long and require her to spend all day every day at the course. Still, she had a lot of fun selling her prints

at these tournaments and getting to know the people who play in them, run them and cover them for the media. Today, she's content to take on private commissions from both individuals and clubs, all of which keeps her busy.

"Many clubs display the originals I paint," said Hartough. "And they want prints of my paintings to sell to members and friends of the club."

The Fun of It

As you'd expect of someone who has painted the world's most famous golf holes, Hartough has had her share of fun and interesting adventures.

"My first time at St. Andrews was in 1988," she said. "I had an agent who was a member of the club, and I had a really good chance to explore the course and the town for a week. When my agent came back to pick me up, he got me into the R&A for a midnight tour!"

"My project with Pine Valley was a thrill too," she continued. "Ernie Ransome, who had commissioned the painting, escorted me into the club to show me where the painting was going to be hung."

Many of the clubs for which she paints allow her to sell prints of her work; her website (hartough.com) shows many of the other paintings she has done through the years.

Iconic Courses Through a Camera Lens

Golf course photography is also extremely popular among clubs and golf fans. One of the best-known golf course photographers, Evan Schiller, is typically booked six months in advance.

Schiller has been a golf course photographer for a quarter century, but he didn't begin his career as an artist. Before ever picking up the camera, he was a club professional in New York. He also played on professional tours, including the European tour and several mini tours, including the Nike and Web.com tours.

His photography career began after he finished playing in the California Open in Palm Springs.

Artists devote entire careers to producing it and clubs seek out those artists to produce one-of-a-kind artwork for their facilities.



The 9th Hole, "Himalayas," The Country Club, by Linda Hartough.

"After we finished playing the tournament, someone mentioned a new course down the street that turned out to be the Stadium Course at PGA West," said Schiller. "I went and played it and remember coming down the 9th hole to discover this beautiful scene in front of us with Pete Dye's railroad ties and the reflection in the water. I decided then and there to run and get a camera."

And a career was born.

"It took a while to get established as a golf course photographer," said Schiller. "When I worked at clubs, I really enjoyed teaching, so I kept working as a teaching pro in those early days.

"When I started, there weren't a ton of golf course photographers," he continued. "No one was really doing it, so I had

to figure it out on my own. I didn't take photography lessons; I just learned how to do it. In the early years, I shot with film, which is very sensitive to x-ray, so I when I flew I had to carry everything in lead bags. I also had to bring rolls and rolls of film. Today I shoot with digital cameras, which is much better. I can do a lot more with my equipment and there's much less that can go wrong."

Today, he is one of the best-known golf course photographers in the world and clubs come to him directly. Courses hire him to shoot their properties and typically use those photographs to showcase their clubs on social media or via websites and advertising programs.

A typical assignment takes Schiller anywhere from a few days to a week to complete. He doesn't schedule more than one project



11th hole, Hackensack Golf Club, photo by Evan Schiller.

in a week because there's no way of knowing if the weather will cooperate. Schiller uses a Fuji camera as well as a DJI Inspire 2 drone to photograph and video the golf course(s). After the shoot is done he needs a couple of days to edit his shots.

Of course, it's not always a simple matter of scheduling a few days at a course to take photos. He needs to plan around each club's maintenance, tournaments and league schedules. And for clubs that host professional tournaments, he needs to be careful his schedule doesn't conflict.

"One of the challenges of going out in the morning to shoot is that maintenance crews are out there doing their work," said

Schiller. "Tracks and footprints in morning dew will ruin a shot, and I can't take photos of holes when staff are mowing or doing other maintenance. A lot of my prep work involves coordinating with course superintendents."

The Stories

"One of my favorite stories happened about 20 years ago when I was shooting Old Head in Ireland," said Schiller. "It's a spectacular course that sits out on a promontory jutting into the Atlantic, and I was invited to take a helicopter up to capture some aerial shots. My wife was working as my assistant

that day and I had taught her how to empty and reload the three cameras I brought so I wouldn't have to stop to reload. With the film I was using, you only have 10 or 12 frames from a full roll, so she was very busy. They take the doors off and strap you in so there's nothing in the way, and the pilot gave us a preflight speech warning us not to let anything fall out of the copter because if it hit the rotor, we were going down. Each roll of film came wrapped in its own foil packaging, and she had to rip the foil and take out the film. As she did, she was shoving the packages way down into her pockets. I didn't realize it, but she soon ran out of room in her pockets and couldn't figure out what to do with all the foil that was quickly accumulating. So, she started eating it, deciding that was better than losing the foil and bringing the copter down!"

"Another fun day happened on a photography trip in the Dominican Republic. I was shooting Corrales, a Tom Fazio resort in Punta Cana, and was invited to play. On one hole, I shot my drive way, way right, onto another fairway. I hit my ball back towards the green and as my caddie and I were driving back to our hole, we saw another cart coming our way. My caddie knew the guy who was driving the cart and excitedly started yelling 'Misha!' It turned out to be Mikhail Baryshnikov and he played the last three holes with us. At one point, my wife hit a shot and the club flew out of her hands and almost hit him. She was mortified, but he whispered, 'What happens in Punta Cana stays in Punta Cana.' When we finished golfing, he came back to our host's house with us for a glass of wine and a lot of laughs."



5th hole, The Reserve at Moonlight Basin, photo by Evan Schiller.



Medinah Country Club, photo by Evan Schiller.

Great artists like Linda Hartough and Evan Schiller don't merely create pictures of clubs and courses. They demonstrate what's truly special about those clubs, and the game of golf itself.

These kinds of experiences make all the travel worth it. Schiller says that over the past few years, he has traveled about 100,000 miles. You can see some of his work at evanschillerphotography.com.

Celebrating Clubs

Club art is really about celebrating clubs and what makes each one special. Great artists like Linda Hartough and Evan Schiller don't merely create pictures of clubs and courses. They demonstrate what's truly special about those clubs, and the game of golf itself. That's why more clubs than ever are turning to Hartough and Schiller and their peers in the golf art world to create works of art for their properties and their members. [CD](#)

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

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LASTING *Impact*

By Joe Barks

Working effectively with 20 different Board Presidents for 20 years is only part of how and why Michael Stacks earned Excellence in Club Management honors.

The club industry is not immune from career volatility for even the most accomplished managers, with the resumes of many top GMs including a series of hops, skips and jumps as they seek to find a place that provides professional security and satisfaction. But examples can be found that prove reaching that goal doesn't have to be a case of chasing an ever-moving target.

After graduating from Oklahoma State University's Hotel & Restaurant Administration program and spending 10 years at a series of hotel and resort properties in the Virgin Islands, Michael Stacks shifted to private club management in search of more stability. He took positions at a variety of clubs—including Franklin Hills Country Club, Huron River Hunting and Fishing Club and Bloomfield Open Hunt, an equestrian and tennis club—in Michigan, and then became general manager of Gaillardia Golf & Country Club in Oklahoma City, Okla.

In 2002, the road led to his taking the position of general manager/COO of Indian Hills Country Club in Mission Hills, Kan. Stacks remained at Indian Hills for 20 years and worked with a new board president for each of them—defying the added difficulties of one-year terms that many see as the root cause of many GMs' moves. Over that time, he helped to steer the club through a series of challenges and to impressive new levels of growth and accomplishments (see "Ideas and Achievements, pg. 18).

In a serendipitous convergence with Indian Hills' 100th anniversary year, Stacks' steady contributions to the club's success during the most recent one-fifth of its history then culminated with his selection by a peer group of managers for The Mead Grady award, as part of the 2022 Excellence in Club Management® (ECM) Awards co-sponsored by the McMahon Group and National Club Association (see sidebar, right).

The Right Fit

Stacks did announce this fall that he would be leaving Indian Hills to take a new position (see Editor's Note, pg. 21). But after finding and following a career straightaway for the last two decades at Indian Hills, he doesn't feel his particular track record reflects any special ability to navigate or avoid the usual curves and detours.

"It's a matter of finding a place that fits you and your management style," he said. "I was blessed to have 20 really great presidents at Indian Hills, and that's what keeps you there."

"Communication is everything," Stacks continued. "You have to let the president and executive committee know about everything, so they learn to trust that you've got things handled and they're not going to be surprised when a member approaches them on the driving range or in the clubhouse about something they haven't heard about. There are issues that come up every single day, and whether they're minor or major, your presidents need to know about them, so they can be confident they're prepared to answer

HONORED BY THEIR PEERS

The Excellence in Club Management (ECM) Awards were established by the McMahon Group, Inc., the St. Louis-based consulting firm, in 1997 and have been co-sponsored by the National Club Association since 2018.

The annual awards are selected through nominations submitted on behalf of qualified candidates by other parties. Award recipients are selected solely on the basis of their achievements at the club they currently manage.

Awards in four categories are given each year:

- **The James H. Brewer Award**, for a manager of a country/golf club with 600 or more full-privilege members.
- **The Mead Grady Award**, for a manager of a country/golf club with fewer than 600 full-privilege members.
- **The Mel Rex Award**, for a manager of a city, athletic or specialty (non-golf) club.
- **The John Furlong Award**, for excellence in management of a club property in Canada.
- **The "Rising Star" Award** for an assistant club manager.

Lifetime Achievement Awards for a retiring club manager are also included as part of some years' ECM honors.

A Selection Committee comprised of a peer group of leading club managers conducts the judging for the ECM Awards. A full listing of the judges, in addition to information on past winners and on how to nominate candidates for future years' awards, can be found at clubmanageraward.com.

The 2022 recipients of Excellence In Club Management Awards were honored on May 16, 2022 in a special presentation, sponsored by KOPPLIN KUEBLER & WALLACE, at the historic Riviera Theater during the National Club Conference in Charleston, S.C.

Profiles of the 2022 ECM winners will appear in the next several issues of *Club Director*.



IDEAS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Implemented at Indian Hills CC under Michael Stacks' leadership:

- Added pop-up “bubbles” to extend outdoor dining in colder months; the bubbles can seat up to eight people and are outfitted with chandeliers, Bluetooth speakers, area rugs and space heaters. During the pandemic, members made reservations and booked the bubbles weeks in advance; they are still made available on a requested basis, and families or groups often use them for special gatherings.
- Started a craft cocktail program, bringing some of the area's top bartenders to the club's bars to help develop new libations featuring a wide range of products and flavors.
- Created a scaled-down formal dining room for members who still prefer a quieter and more intimate venue. The five-table space maintains an enviable location overlooking the golf course with proximity to other dining rooms and service stations. The menu mirrors offerings in other dining spaces while featuring more formal touches to enhance the experience, such as *amuse* and bottle service. Staff wardrobes are also adjusted appropriately for service in this space.
- Started a women's four-hole golf program that now attracts more than 30 participants each year and feeds new participants into the women's 9- and 18-hole programs that have well more than 100 players. Participation in the club's men's league has also grown to more than 70 weekly players.
- Invested \$5 million in 2017 for new “Tilly's 19th Hole” Adult Bar (named in honor of golf course designer A. W. Tillinghast) that overlooks the 18th hole. The bar has increased revenue streams by almost double from previous pool seasons.
- A facelift for the ladies' locker room in 2017 added a private bar and lounge that can also serve as a bridal suite for weddings. All of the club's women card players can now fit comfortably in the room together and do not need to find places to play elsewhere in the clubhouse. The Ladies' Locker Room also provides enough space for the Women's Golf Association to conduct its meetings and business, which has been extremely beneficial for the group. A steam room and full-service bar were also added, further enhancing the popularity of the space. All these improvements were made for \$700,000.
- Updates for the men's locker room wet areas and lounge began in January 2022 and were completed ahead of golf season.
- Developed an extensive new-member orientation program that includes new magazine-style book that promotes all of the club's amenities and services, while also defining expectations for behavior and interaction with other members and staff.
- The club's 100th anniversary celebration in 2022 included publication of a centennial celebration book, design of a special centennial logo, and a refresh of all print materials to incorporate new brand standards.

“There are issues that come up every day, and whether they're major or minor, your presidents need to know about them.”

any questions when they walk anywhere in the club. That's what's worked for me, and the philosophy I've carried through all my years.”

In nominating Stacks for ECM honors, Robert Owens, the current president of Indian Hills' board of governors, credited him with “establishing an inviting and engaging leadership style [that] promotes and sustains” the club's “culture of courtesy.” Stacks also instituted “a more engaged culture for members and employees alike,” Owens added, “creating programs to enhance member feedback and empower member committees, [and leading] initiatives to set clear goals and objectives for each committee.” All of this, Owens said, has made Indian Hills a place where “people want to be members,” as evidenced by its “burgeoning waiting list of new candidates hoping to gain membership.”

The engagement level of the Indian Hills staff is reflected by the long tenures of many key department heads and employees Stacks led since his arrival in 2002. Most notably, Golf Professional Mike Ricket started there as an assistant pro in 1982 before becoming the head pro four years later.

Staying Out in Front

Mission Hills, Kan., has a population of just more than 3,500, but the Kansas City suburb is home to several well-respected clubs that are all in high demand. Being in that kind of market, Stacks says, always made him stress to his team that “We don't want to just keep up with the Joneses—we want to *be* the Joneses.”

Following that mantra led Stacks to help push through a \$12 million clubhouse renovation in 2009, when the Great Recession caused many clubs to put capital projects on ice. The renovation gave Indian Hills a leg up on attracting large events with the addition of a ballroom and associated banquet spaces and expansion of the kitchen; the club now has the capacity to host gatherings of more than 500 people while still retaining

enough clubhouse space and kitchen capacity to avoid any effect on regular member dining.

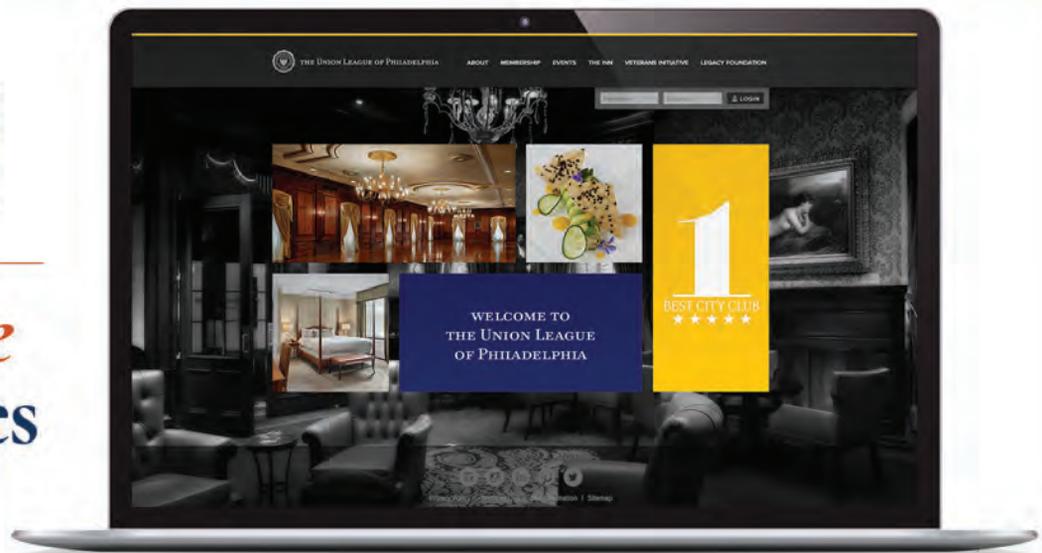
The Indian Hills renovation included a significant focus on outdoor dining well before that became a sweeping trend. The patio was expanded to seat more than 150, and a wood-burning fireplace with soft seating and outdoor bar with TVs were added, allowing the club to fully showcase its golf course vistas.

Indian Hills saw an immediate boost in outdoor covers from the project that continued to gain momentum year after year. That success led to the addition in 2017 of a new adults-only bar and 19th hole venue overlooking the 18th green that is also equipped with a fireplace and includes outdoor seating for another 50 people.

All of this proved to be extremely prescient when the pandemic hit and Indian Hills saw its banquet business, which accounted for half of its total food-and-beverage revenues, take a \$1 million hit in 2020. But with already a decade of experience with high-volume outdoor service, the club was well-prepared to pivot to provide safe and efficient dining. It set *à la carte* records while also generating new revenue



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Michael Stacks with Indian Hills past presidents.

streams through grocery programs, increased curbside to-go offerings and made up the entirety of 2020's \$500,000 loss in F&B by the end of 2021.

"Michael's effective style was never more evident than his deft navigation of the ever-changing pandemic challenges," Robert Owens wrote in his ECM nomination. "He established innovative programs and employee engagement measures to successfully maintain member satisfaction and service-delivery standards. These enhancements were accomplished under extraordinary circumstances, with safety and experience for his staff and the membership always foremost in consideration."

Learning from the Masters

Indian Hills CC also benefitted from experience Stacks gained and lessons he brought back and implemented, from what's universally recognized as the Joneses everyone in the industry strives to keep up with: Augusta National Golf Club during the Masters tournament.

Stacks first got the opportunity in 2015 to be among the group of GMs from around the country to travel to Augusta to help with

tournament operations, and he's returned every year since, except when the pandemic interrupted the schedule.

"I get to help run the Founders' Room, where members' and players' dining takes place," he said. "It's the only room where breakfast, lunch and dinner are all served [during the tournament], and it requires two shifts and over 30 people on the staff.

"It's a lot of work but certainly a great experience," he added. "We're helped by hospitality students from the University of South Carolina, and I tell them each year, 'Forget everything you think you already know—this will be the hardest thing you've ever done, but if you do it well, you're going to benefit for the rest of your life from how you'll learn to serve some of the most prominent and gracious people in the world.'"

Indian Hills members and staff benefitted for the rest of each year from the new ideas and techniques Stacks continued to bring back from each of his Masters experiences. "Every time I go back to Augusta, there's something new—a new building or underground tunnel, or a new approach they've come up with to improve efficiencies and the experience," he said. "That's

Indian Hills members and staff benefited for the rest of each year from the new ideas and techniques Stacks continued to bring back from each of his Masters experiences.

shown me that if you can think it, it can probably get done, no matter where you are. And it helped me keep pushing to find new ways to continue to improve both the facilities and experiences at Indian Hills.

“It also helped me to refine and continue to try to perfect our service mentality, too,” Stacks added. “It’s all about eye contact and

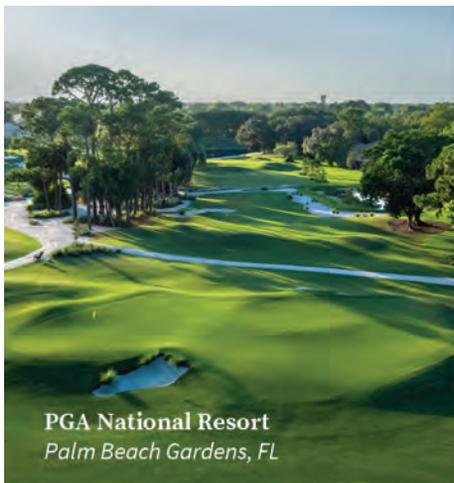
smiling and being courteous, and creating a culture that everyone buys into and that makes those things second-nature.

“We hired someone whose main job is hospitality training, not only for F&B, but the entire club,” Stacks said. “That’s key to keeping a culture and vision consistent. We sold our staff on how they’re working for some of the top entrepreneurs, doctors and lawyers, and how they do so in a workplace that has great views and lets you play golf on Mondays.

“We changed our philosophy and training to focus on providing experiences that not only become the best part of a member’s day, but the best part of an employee’s day, too,” Stacks said. “When you can establish that as something that’s felt by everyone throughout the entire club, the first day of work is every day, and 20 years will go by like that.” **CD**

Joe Barks is club communications director with McMahon Group. He can be reached at jbarks@mcmahongroup.com.

Editor’s Note: In September, Michael Stacks informed the Board of Indian Hills CC that he had accepted the General Manager position at Bay Harbor Yacht Club in Bay Harbor, Mich., and he will begin his duties there in December. “It was certainly not an easy decision to leave Indian Hills after so many years, but this offered the opportunity to relocate to Northern Michigan, where my wife is from and where we still have many family members,” Stacks said. “And I know that Indian Hills will be in great hands with the quality team that I worked with there and that is primed to sustain and build on the traditions and standards set by the club’s Board.”



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The new model at the
**OLD
BARNWELL
CLUB**

By Kim Fernandez, CAE

A new kind of private club marrying championship-quality golf with a foundation of inclusivity is taking shape in Aiken, S.C.

The Foundation

From the moment you arrive, you'll feel it. Warmth and welcome. Kindness. A spirit of camaraderie and healthy competition. A genuine curiosity and care for you—and your golf game.

—*OldBarnwell.com*

Schreiber grew up playing public courses and caddying at a few clubs around Chicago; his father, who grew up without much, and later worked in commercial real estate, didn't join a club until later in life. "My friends were all members of those clubs," Schreiber remembers, "I was caddying, which I think gave me a different perspective." Schreiber's mom stayed home to raise eight children and the couple's success allowed for privilege; he graduated from Vanderbilt and then Northwestern before going into sales and marketing and eventually co-founding and helping grow and sell a successful software-as-a-service startup.

"My mom and dad have had incredible success," Schreiber says. "There's no chance I'd be able to consider something like [Old Barnwell] if I hadn't had that privilege."

But his particular career path has its own roots, and those, Schreiber says, came from his years as a caddie at Old Elm Club.

"I was about 14 years old, and I used to caddie for D.C. Searle, who was a pharmaceutical giant, and Chris Galvin, who was CEO of Motorola in its heyday," he remembers. "In any other scenario, there would be security between me and those people, but I got to talk to them, learn who they were, occasionally ask questions. For a 14-year-old kid, that was the world."

He grew up, went to college, eventually found success in venture-backed start-ups, and then—"this is the part of the story I don't like telling," he says—found himself married with a young child, a lot of money and a substance addiction.

Nick Schreiber knew what he was looking for, theoretically, on his 50 or so trips to scope land within a six-hour drive of Charleston, S.C. Sandy soil was a must. Hills were good. Interesting potential turns, attractive topography, somewhere a course or three could roll and curve with a nice spot for a clubhouse. But every time he thought he'd found it, the golf course experts he excitedly called to confirm found flaws: you're missing a key piece of topography, the soil's not quite right, it's close but not perfect. And perfect was key.

He thought the 440 acres in Aiken, S.C., about 30 minutes outside of Augusta, Ga., were right when he saw them in December 2020, but he'd thought that before. And, like before, he called course architects Brian Schneider and Blake Conant to have a look with familiar hope and trepidation.

"The land wasn't perfect," Schreiber remembers. "The original parcel was 440 acres, and it was unique—there were kind of three blades of a fan, you'd have to navigate a hole in the middle to get to different aspects, I was worried we'd have to buy additional parcels to make it work." But for the first time in a nearly three-year search, Schneider and Conant were adamant: You have to buy this. So he did, adding another 130 acres for a total of 575.

Those 575 acres of rolling hills, sandy soil, towering trees and now bulldozers and heavy equipment are well on their way to becoming Old Barnwell, a private club Schreiber and the team he's carefully assembled hope will transform both golf and, perhaps, the idea of private clubs themselves, offering world-class play, opportunity and a love of the game to people who've never considered picking up clubs, much less being part of a club. Everyone, top-down, general manager to caddie, and every member on the roster, has to buy in to what he's doing, too, before becoming part.

Physically and philosophically, every detail of Old Barnwell was crafted to be groundbreaking.





Founding member Izzy Dawood with Old Barnwell founder Nick Schreiber on part of a future club golf course.

He successfully completed rehab and then started thinking—deep thinking. “My wife is an attorney and when we moved to Charleston seven years ago, she started working for a nonprofit law firm. The amount of fulfillment she gets from that is remarkable. It became clear I had to change. I grew up with every privilege imaginable. What is it I want to do?”

That reshuffling of priorities, his own background, and a love for the game of golf led to the idea for Old Barnwell: a private club that would offer championship-quality golf, camaraderie and opportunity to both traditional club members and people in the community who’d never considered anything about the club lifestyle.

The Schreibers set a priority. “If we’re going to do this, we’re not doing it for the money. We want to do this for something else entirely,” he says. “There’s a bigger role private golf can play in these people’s lives, and that’s what this club is going to do.”

The Club

Our mission is simple: To bring people together through golf.

—Old Barnwell member prospectus.

When Old Barnwell is completed, it will feature two carefully designed 18-hole golf courses, a 12-ish hole kids’ course designed for families, a driving range, a 5-acre pond stocked with fish, outdoor movies, a beautiful clubhouse, lodging for members and guests, a treehouse, club tournaments, family weekends, charity events and, perhaps most importantly, a built-in sense of opportunity and potential discovery around every corner.

“That’s all I talk about,” laughs Schreiber. “We can create a sense of discovery.”

That goes beyond members; Old Barnwell and its members will be committed to bringing in the community as well:

- A youth caddie program sponsored by Evans Scholars designed to offer kids a paying job, an introduction to golf and the opportunity to build a network like Schreiber found caddying at Old Elm. Designed to also teach honor, integrity and values, the caddie program will offer training and support to children who’ve never played golf before. “We’re already talking to schools, churches and organizations to find good candidates,” says Schreiber.
- Sponsorship of four aspiring female golfers per year, offering 12 months of local housing and unlimited access to the club for practice, play and networking.
- Partnerships with two historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The men’s and women’s golf teams at Paine College, Augusta, Ga., will have access to Old Barnwell’s courses and facilities for practices, while 10 to 12 students from Paine and Voorhees College, Denmark, S.C., will have the opportunity to build a professional network with members and employees alike. An accounting student, for example, might have lunch or play nine holes with a member who has experience in the field.
- A paid maintenance apprenticeship program for local high school seniors to work with maintenance staff for one year after graduation.
- Monthly golf clinics for local children, including transportation to and from the course, lessons, meals, and the chance to meet members and staff.

Other programs are in development but they're all designed to accomplish the same goal: use golf to develop professional networks that can kick off or enhance career success for those for whom nothing is guaranteed. To do that, golf will be largely played with a sense of fun, learning and improvement; you won't have to be a fantastic golfer to play here. Inclusion is the name of the game, on all fronts.

"For folks without means, a professional network is extremely hard to come by," says Schreiber. "They don't get 'My dad knows so-and so,' or 'My mom is friends with this person.' We're going to provide that access. There's research that says if you have friends who are wealthier or have more opportunity than you when you're a teenager, that's a way to give yourself an opportunity. We're going to do that here. It doesn't cost us money. It just requires our members to say they want to participate in that." Which is already exactly what they're doing.

The Members

We're creating programs that empower, invite, and celebrate people and communities historically underrepresented in the game of golf—to create new traditions and a legacy that belong to everyone.

—*OldBarnwell.com*

When it opens in fall 2023, Old Barnwell's membership will cap at around 225 with lower-than-normal initiation and annual fees in tiers that include local, national and under/over 40. Members must commit to the club's mission, agreeing to make themselves available to play and connect with community members participating in the club's caddie, apprenticeship and other programs. Schreiber worried a bit that finding those people might be a challenge. He needn't have.

"We've been very lucky," he says. "I thought if we had 125 members, we'd be in a good position to really focus on our partnerships and programs. We're already at 170 members and another 50 have expressed interest. I don't know how that's possible but here we are."

Izzy Dawood, chief financial officer at Paysafe Group, knows exactly how it's possible.

"I grew up in Dubai," he says. "There weren't too many golf courses then. Like Nick, I didn't grow up in country clubs. I picked up golf after college but probably didn't know what a country club was until later in life—now I know that would have helped my career. You are who you hang around with."

He moved to the U.S., realized clubs were a terrific way to grow friendships and networks while having fun, and joined a few as he moved around the country. "I never bought homes,



What will be the 8th tee box.

OLD BARNWELL AND ITS MISSION

From Old Barnwell's Membership Prospectus:

Our mission is simple: to bring people together through golf.

There are few activities that have the power and opportunity to bring people together, regardless of race, gender, age, or creed, in the way that golf does. At its best, golf unites us with nature, connects us to others, feeds our competitive spirit, and inspires our imagination. Old Barnwell is a celebration of these elements, and of all that is exciting, affirming and joyous about golf. Through our mission, our membership, and our community, our goal is to create new traditions and a legacy that belong to everyone.

The Ideal Member

In alignment with our mission, Old Barnwell aims to serve a broad range of golfers and their families. And while all are welcome to apply for membership, there are certain key criteria that define our target member. We are looking for members who:

- Believe in and support our mission.
- Respect other members, guests and employees.
- Want to be a part of a community that goes beyond golf.
- Enjoy meeting (and playing with) new people.
- Value an unrushed but brisk pace of play.
- Understand that welcoming beginners & families is a pro, not a con.
- Appreciate exceptional golf course design.
- Enjoy alternate formats (match play, foursomes, etc.).
- Want to improve and help others improve.



Sarah, Henry and Emmett Schreiber enjoying the club's construction.

but I joined golf clubs. They were somewhere to relieve stress, I felt invited and welcomed and comfortable, I made friends and contacts.”

He jumped at a founding membership to Old Barnwell specifically because of its mission. “Why are you doing this,” he says. “What’s the driving force? It’s not making money or getting rich, but leaving a legacy well after we’re gone. We all have the opportunity to play at nice clubs with exclusive memberships. At the end of the day, I’m part of something that’s actually helping other people.”

Schreiber has taken great care to craft his membership with people like Dawood, who are as committed to the mission as they are to the game.

“Out of those 170 members,” he says, “there are probably 10 who, when push comes to shove, maybe we missed the mark. Maybe they’re not as committed to the mission as we hoped. It’s inevitable. But that doesn’t mean we’re not just as committed to striving for that goal.” He and the club’s director of partnerships spend time with prospective members on the phone, through Zoom and in person, getting to know them.

“In each case,” he says, “if you haven’t expressed real interest in the mission or if we ask what about the mission speaks to you and you give a ho-hum answer, we set that application aside. We ask, ‘Are you committed to being part of the mission of Old Barnwell,’ and I want them to say yes.”

The Experience

Old Barnwell exists to celebrate all that’s exciting, affirming, and joyful about golf, with a modern approach that serves all kind of players, families, boon companions, and connoisseurs of the game.

—OldBarnwell.com

Schreiber meticulously assembled the club’s professional team, from selecting Schneider and Conant as architects to his pros, his maintenance staff, his partnerships team, and everyone else at Old Barnwell. He got some attention when John Lavelle, whose pedigree includes stints at Augusta National and Congaree, signed on as director of agronomy, and says it was both Lavelle’s professional expertise and his interest in the club’s mission that sold him.

“I can’t overstate how important he’s been to our club,” Schreiber says. “He brings a wealth of experience from some of the best clubs in America and has an unbelievable management style. People say it’s difficult to get employees right now—we are not having that problem. Everybody wants to work with John.”

For his part, Lavelle says Old Barnwell was clearly a great opportunity.



Course routing, art by Don Placek (Renaissance Golf Design).

“Nick’s passion was one of the things that brought me in,” he says. “There’s a charisma about him.” They met through friends, played golf together, and realized they made a great team.

“It’s certainly unique,” he says of the club. “We’ve got a one-of-a-kind mission going here. Who wouldn’t want to be part of something like that?”

Schreiber is careful to stress the importance of every person on the Old Barnwell team—staff, members, everyone—when it comes to the club’s success. The mission has to integrate with fantastic golf and opportunities for fun for everyone. That’s critical—and his 10-year goal speaks to it.

“Ten years from now, I would love if Old Barnwell was known for its golf,” he says. “Wouldn’t it be great if in 10 years, a whole bunch of clubs were doing what we’re doing and we weren’t an outlier? I’m not saying I don’t want to be known for the impact we’re trying to make, but wouldn’t it be great if more clubs were working like we’re working so it wasn’t as unique? Then we could be known for our golf.” **CD**

Kim Fernandez, CAE, is NCA’s vice president of communications. She can be reached at fernandez@nationalclub.org.



Old Barnwell founder Nick Schreiber will speak about his club, its philosophy, golf, opportunity and inclusion at the 2023 National Club Conference, May 7–9, The Union League Club of Chicago.

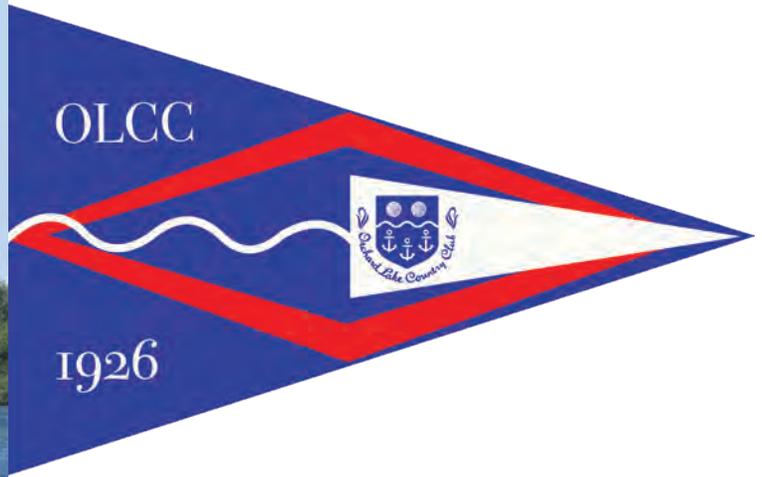
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By Bill Smith

Orchard Lake Country Club reinvigorates its proud sailing program

Orchard Lake Country Club, Orchard Lake, Mich., has long been known for the excellence of its golf course—in fact, the club boasts one of the highest ranked golf courses in the state. And as with golf, the club’s racquet and swim programs have been recognized for decades as some of the area’s strongest programs.

“Orchard Lake is a total family club,” said Peter Swick, Orchard Lake Country Club’s chief operations officer & general manager. “We are proud that we offer so many activities that appeal to everyone in the family, young and old.”

That’s where sailing comes into the story. Historically, boating was an essential part of the club’s identity. The first club developed on the site was a boating club—the Orchard Lake Yacht Club—in 1900. The club’s founder, Willis Ward, was an avid sailor who created the club to provide a place for sailors from across the globe to compete in races. The Orchard Lake Country Club as we know it today, with golf and many other offerings, wouldn’t be developed for another quarter century.

With its location on scenic Orchard Lake, it makes sense that boating would play an important role in the club’s history. However, fewer members were taking advantage of the program as time went on. In 2020, the club decided it was time to reenergize the sailing program.

The Right Leader and The Right Boats

The process started with the hiring of Bruce Lilley, a retired private club GM and the sailing coach of a local school system, who was brought on as waterfront and sailing center director. Lilley was the perfect choice because in addition to being an excellent coach, he understands the private club environment, what club members want and how to provide those experiences.

“Bruce was able to use his club management skills,” said Swick. “He is the reason our boating program is such a success today.”

Lilley’s first order of business was to evaluate the club’s fleet of boats to determine whether existing resources would be sufficient. After a thorough evaluation process, he determined the club needed to invest in new boats.



“I taught sailing here back in 1978 and ‘79, and they were using the same boats,” said Lilley. “It was pretty obvious that we needed to update our fleet.”

Lilley created a list of characteristics required in a successful fleet and started looking for durable, high-quality boats with easy-to-replace parts. He quickly decided that Flying Scot was the right choice.

“Flying Scots are perfect for us because they are very simple but can be as complicated as you want to make them,” said Lilley. “So not only are they perfect for beginners, but if some of our more experienced sailors want to participate in a regatta, we can add a spinnaker, pop the boat on a trailer and they are ready to go.”

According to Tyler Andrews, co-owner of Flying Scot, this flexibility is one of the reasons he company’s boats are so popular with private clubs.

“Our boats have just one design but can be adjusted simply and quickly to meet the needs of any sailor, whether they are beginners or have advanced skills.”

“Our boats have just one design but can be adjusted simply and quickly to meet the needs of any sailor, whether they are beginners or have advanced skills,” said Andrews. “The boat can grow with the sailor.”

“Our boats are high and dry, and they do everything well,” added Carrie Andrews, co-owner of the company. “Normally, there are trade-offs between stability, ease of maintenance and performance. But these boats are really stable, easy to take care of and high performers.”

Flying Scots are extremely popular with yacht clubs and other clubs with boating programs. Currently, 126 clubs across the United States use them. The company has been around for 65 years, and all their boats are hand made in Maryland, with sails from Madison, Wisc. They are also affordable, starting under \$30,000. When a club orders new boats, Tyler Andrews delivers them personally, rigs them and then sails them onsite to make sure they are set up properly.

“Clubs appreciate this level of personal support,” he said. “In the case of Orchard Lake, I’ve developed friendships with many of the members and I’ve even sailed with them.”

Orchard Lake Country Club currently has six Flying Scots, as well as older Lasers, a catamaran, kayaks, paddleboards and a carbon fiber rowing shell. There are even two large pontoon boats for members who prefer a different experience. The club plans to buy several more Flying Scots in the coming years.

Winning Over Members

Choosing the right boats was just the first step. The club needed to encourage members to use them. An important part of Lilley's job was to get members who had never stepped foot onto a boat out onto the lake.

"When the first tee is busy, I like to walk over and remind members that the sailing program is here," Lilley said. "The club has a rich tradition of sailing. In fact, our roots lie in sailing. I wanted to regain that element of our identity."

He's made great strides—since the first season with the new Scots, the children's sailing program has tripled in participants.

An important element of the boating program's success was the introduction of a more structured curriculum through the

Orchard Lake Sailing Academy, which is an essential part of programming for both adult and junior sailors. The club also created a team charged with executing the standards of excellence for the boating program, which it calls the Delta Team. And the club has even created its own club burgee, a nautical flag that identifies Orchard Lake's yachting team both at the club and when members travel to races.

According to Lilley, the club has an active and accomplished sailing support team that is largely responsible for the success of the program. In addition to teaching members how to sail, the team also teaches maintenance and safety.

"Every second of every day, they are constantly on alert," said Lilley. "There are a lot of things that can go wrong on the water, and you have to know how to avoid those things."

"When we started, the sailors and golfers didn't really mix," continued Lilley. "Now our golf members are also using our sailing resources. In fact, one golf member is our honorary commodore!"

Over the years, junior members were the predominant engagers when it came to boating, but the club has made



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“The club has a rich tradition of sailing. In fact, our roots lie in sailing. I wanted to regain that element of our identity.”

important accommodations to make boating more convenient for adults. This includes expanding waterfront hours and pushing league outings back to 6:30 p.m.

“You can’t close at 5 p.m. if you want people to come out and sail after work,” said Lilley.

The boats are available to all members once they demonstrate sailing proficiency. Then, it’s open sailing. There is even a Friday night sailing league, which is very popular among members.

With success achieved at Orchard Lake, Swick and Lilley are now working to get the word out to other clubs.

“We are expanding our interclub relationships to participate in regional Flying Scot events,” said Swick. “And we are hosting our own race that will have sailors coming from all over the Midwest. This is a great way to enjoy sailing while building new relationships with people who love the sport as much as our members do.”

Swick acknowledges that the purchase of the boats and the other initiatives that were necessary to rebuild the program represented a significant investment for the club. But he and Lilley think the investment was worth it. The members love the program, their kids are getting the chance to become sailors at a young age and the club is benefitting by participating in races with clubs from all over the region. Most importantly, the reinvigorated boating program has strengthened the club.

“The bottom line is, sailors have more fun,” said Lilley. 

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



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A Conversation with Representative CÁRDENAS

Rep. Anthony Cárdenas (D-Calif.) was first elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2013 for the 113th Congress (2013–2014) and has represented California's 29th district since. Now in the 117th Congress (2021–2022), Rep. Cárdenas sits on the prestigious House Committee on Energy and Commerce, where he is fighting for hard-working American families. He has worked on and authored legislation to lower prescription drug prices, protect American consumers, combat climate change, and ensure that everyone has access to affordable, quality health care. The Committee on Energy and Commerce is the oldest of the "authorizing" committees in the House.



Rep. Cárdenas is committed to bringing awareness and change to the issues most important to the San Fernando Valley and its families. A passionate advocate for justice, Cárdenas's work on common-sense gun safety, immigration reform, juvenile justice, and championing solutions that will make the U.S. economy even stronger has been recognized and praised both locally and nationally.

Cárdenas led the passage of the bipartisan At-Risk Youth Medicaid Protection Act, which he co-wrote with Virginia Republican Morgan Griffith. This law ensures that at-risk young people have much-needed health and mental care coverage when they reenter the community from juvenile detention centers. The resolution acted as an extension of his work within the bipartisan Crime Prevention and Youth Development Caucus, which he co-founded along with Rep. David Reichert of Washington during the 113th Congress. During the 113th Congress, Rep. Cárdenas also founded the bipartisan Congressional Student-Athlete Protection Caucus along with Rep. Charlie Dent of Pennsylvania, underscoring his dedication to fostering America's youth through bipartisan support.

Club Director: Mr. Cárdenas, your parents emigrated from Mexico and settled in the Los Angeles area before you were born. You are the youngest of 11 children and grew up helping your father with a gardening business. When did your interest in politics start and why?

Rep. Tony Cárdenas: I was 31 years old when I was recruited for state assembly. After getting my electrical degree from UC Santa Barbara, I moved back to my community where I was born and raised. I was a business owner, raising two kids when I was recruited to run state assembly. After six months of courting, I ran for the seat and won.

CD: As the son of immigrants, immigration policy is very important to you. The National Club Association (NCA) supports immigration reform, particularly with respect to non-agricultural seasonal workers. Where do you think Democrats and Republicans can agree on immigration reform?

TC: Democrats and Republicans agree that we need a better-balanced workforce in America and immigrants are our best answer to a robust workforce across industries. Immigrants have always been a part of the American fabric and we need them now more than ever.

As policymakers, each one of us needs to focus on working together to create good polices that benefit all communities, and separate the politics of campaigning from the day-to-day legislation.

CD: It's been decades since meaningful immigration reforms have passed Congress. Do you think there is any chance Congress can move an immigration reform package in the next few years?

TC: The biggest obstacle to progress on meaningful immigration reform is the negative rhetoric towards immigrants. We need everyone to move past that and then we will see progress on meaningful immigration reforms.

CD: Mental health and juvenile justice are also areas you've worked to make changes at the federal level. What do you see are the main things the federal government can do on these issues?

TC: Mental health services are delivered at the local level and we need to continue to support that with resources and laws that help everyone have access to mental healthcare.

CD: Politics has always been a rough sport, but seems to have gotten particularly nasty and personal over the past 20 years. What is it really like as a member of the House? Do you have any opportunities to get to know members on the other side of the aisle?

TC: As a first-generation citizen, it is a tremendous honor to be a member of the House of Representatives. As policymakers, each one of us needs to focus on working together to create good polices that benefit all communities, and separate the politics of campaigning from the day-to-day legislation.

CD: You're a member of the New Democrat Caucus. What is the purpose of the caucus and are there any successes you can point to that have come out of working through the caucus?

I encourage the industry to support young people having access to every golf course in America.

TC: I joined the New Dems Caucus because we are focused on practical legislation. We constantly consider the viewpoint of workers and employers. We try to take a balanced approach. For example, I was a small business owner and I appreciate signing the front and the back of a paycheck.

CD: NCA is an association of private country, city, golf, athletic and yacht clubs. What's been your experience with clubs and do you think people understand the enormous amount of charity work clubs do every year?

TC: I've had the opportunity to play at private and public courses across the country and I constantly think of how important access is for all people interested in playing golf. I encourage the industry to support young people having

access to every golf course in America. I think the most important charity is to make their courses accessible to all, no matter their income level.

CD: You've played golf for many years. What lessons do you think you can take from the game and apply to politics?

TC: Before I learned how to play golf, I saw a little ball and someone swing and thought, "that was easy." When I started to play, I learned it's harder than it looks. Discipline, practice and dedicating yourself to improving your game is critical and I think that a lot of people think making laws is easy but when you're making laws, it takes discipline, practice and dedication.

CD: Pick your foursome: one Democrat, one Republican and one member of the PGA or LPGA.

TC: Democrat: Barack Obama

Republican: George W. Bush

PGA: Chi-Chi Rodriguez

LPGA: Lorena Ochoa. **CD**



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By Curtis Dubay

THE GREAT ECONOMIC

UNCERTAINTY

Recession or not, inflation is wreaking havoc on consumers and businesses.

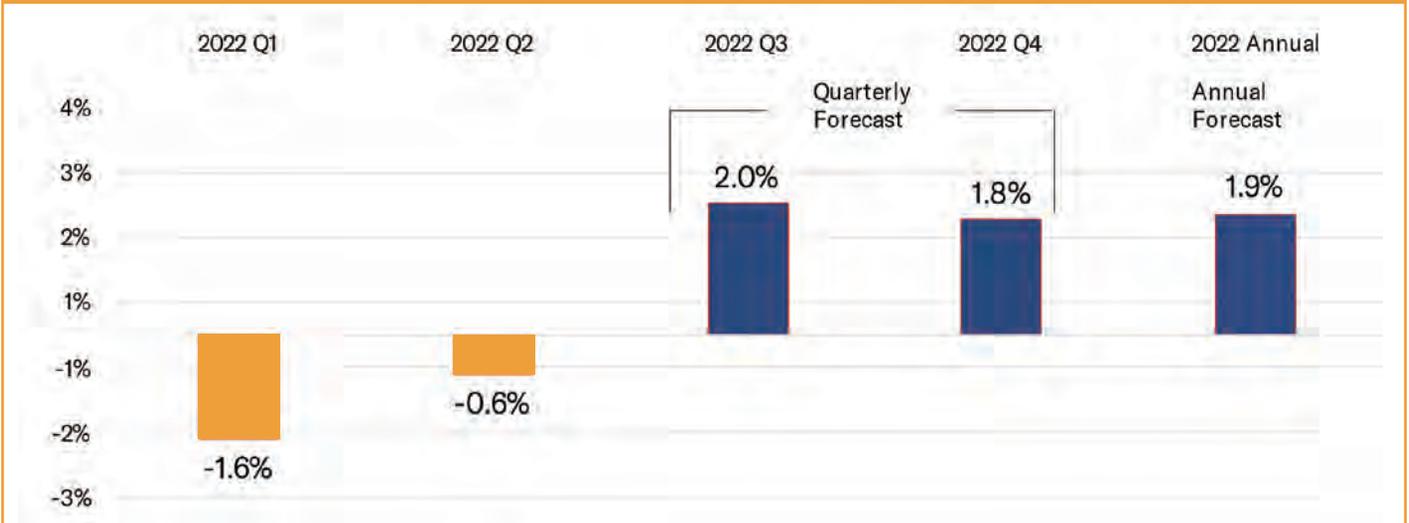
What does that mean for your club?

Everyone wants to know if we are in a recession, or if we had one earlier this year. We definitely had the (what used to be anyway) textbook definition of one in the first half of 2022 because the economy contracted in both the first and second quarters. There are other economic factors, though, that say we didn't have a recession.

The committee at the National Bureau of Economic Research that most accept as the arbiter of recessions looks at job growth, income and spending data, and manufacturing output in addition to the size of the economy. Each of those data points is holding up well, jobs in particular. The economy added 528,000 jobs in July. Economies in recession do not usually add jobs, especially at such a healthy clip. However, sometimes jobs are a lagging indicator and other measures of job growth are weaker.

It is also important to keep in mind that we are now deep into the third quarter. Looking back at what the economy was doing six months ago is retrospective and doesn't change what happened then or is happening now. If we did have a recession back then, we are very likely out of it now. As of this writing, the U.S. Chamber is estimating 2% growth in the third quarter.

The Economy Contracted in Q1 & Q2—Matching Definition of a Recession



Source: Economic Policy Division

Economic Reality

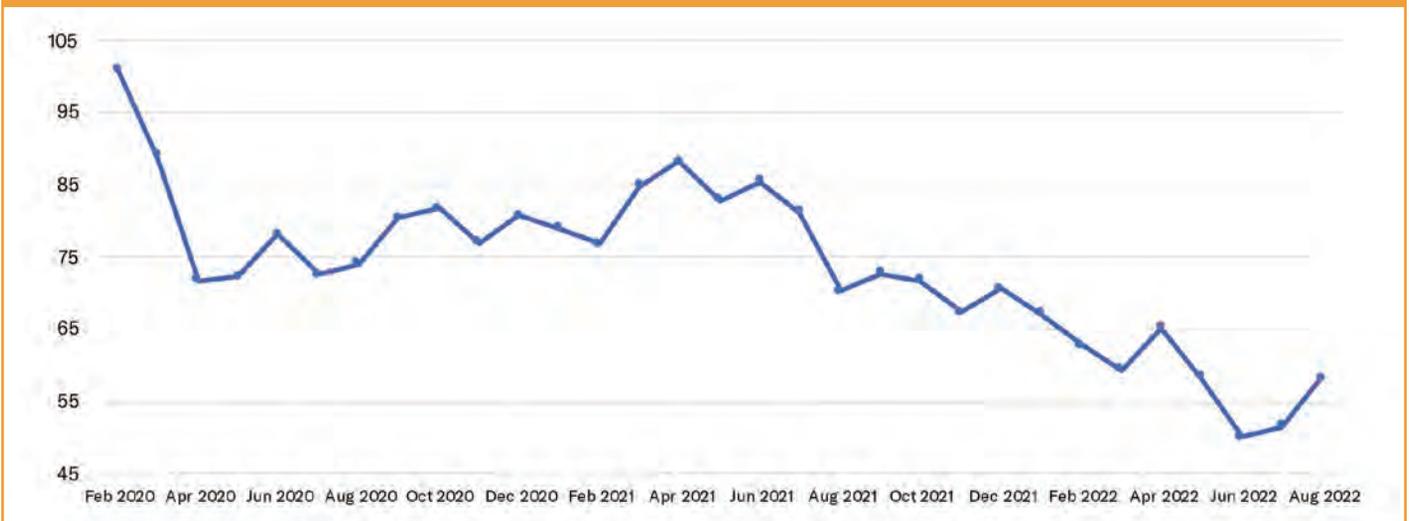
Ultimately, the technicalities of a recession call take a back seat to the economic reality consumers and businesses are facing every day. High inflation is making their lives difficult and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. The volatility and instability that come with fluctuating prices makes them feel like the economy is doing poorly, whether or not we're technically in a recession.

Take, for example, consumer sentiment. As of July, it was near its all-time record low. Consumers feel terrible about the economy because inflation is squeezing their budgets. Despite their incomes

growing more than 5% on an annual basis, their inflation-adjusted (real) income growth is negative because inflation is around 9%. Gas and food prices are up even more than that. It is easy to see why consumers feel sour.

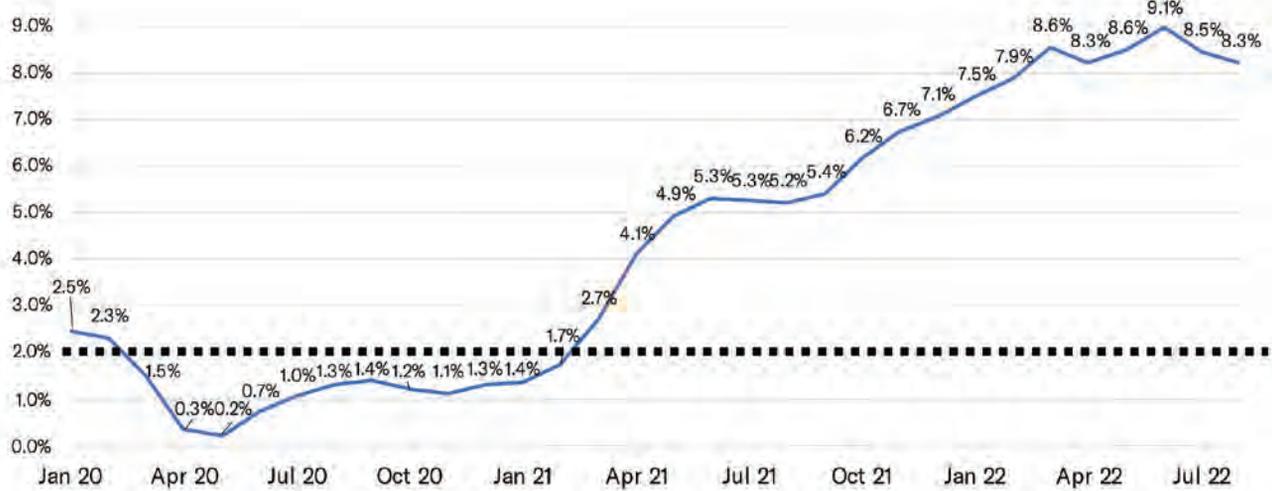
Supply chain issues also continue for both consumers and businesses. Consumers cannot always get the products they want and businesses are still struggling for inputs and inventory. The scarcity of things that were abundant not that long ago reinforces bad feelings about the economy. Supply chain issues are also making inflation worse.

Consumer Sentiment Rose in August—Hit Lowest Ever in June



Source: Economic Policy Division

Consumer Prices Rose 8.3% Annually in August—Have They Peaked?



Source: Economic Policy Division

Inflation

Inflation is the major problem for the economy now and will be well into 2024 at least. As of July, it was 8.5% on an annual basis. Food prices were up almost 11% annually and gas prices 44% from a year ago. Inflation is a problem because it squeezes consumers' budgets, which becomes a problem for businesses because they spend less.

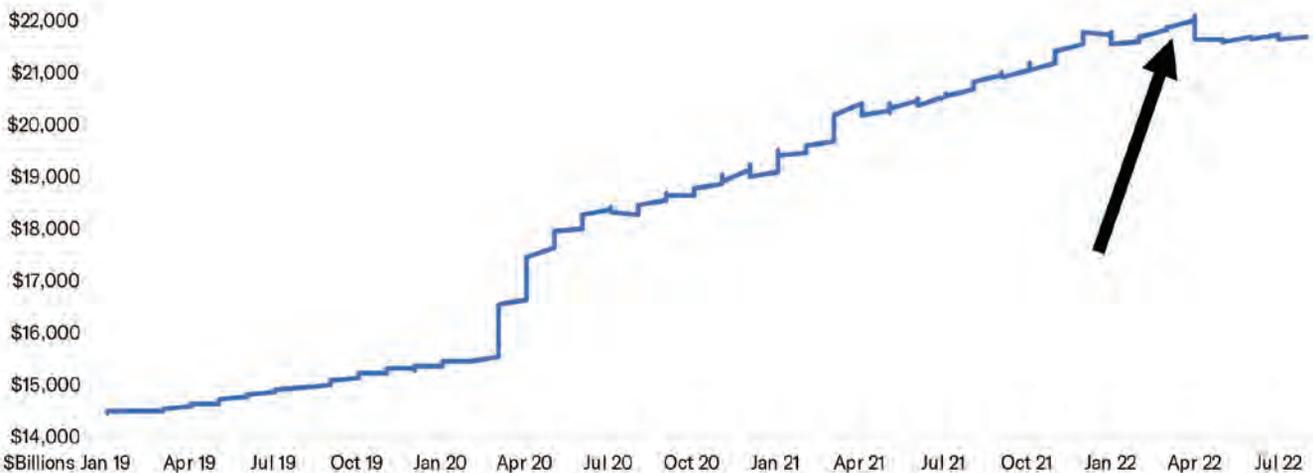
It is also a major problem because of the instability it causes. When businesses don't know what the prices of their inputs are going to be from day to day, they are hesitant to make decisions.

When workers don't know what prices will be, they are hesitant to accept wages that may prove too low in a month or so. This uncertainty pervades the economy and slows economic growth.

What Can Be Done

The job of fighting inflation falls mostly to the Federal Reserve through its setting of monetary policy. (Congress and the president share some responsibility through fiscal policy and not making a bad situation worse by increasing spending.) Inflation comes from too many dollars chasing too few goods. From the beginning of

Money Supply Rose Rapidly During Covid—Falling Now



Source: Economic Policy Division

All Housing Market Indicators Down in July



Source: Economic Policy Division

From the beginning of COVID-19 in February 2020 until it shifted gears earlier this year, the Fed increased the money supply more than \$6 trillion—far greater than the economic growth in that period. Inflation will remain high until the Fed can bring the money supply down.

COVID-19 in February 2020 until it shifted gears earlier this year, the Fed increased the money supply more than \$6 trillion—far greater than the economic growth in that period. Inflation will remain high until the Fed can bring the money supply down.

It will do that by raising interest rates and selling its holdings of Treasury bonds and mortgage-backed securities. It has already raised interest rates four times this year (as of August), bringing the Federal Funds rate from 0% all the way to 2.5%. Many expect additional interest rate increases this year.

The Effect of Credit

Higher interest rates bring prices down by cooling demand. For consumers, anything they buy on credit will become more

expensive as rates rise, which will cause them to cut back. For instance, they will use their credit cards less for smaller everyday expenses they can delay. They will buy fewer bigger-ticket items that often require credit, such as homes and home remodeling, cars, expensive electronics like computers and televisions, appliances like refrigerators, dishwashers, washing machines and dryers, furniture, recreational vehicles, boats and trailers.

The easiest way to see how this lowers prices on the consumer side is the effect of higher interest rates on the housing market. Home buyers usually use mortgages to buy homes. A higher Federal Funds rate will translate into higher mortgage rates. The average 30-year fixed rate mortgage was 3.1% to start the year. It has risen to around 5.5%. That is a huge jump in a short period.

This has caused the scalding hot housing market to cool. All the major housing indicators are down. Prices are sure to follow, but the housing market was so hot that it has room to cool without prices declining. Home prices have been rising 20% on an annual basis for months now. That can come way down without going into negative territory and still have a large impact on lowering inflation.

The same thing that is likely happening in the housing market will happen with other items that require credit.

For businesses, investment in plants, equipment, software and other things necessary to make their goods or provide their services will become more expensive. Many such investments will become unprofitable and therefore businesses will not make them. This will cause business investment to decline which will further reduce price pressures.

Home Prices Still Soaring as of June—But Pressure Easing



Source: Economic Policy Division

Inflation is going to be the major economic issue through 2024, which means we are in for bumpy few years.

Borrowing costs for businesses are already rising. The average rate for AAA-rated corporate bond has risen from under 2.8% to start 2022 to over 4% recently.

Forecasts

These downward effects on demand and therefore prices will happen over time. There are lags to monetary policy. It will take at least until 2024 before inflation is back near the Fed's 2% target.

Inflation could come down some before the end of 2022 through the expectations of consumers, businesses, and financial markets. If these groups expect inflation to slow over the next few years because of the Fed's actions, they may act in ways that bring prices down now. For example, instead of buying now, they will wait for prices to be lower in the future. This will cool demand presently.

If inflation declines to 7% by the end of the year as the Fed anticipates, it will be through this mechanism. Inflation

expectations remain relatively low and stable, which increases the chances that lower inflation expectations could help to take some pressure out of prices in the coming months.

Continued volatility of energy prices and home price appreciation (because the run up in home prices the last few years has not fully been accounted for in the inflation data) could cut against that effect.

Even if inflation comes down to around 7% before year end, we will still have a way to go before inflation returns to levels we grew accustomed. Inflation is going to be the major economic issue through 2024, which means we are in for bumpy few years. We will have periods of strong growth followed by periods of weak growth as policymakers work to wring inflation out and consumers and businesses adjust to changing prices, higher interest rates, and less available funding.

The stock market will follow those bumps in the road. It won't likely return to its recent highs until we are fully out of this tumultuous period—but it will get there.

Once we are through this bumptious inflation period, the economy is poised for a long period of robust growth. 

Curtis Dubay is chief economist at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. He can be reached at cdubay@uschamber.com.

Want More? Curtis Dubay, chief economist at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce recently presented the NCA webcast, "Inflation, Supply Chains and the Economy." NCA members can watch the recording at nationalclub.org/education/webinars/. Click on "past events" to view the recording



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STAYING SAFE, *Feeling Welcome*

Security is on everyone's mind, but new technologies can help achieve a feeling of safety at the club without alienating members or their guests.

By Ernie Ace Velayo, Tanya Turner and John Wright



How to enhance security without compromising the member and guest experience is a question private club operators are contemplating more than ever before. Even more, introducing new security technologies as a member benefit to enable rather than restrict member access and movement on club property takes careful planning.

Visitor Management Systems

It is important to understand who is entering your buildings and facilities, the areas they access and at what time they do so to ensure a seamless member and guest experience while securing restricted areas on the club's property. Visitor management systems help organizations categorize and classify their members and employees. Powered by access control readers and other identity management controls, these systems provide a method of verifying identities with their associated permissions.

Visitor management is an important system function for the "member" users of an access control system. Members want security but also flexibility to move freely throughout club

club member to send an email with a credential that works on the date and time of the lunch. This credential would work for the front gate, the guest entrance to the club and any other needed access point to get to the lunch area. Allowing a club member to invite guests takes a redundant portion of the system management and gives it to the members who also enjoy the flexibility. It's a win-win solution. Additionally, clubs may also send information on "what to expect during your visit" that could be reviewed and digitally initiated before a guest receives a mobile credential to enter the facility. Automating any user screening is also key in keeping the procedure fast and user-friendly.

While many clubs do not have integrated access control systems in place, it's been a key component for organizations as an aid to return to work procedures in 2022. Although the old handwritten paper logbooks may be helpful for standard check-in processes, they do not provide clubs with data that can be used to improve and optimize the member and guest experience. Understanding who is in the building, how long a person is inside, where they've gone, etc., can inform important business decisions

Members want security but also flexibility to move freely throughout club facilities while feeling free and welcome to invite guests.

facilities while feeling free and welcome to invite guests. Access control-visitor management integrations have grown in popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic. The integration made it easier to assign and customize guest credentials, add digital nondisclosure agreements, preregister guests, print badges and create health questionnaires. When building staff was limited, bypassing a front desk sign-in process was made possible with visitor management and access control.

These systems help streamline the club experience by saving time and reducing confusion. To properly do this, club operators must create individually manageable spaces for their members. The club needs to allow for straightforward management of users who require full access to all relevant locks for that space and even delegation of visitor management. In the case of private clubs, a paying member represents a primary user of the space created in the system. They have fulltime access to all the space's locks. Members can invite guests, for whom they can set more refined access rules. A member's guests are users asked by club members to have (optionally) limited access to the space created. The space created is the area that club members need to have access to reach and enter their private site or residence.

A perfect example is a member who wants to invite their mom over for lunch at the club. They have a system that allows the

such as hours of operation and staffing needs or prioritizing facility renovations or upgrades. Similarly, knowing when a person has entered a building or club facility (timing and location), accessible/restricted area locations and when the person departs from the facility contributes to greater operational club security and keeps accessibility fair and consistent.

Bringing People Together

Thanks to the pandemic and technology, mobile credentials and frictionless solutions are becoming the standard when it comes to identification and access control. Automation provides an answer to simplify redundant tasks that allow employees to focus on guest services and the club's experience. The fewer issues or redundant tasks employees have to focus on, the more they can hone in on the people around them. It is easy to use technology to isolate people from one another, but the key to most successful clubs is the social aspect itself. So how do we use technology to empower the social aspects of a club? It's simple: Remove redundant, time-consuming tasks from your staff's day. If you can remove many of the redundant tasks from your employees' routines, it frees them up to focus purely on the individuals they are teaching, serving or directing at the club. This allows for an environment that can focus on people and the personal relationship they have with each other.



If you can remove many of the redundant tasks from your employees' routines, it frees them up to focus purely on the individuals they are teaching, serving or directing at the club.

Using technology and visitor management data can allow club directors and operators to better protect employees, assets and buildings, as well as automate redundant processes associated with member and guest access. Take a gate guard, for example. They have a redundant job, but automation can transform the role from a security-centric position to a pure guest services position. With the proper automation, the data needed to enter the club is received, stored and documented automatically, using credentials for members, employees, vendors and visitors. Adding video sequencing for guests, delivery drivers and outside

services can provide additional visitor data to verify entrance, location and arrival/departure times. And with all this, the systems are cataloging it instead of the gate guard doing it with a pen and pad/spreadsheet. The gate guard then is simply focused on being a great first interaction with the visitor rather than a security barrier, speeding up the process, negating human error and providing an excellent experience in the first 30-second interaction with the club.

Other Tech: Credential as Payment Method

Credential as a means of payment is a growing sector within private clubs. It is best known as a closed-loop system, where members use a mobile credential or wristband to purchase goods while at the club. It offers advantages over traditional cash or card payments by reducing transaction times and costs and eliminating cash handling. It also enables clubs to gain invaluable revenue and behavioral information on their members, enabling the constant evolution of a better member experience. Once a closed-loop system has been implemented, it creates a much better experience for the members and their guests with faster service, resulting in more time socializing, interacting within the club and creating memories.

Members can also budget for their spending at the club by depositing a set amount in advance. Offering this level of control means happier, more loyal customers, leading to higher spending in the long term. The technology does not end with standard purchases but can also help members enhance their experience within the club. Even timed events can be processed with the technology—think sauna, spa, court lights or tanning beds. Place a credential and select the needed period; the related costs are displayed. When identifying at the terminal, the authorization will be checked, the corresponding value will be debited and the installation will be started. Imagine a club where the use of a credential dictates every interaction. A single placement of a credential can control access, purchases and even timed events. With current hardware, this is feasible and the future for most private clubs.

Access control technologies and security analytics are evolving at a rapid pace. Advancements in software development, cloud access and the proliferation of personal mobile devices have helped initiate a shift from hardware-based solutions to more software-based systems that can provide

more comprehensive coverage and analytics with the flexibility of features being added over time. It is very important to look at your security systems as only one piece of the puzzle. The culture and the people who live and use the system every day, along with modeling visitor management policies based on how members and guests move around a facility, will be the determining factors of a successful security program. **CD**

This feature was authored on behalf of Security Industry Association.



Ernie Ace Velayo is business development manager, west, for AMAG Technology. He can be reached at ernie.velayo@amag.com.



Tanya Turner is HR director, North America, with SALTO Systems, Inc. She can be reached at t.turner@saltosystems.com.



John Wright is retail & fitness industry business leader with SALTO Systems, Inc. He can be reached at j.wright@saltosystems.com.

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CHANGING TABLES

The club culinary scene is evolving. Fine dining and the latest trends are on the menu, and chefs are proving more than up to the challenge.

By Karen Moraghan



Food at private clubs has always had an image: reliable, predictable, reasonable. Clubs were a good place to get a decent burger, club sandwich or Cobb salad. Don't expect anything fancy, just stick to the tried-and-true.

While those old reliables may still show up on club menus, just about everything else coming out of the kitchens of many top clubs has changed for the better. Much better!

Clubs are hiring well-trained, experienced chefs improving the club dining experience. And with their top-level training comes new levels variety, preparation and sophistication that are being eaten up by appreciative members and guests.

Culinary Evolution

Private club cuisine was already on the upswing when it was kicked into overdrive during the coronavirus pandemic, as

members sought out safe havens for dining and recreation. At many clubs, nimble operations teams quickly added tents, outdoor and patio dining that expanded capacity and access. As demand grew—and not just in-season—chefs upped their game to match.

At Reynolds Lake Oconee, an expansive community in Greensboro, Ga., Executive Chef Zouhair Bellout and his team provided to-go offerings and twice-weekly grocery ordering and pick-up services for residents. National and regional food purveyors stepped up to source groceries for residents as well.

Executive Chef Ed Stone at Springfield, N.J.'s famed Baltusrol Golf Club says club dining provided worried members with a heightened comfort level; as a result, business steadily increased. Since members couldn't—or wouldn't—go to their favorite non-club restaurants, he pushed his team to raise the quality of both the food and the experience.



Executive Chef Ed Stone
Baltusrol Golf Club





Executive Chef Zouhair Bellout
Reynolds Lake Oconee



“I know chefs that love it when a member complains, as they are then challenged to make them happy.”

“There were new challenges every day, but I am fortunate to work with a great team of talented and creative chefs who worked exceptionally hard to ensure our members enjoyed an exceptional dining experience at every visit,” said Stone.

Members Make the Difference

For a chef, working in a restaurant is very different from working in a private club. A restaurant or hotel serves different people every day and the menu is what it is with little flexibility. A club

chef serves the same clientele day after day—customers who can have a big say in whether he, or she, keeps their job. So club chefs tend to be very receptive to member feedback.

“I know chefs that love it when a member complains, as they are then challenged to make them happy,” says Diana DeLucia, publisher of *Golf Kitchen Magazine*. “It is difficult for a restaurant chef to work in a private club as there are so many more expectations and culinary situations to execute. At a club, it’s about the member’s choices first and not so much about the chefs. These chefs need to be good communicators in the front of the house and in their domain, behind the scenes.”

They also need to be skilled in all kinds of dining—elegant, dinners, banquets, everyday club cuisine—while always remembering who’s the boss. If a member asks for bacon and eggs when the club is hosting a fancy event, it may be in the chef’s best interest to comply—and do so with a smile.

Club Culinary Environment

Chef Bertrand Bouquin, culinary director at Desert Mountain in Scottsdale, Arz., is a James Beard Foundation Award chef who has



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Publisher Diana DeLucia
Golf Kitchen Magazine



been honored as a *Maître Cuisinier* (French Master Chef). He's thinks private clubs are great places to work.

"Clubs are community-based, have great members who may be able to provide counsel or assist in future career opportunities, pay full benefits, and often provide housing. The relationships you build at the club will last a lifetime if you care enough to foster them."

Bouquin is responsible for Desert Mountain's 10 restaurants, from sophisticated Italian to gastro pub to Mexican, and insists each one stays authentic to its culinary origins. Much of his 80-cook staff comes from Europe and South Africa, creating a wonderfully rich diversity in the kitchen.

"There is a great deal of interaction and feedback from members. We are always evolving, adding new things that are fresh and different while keeping the best sellers and the traditional items our members have come to love."

Sophisticated Tastes

At many golf and country clubs, the culinary team takes pride in offering diverse, creative menus. They have to.

"Many of my members are foodies, well educated in food and wine and have advanced palates," says Michael Ruggerio, executive chef at Glen Arbor Golf Club in Bedford Hills, N.Y.. "They genuinely support our sourcing and working with the most exceptional products. I come here every day able to express my ideas, be creative, be an artist, and as a chef, that is why we do this."

Baltusrol's Stone recognizes that his members are well traveled and have eaten at some of the finest restaurants in the world.

"When I arrived in 2004, I could not understand why the cuisine at the club was not held to a higher standard. During my interviews, management and the executive committee were vocal in expressing their commitment to making changes. I had one



Chef Bertrand Bouquin
Desert Mountain



“Many of my members are foodies, well educated in food and wine and have advanced palates.”



Executive Chef
Michael Ruggerio
Glen Arbor Golf Club

vendor tell me I was committing career suicide by coming to a private club. But I went with my gut, and it’s paid off.”

Chef Stone enjoys creating menus for the club’s popular wine dinners: Their limited size allows him to prepare more labor-intensive dishes impossible for a la carte dining. But Stone and his team also can go big, as they did when hosting the 2005 and 2016 PGA Championships, serving thousands of corporate clients, contestants, officials, and dignitaries. He’ll do it again for the 2023 KMPG Women’s PGA Championship.

At Desert Mountain, Bouquin and his team support the club’s annual member-guest extravaganza: In a period of 14 days, the club holds its women’s member-guest, men’s member-guest, and Spring Bash, which features a party for more than 1,000 and a live concert on the main practice range. It’s easily among the biggest member-guest events in the U.S., and the ordering, planning and executing is a year-round, large-scale operation.



Executive Chef Matthew Gilbert
Medinah Country Club





Desert Mountain

Buying the best quality ingredients and letting them shine is the best way to utilize food.”

Fresh and Healthy

Another aspect of dining today is an emphasis on health. From allergies to dietary requirements, club chefs must pay close attention to the special needs of their members, while looking for the freshest, most local ingredients.

“We embrace the health conscious,” said Ruggerio. “We have a responsibility to be aware of the food we prepare, serve, and where we source it. We need to know where it grows and its seasonality. Buying the best quality ingredients and letting them shine is the best way to utilize food.”

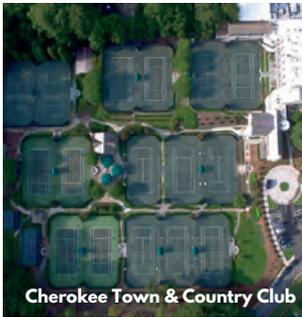
Reynolds’ Bellout loves to roam the markets and farm stands of northern Georgia, driving as far as Atlanta, 70 miles away, and turning his “discoveries” into exciting new menu combinations.

Medinah Country Club outside of Chicago has one of the largest on-site growing operations of any club in the country: 34 different fruits and vegetables, 17 savory herbs and garnishes, and six varieties of fragrant and edible flowers, spread among 25 beds. The vegetables and herbs are featured on the club’s Garden Menu, while some of the fruits are turned into jams, enhance seasonal dishes, and garnish cocktails.

The club also has its own bee colony, plus as many as 30 chickens who produce about 25 eggs a day.

It used to be members simply wanted birdies. Now they get chickens. Private clubs and their chefs will keep taking their dining programs to new heights. [CD](#)

Karen Moraghan is president of Hunter Public Relations. She can be reached at kmoraghan@hunter-pr.com.



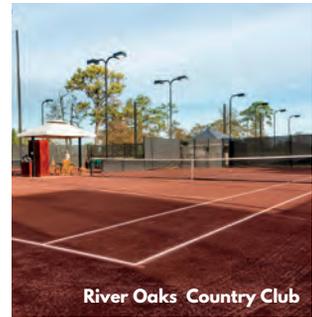
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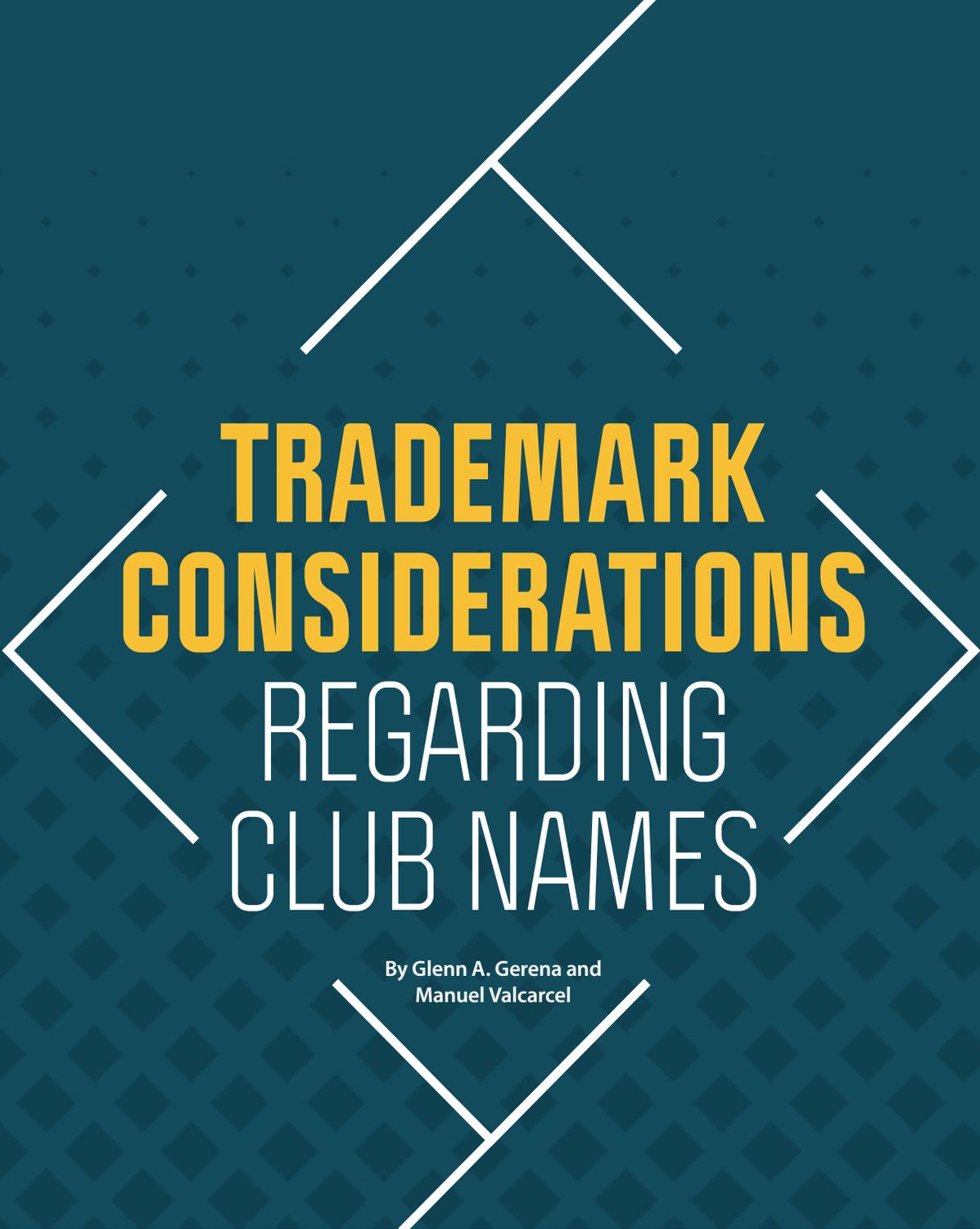
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TRADEMARK CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING CLUB NAMES

By Glenn A. Gerena and
Manuel Valcarcel

Trademarks and service marks are names, logos and other symbols that are used to identify and distinguish one's goods and services from the goods and services of others; they also indicate the source of the goods and services. Trademarks are marks that are used on products and service marks are marks that are used in connection with providing services. Club names can function as service marks with respect to club-related services as well as trademarks as used for ancillary products provided by the club. It is, therefore, important to understand and consider trademark issues when adopting a name for a club, both to avoid infringing the trademark rights of others and to establish and protect trademark rights with respect to the name that is used.

Misconceptions

Common misconceptions regarding trademarks include the beliefs that a trademark must be registered to have rights and that no one can challenge the use of the mark that is registered. Not so. Under U.S. trademark law, trademark rights are based on use of the applicable mark and the user of a mark can claim “common law” trademark rights based on such use and assert claims of common law trademark infringement and unfair competition even without registering the trademark. As between two parties using the same or confusingly similar marks in connection with the same or related services, the prior user can claim superior trademark rights in the geographic area where the prior user uses its mark and that user can also potentially claim rights in a reasonable zone of expansion. Even if the later user obtains a trademark registration for its mark, a prior user can seek to cancel the trademark registration and would have a defense against a trademark infringement lawsuit based on the trademark registration to the extent of its prior rights.

Another common misconception is that there is no trademark infringement issue unless a proposed name is identical to a third party’s mark, and the goods and services provided by the respective parties are the same. Neither the marks nor the goods/services need to be identical for there to be trademark infringement. If the two marks are similar in appearance, sound and meaning and the goods or services are related such that there is a likelihood of confusion among the consuming public with respect to two marks, and/or consumers might mistakenly believe that there is an affiliation, sponsorship or other relation between the two users of the marks, trademark infringement issues may exist.

Naming a Club

Before proceeding with use of a name for a club, a trademark search should be conducted to assess whether the proposed name is the same as or is confusingly similar to a third party’s mark. The usual trademark search and clearance process starts with a preliminary search for marks covered by active state or federal trademark filings. This type of initial limited search is done to quickly assess whether the proposed name should not be used because a similar mark is registered. If the preliminary search does not reveal issues, the next recommended step is to proceed with a more extensive search, including searches for unregistered marks. If a logo will be used, a design search for the logo should be conducted as well.

If the searches do not reveal issues with the use of the proposed name, consideration should be given regarding whether to seek a trademark/service mark registration for the name. While, as noted previously, common law trademark rights can be claimed even without having a trademark registration, registration provides

Trademarks are marks that are used on products and service marks are marks that are used in connection with providing services.

presumptively exclusive rights throughout the geographic area covered by the registration, along with the right to bring claims under the applicable trademark laws. A federal registration would allow use of the ® registration symbol and provide a stronger basis to pursue claims through domain name registry dispute procedures to force the transfer of confusingly similar domain names that are later registered and used by others; this also affects claims under social media site complaint procedures with respect to confusingly

similar social media handles that are used by others. Domain name registries and social media sites most likely will not take any action (unless ordered by a court to do so) with respect to confusingly similar domain names or social media handles used by others unless a mark is federally registered before the domain name or social media handle at issue was registered.

Registration

Registration can be sought at the federal level and/or at the state level. A federal registration would cover all states as well as U.S. territories and possessions, whereas a state registration would cover the applicable state. In either case, a registration can broaden the scope of your trademark rights beyond the common law trademark rights that cover the geographic area where the mark is actually used. Sometimes a state registration is sought either by itself or in addition to a federal registration because registration at the state level is a much faster and less expensive process than federal registration. The registration process at the state level generally only takes a few weeks, whereas the federal registration process can take more than a year.

If a mark is not federally registered, the ® registration symbol cannot be used, but ™ or ℠ can be used for any trademark or service mark, registered or unregistered. It is a good practice to use such symbols to provide notice that trademark rights are claimed and help avoid innocent infringement of the mark.

It is important to note that to obtain a trademark registration, whether at the state or federal level, the mark to be registered must be used as a mark for the goods/services covered by the registration. Simply including the mark in a company name, registering a domain name or launching a website using the mark without more does not constitute “use” for trademark registration purposes. One-time “token” uses are not sufficient either. In most states, the mark has to be in use before a registration application can be filed. At the federal level, it is possible to file a registration application before commencing use of the mark, based on a bona fide intent to use the mark. However, the registration will not be issued unless and until the mark is actually used.

Trademark registrations have a duration of 10 years at the federal level and typically five years or 10 years at the state level, depending on the state, and can be renewed for successive additional terms as long as the mark continues to be used. To avoid cancellation of a federal registration, a declaration of use must be filed between the 5th and 6th year of the initial registration term.

Unique trademark issues may arise for a club in a residential community. A residential club community developer acquires common law trademark rights when it uses trademarks in connection with the sale of residential property and club memberships. After sell-out of the residential property and turnover or sale of the club to members, the developer may assign its trademark rights to the club or retain the trademark rights possibly for use in connection with a property resale or management business or related residential or club projects. The club's continued use of the trademarks could be challenged by the developer if the club has not obtained a license to use the trademark from the developer, especially if there are ongoing disputes with the developer. The owner's association may also want the trademark rights for use with its association services. If the developer does not retain trademark rights, the developer, club and association should agree on future ownership of trademark rights and use of trademarks.

In addition to protecting a trademark owner against a competitor's use of confusingly similar trademarks, trademark rights may need to be asserted in other situations unique to a club. Committees formed to represent club members in a dispute with the club or the club board may use the club's trademarks in their name or communication with members. Members also sometimes form golf associations independent of the club, which may use the club's trademarks in its name or communications with members. Businesses such as residence rental companies may use trademarks that are similar to the club's trademarks to confuse the marketplace into believing that there is an affiliation, sponsorship or other relation with the club. The club may want to assert trademark rights to stop such uses of similar trademarks. The club's failure to take action to stop such similar uses can result in loss of the club's trademark rights.

Club owners and their attorneys should consult with trademark counsel to ensure that trademark issues discussed above are considered and addressed appropriately and avoid potentially disruptive and costly disputes. **CD**

Glenn A. Gerena and **Manuel Valcarcel** are attorneys at Greenberg Traurig, P.A.. They can be reached at gerenag@gtlaw.com and valcarcelm@gtlaw.com.

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THE WAR FOR

How Private Clubs Must Evolve & Adapt

Richard M. Kopplin;
Kurt D. Kuebler, CCM; and
Thomas B. Wallace III, CCM, CCE, ECM

While inflation, gas prices and the state of the economy are all real issues, among the most concerning issues for the private club industry is labor and what it will look like in the future. Club executives are grappling with the number of open staff positions, the lack of applicants, salary hikes and record-breaking employee turnover. We've heard, "Our community is paying \$30/hour for dishwashers! How do we compete with that?" "What are other clubs doing to attract and retain employees?" "How do we prevent current employees from being overworked when we can't find staff to fill open positions?"

It seems the questions are endless and the pressure on club leaders grows as the challenge to find and retain staff spreads beyond departments or positions. Hotels, restaurants, resorts, golf courses, hospitals, airlines and countless others are being forced to adapt to the tight labor conditions.



TALENT

April 2022 marked the eleventh consecutive month when more than 4 million workers left their jobs. In May, available jobs outnumbered unemployed workers by nearly 5.3 million. Businesses of all shapes and sizes are feeling the effects of the labor shortage. The *Global Golf Post* reported that the No. 1 problem in golf is labor. The golf industry flourished during COVID-19, but while courses stay busy with golfers, clubs are discovering that providing a high-end golf experience has never been more difficult. Most superintendents report being short five or more workers, which leads to cutbacks on the course and overworking of current staff. Many grounds teams are relying on high school kids and retirees who are inexperienced but can rake bunkers or operate mowers just to keep playing conditions acceptable. Finding assistant golf professionals is nearly impossible these days as many left the industry as a result of long hours, low pay and/or mistreatment by demanding and frustrated members.

John Barker, president of the Ohio Restaurant Association stated, “Restaurants are doing well driving revenue in 2022. However, the industry is short-staffed by 750,000 employees

compared to pre-pandemic levels, which is -6.1%. This is taking a toll on customers and workers.”

The Good News

Even though times are challenging, the good news is that clubs are evolving to survive, just like they did during the pandemic. To combat labor issues, clubs ultimately have two choices: cut services or raise dues, and both can be tricky to implement without infuriating members. Gus Jones, COO of Martis Camp Club in Truckee, Calif., worked with his finance committee and board to formulate a plan for increasing dues to offset broad compensation adjustments in 2021 and additional wage increases in 2022. They shared research and information with the membership prior to the changes going into effect.

GMs have found themselves in difficult positions as they attempted to balance open staff positions with overworked, exhausted employees who were trying to keep up with booming dining outlets and busier-than-ever member facilities. “We are facing an unprecedented crisis in hiring. The problem goes

April 2022 marked the eleventh consecutive month when more than 4 million workers left their jobs. In May, available jobs outnumbered unemployed workers by nearly 5.3 million.

beyond private clubs and the hospitality industry. We cannot succeed in this time of flux without trying new things,” said Phil Kiester, The Country Club of Virginia’s (CCV’s) general manager.

Strategies

The following are 13 options for clubs to consider when dealing with the shortage of labor:

- **Finding new labor pools.** While hiring member children to work at the club has its pros and cons, hiring other clubs’ members’ children opens a whole new pool of potential employees. Also, consider sharing employees with neighboring clubs to ensure the success of larger events. CCV has found success in a number of different ways:
 - **Social Media Campaigns.** The club provides content graphics and awards prizes to team members who share job openings on their social media accounts.
 - **Phone Blitz.** The club pulled contact information for candidates who had applied in the past and proactively reached out via phone call and text. They found that by far, texting was the most successful medium for communicating.
 - **Community Involvement.** The club has prioritized growing relationships with community organizations and schools for mutually beneficial partnerships and with the hope of yielding future team members.
 - **Public Relations/Visibility.** The club entered local and national top workplace contests and won! They leverage their awards in job advertisements and during the interview process.
 - **Intern and Manager in Training Programs.** The club has invested in these positions and enhanced their programming to provide a quality experience, resulting in a pipeline of prospective employees.
- **Regularly reviewing salary and hourly rates.** With inflation and market salary rates continuing to climb, clubs should review salary and hourly rates of all employees every two months. It is important to note that the market, not the club, sets salary rates. If other employers are paying it, clubs must keep up to retain and attract employees.
- **Boosting benefits.** Employers across the board are aiming to offer unique benefits that entice and keep talent. Costco, for example, offers free memberships to the store, extra pay on Sundays, 50% 401K matching and numerous promotion opportunities. This is all in addition to above minimum wage salaries, exceptional benefits packages and paid time off for vacation, sick leave, holidays and maternity leave. CCV noticed comparable businesses in the local market (restaurants, landscaping companies, etc.) did not have the resources to offer broad benefits like the club could, so highlighting them became strategic advantage. Baltimore Country Club discovered many of their employees wanted/needed pet insurance, so they added it to their standard company benefits offerings.
- **Adjusting Expectations and Restructuring Hours.** Work-life balance is a priority for workers and that won’t change anytime soon. Clubs cannot have the expectation that employees are going to work 80+ hours per week during season or 15+ days in a row without a day off, as once was customary. Clubs are being challenged to think differently about matching availability with operations. While visiting a client earlier this year, we witnessed success in surveying employees on which days and hours of the week they preferred to work. Club leadership anxiously anticipated the results, worried they opened a can of worms and the findings could make the already daunting task of scheduling even more difficult. Surprisingly, it was actually easier to navigate shift assignments by understanding when employees were open to work, and staff appreciated the opportunity to communicate their preferences. Another example for inspiration is Chick-Fil-A, which offers employees the option for three 12-hour shifts or four 10-hour shifts to provide balance, flexibility and predictability for their workers.
- **Promoting Employment Offerings.** Clubs will need to think differently about how they market staff perks, including promoting employment benefits, opportunities and other compensation on the club’s website. CCV has an employment section on the club’s public homepage and proudly includes benefits package details. They also shortened information about the club to a few key statistics and revised employment opportunities to make them seem more approachable to job seekers. The club offers signing bonuses for many positions and created a recruiting task force to share best practices and brainstorm out-of-the-box recruitment ideas.
- **Helping Employees See Their Value.** Kate Buhler, a consultant and trainer with Profitable to Train®, says many employers believe managers should simplify jobs during a labor crisis to make positions as easy for employees as possible. However,

Kate recommends giving employees as much responsibility as they can handle. When she recently trained a team that works in reservation sales, she asked the group, “How much revenue do you think you bring into this business each year?” The team responded with answers between \$50,000 and \$100,000 each. She shared the actual statistics which proved each person in that department brought about \$2 million into the business each year. She then divided that number by the average annual employee salary to show the team how many employees each one of them were keeping employed each year. “Give them real data that communicates their value,” she advised.

- **Provide Flexibility and Freedom.** Giving employees more freedom over when they work and what they do when they are at work is proving successful. Tara Iti Golf Club in New Zealand allowed grounds employees to pick their own work shifts for the two weeks surrounding Christmas and New Year’s. It’s a busy time for the club and while employees were urged to work, they were also encouraged to take time off. The result was that employees who really wanted to be there were working and they still got time off as needed. Other clubs have given employees

in certain departments the opportunity to select their roles for the day—i.e., opting to work in the bag room, clean carts or work the bag drop depending on their mood for the day. While this sort of flexibility may not be possible all the time and in every department, giving employees more control over their work environments can boost employee morale and job satisfaction.

- **The H2-C Program.** There is a bill in Congress proposing an H2-C visa program that would bring in 65,000 workers for three years in a row. If approved, this may provide some relief for labor shortages. Candidates must be vetted and committed to 12 months of work with a specific employer but could sign for two more years after the initial 12 months. This bill is not a cure, but it is a viable option for workers in the near future.

The key to overcoming the labor crisis for clubs is communication and transparency with members. Educate members on the reality of the labor shortage and how it is impacting your business on a daily, weekly and annual basis. Inform members what the ramifications are if the club doesn’t have employees and what it means for services and dues.

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1. You have to pay employees more than you used to.
2. You aren't getting as many people to apply for jobs as you once did.

Communicate and educate members on what this means over time. GMs may need to start informing members that without staff, the only other option is reducing operating hours or limiting services.

To be as transparent as possible, keep the following in mind:

1. **Use data to back every decision.** If you go to any superintendent and ask him if he can cut his budget, he'll respond with something along the lines of "Yes, I can. But that means we can only mow greens once per week not twice per week." This is how clubs need to think in every department. How can the club operate more efficiently and identify opportunities where small changes or cutbacks can have a big impact on labor and/or staff morale? For example, the chef may say, "We can still be open on Sunday evenings but we can only have one dining room open with reduced hours and a limited menu."

2. **Make members part of the process.** Have members vote on what is most important by asking them to identify which services are vital and those that are farther down on the priority list. Perhaps closing on Sundays is less important than closing on Tuesdays.
3. **Educate members on what the workforce today values:** Creative compensation structures, caring environments and work-life balance. Help members understand that valuing and respecting employees in a positive, caring environment is what attracts and keeps employees.

For more than a decade, the industry has focused on attracting the next generation of members. Clubs realized they had to evolve services and offerings in order to attract millennial members who valued family activities and non-golf facilities. Now the industry must focus on attracting the next generation of *workers*. Clubs have to adapt and create the kind of employment opportunities that workers today seek. 

Richard M. Kopplin, Kurt D. Kuebler, CCM, and **Thomas B. Wallace III**, CCM, CCE, ECM, are partners at KOPPLIN KUEBLER & WALLACE. They can be reached at dick@kkandw.com, kurt@kkandw.com and tom@kkandw.com.



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"Club Benchmarking offered us tools, professional analysis, proven process and education for our members that were essential to getting our plan across the finish line."

Frank Ford - President



The Country Club of Orlando - Florida

"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



Thunderbird Country Club - California

"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."

Brett Draper, CCM - General Manager



Lemon Bay Golf Club - Florida

"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

Budget Time is Here

Is a 20% dues increase palatable?

DAN: Budget time is here again—it’s an annual event, something like Christmas or April 15th.

The economy is still in question, but despite this and other macro, global factors, isn’t it time to finally loosen your budgeting belt? While many members are still personally recovering from the pandemic, private clubs are generally doing well. Membership levels are high, dues income continues to flow and “profits” (if you care to refer to a breakeven budget as profitable), are being made. Unfortunately, however, with *an abundance of caution*, services and amenities continue to be scaled back in many but the top quartile of clubs. With memberships full and demand high, isn’t now the right time with the right strategy to position the club for the future? We’re hearing nationwide that club members supported their clubs through the pandemic, but they are ready to move on—not just to get back to business as usual, but to “build back better” (pardon my hyperbole). They are ready to accept more aggressive dues increases, some as high as 20%, understanding that labor, food and other operating expenses have exploded but also for want of a great entertainment experience for themselves and families. We are selling a luxury product, at every level!

BOB: Dan, you’ve been saying for quite some time now that clubs need to consider themselves foremost in the entertainment business, more so than just the golf, racquets, restaurant, etc., businesses. While I don’t disagree with that generalization, the American public has an extraordinarily large selection

of entertainment choices, each trying to carve out their particular niche. Management gurus encourage a focused vision on your core business and mission; how should a board or management expect to control costs, create a budget and hold themselves accountable with such a broad definition of purpose?

DAN: It’s important to paint the big picture and make it clear that all club amenities and services are for the entertainment of our members and their guests. Each club needs to determine for itself what those are, but regardless, everyone and everything needs to be focused on entertaining. Amenities, services and programming all need to be balanced against broad member expectations and their willingness to pay.

I’m glad you brought budgeting into this discussion. Budgeting shouldn’t be about limiting the club, rather about making possible services and amenities that excite members. Clubs are long overdue in raising their dues to the appropriate level necessary to provide the amenities and quality standards that they expect. Clubs are a luxury product and luxury goods’ costs consistently outpace simple inflation or cost of living increases. Too many clubs limit their dues increases to these indices and as a result, fall farther behind in generating the dues, fees and sales income necessary to properly maintain facilities, compensate employees and provide top level entertainment. Einstein is credited with having said that “the compounding of dues is the eighth wonder of the world. He who understands it, earns it, he who doesn’t pays it.” If I can get away with twisting President

Biden’s words for my purposes, I’m sure Einstein would not have objected to my substitution of dues for interest. It’s time to catch up on those lost incomes.

BOB: Dan, I’m not sure I would recommend dues increases of quite this magnitude, but I do agree that dues, fees and unit pricing need to increase incrementally each year. Those increments should reflect the real cost increases for the products the *club* purchases, not local Consumer Price Index for an aggregate cost of a basket of consumer goods and services. As for the here and now, clubs have fallen behind, leading up to and including the COVID-19 years. If they don’t make up for this now, then when? Churchill would be soundly behind not letting this crisis go to waste!

Speaking of not letting an opportunity go to waste, I would like to challenge your thinking relative to budgeting. I know you are a proponent of zero-based budgeting, as am/was I, but isn’t it time to shelve this style of budgeting, at least for the foreseeable future? Don’t you think that zero-based budgeting, by definition, limits the creativity and innovation you are proposing? It is data driven and demands a predictable environment with predictable outcomes. Incremental, or historical budgeting, on the other hand, relies much more heavily on trends and predictions, sometimes worse case. The economic and disrupted business cycle we’ve been experiencing is not likely to fall back into a predictable pattern for several years to come. In our current economic environment, no one is predicting anything with any great certainty.

DAN: Bob, you're confusing sound budgeting practices with the need to create ever improving, ideally expanding experiences. Yes, we've come a long way in building best practices into club management and zero-based budgeting has become a gold standard. Yes, it is data driven, but it definitely needs to provide for and include trend analysis and implementation of scenario planning. Budgets should never be so tight that they hamstring employees or the board from experimenting and innovating. A budget is a guide, not a straightjacket. I agree there has not been much room for such in recent history with boards trying to manage the budget to inflation rates, but that goes for

both historical and zero-based budgeting. Those boards are great at "saving their way to prosperity." I don't disagree that club business currently has a high degree of uncertainty, but the membership does provide a safety net should expectations fall short of predictions. With that in mind, club budgeting still involves predictions, whether about income or expense, but it must be based upon hard data and not unsubstantiated guesstimates. Beyond calculating necessary dues levels, budgets serve as a control function and for many clubs it is their business plan. Management is held accountable for achieving goals and objectives that are baked into the budget

that must be clear and concise. Worst case planning is good to have in your back pocket, but as your primary plan, it is an open checkbook for mismanagement and underperformance.

Clubs need to pick what they want to be: a fully loaded Chevy, a 3 series BMW or a Ferrari. There is a car for everyone—which is your daily driver? **CD**



Dan Denehy, CCM, CHA, is president and **Robert C. James**, CCM, CCE, CHE, is vice president at DENEHY Club

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The Pandemic, Club Staffing, and What We Can Do



Jessie L. Hershey

AFTER TWO YEARS on the pandemic roller coaster, the club industry is facing a paradox of people—specifically members and employees—that poses a threat to club culture.

On the member side, many clubs have been surprised to find themselves in a position of strength after two years of challenges and uncertainty. In fact, we're seeing an increase in the number of clubs wrestling with the issue of how to accommodate an overload of members packing golf courses and overwhelming dining venues.

On the employee side of the equation, an extremely tight post-pandemic labor market has clubs struggling to attract and retain the staff necessary to serve all those enthusiastic members. Therein lies a very real threat to club culture: Without dedicated, engaged employees, it is unclear how clubs can expect to sustain and evolve their value proposition and deliver a consistently positive member experience.

Clubs are grounded in a sense of community with the interaction between members and employees at its center. In research on member attachment

and loyalty, club staff ranks in the top three factors contributing to member satisfaction and is also cited consistently as a significant factor in a member's motivation to join a particular club. While high employee turnover in commercial restaurants or retail might go relatively unnoticed, in a private club setting, members expect to be welcomed by familiar faces who consistently deliver a high level of service. That sense of community and familiarity is what sets clubs apart from other hospitality experiences, but those standards are difficult if not impossible to maintain without sufficient staffing.

The role of human resources professionals (HRP) in the private club industry has come a long way since its beginnings as a tactical position focused primarily on compliance. Today's club HRPs, many of whom came from outside the industry with advanced degrees and certifications, are on the frontlines of the current battle to maintain standards and preserve club culture, and they have their work cut out for them. In a Labor Survey Report published by Club Benchmarking in September, 95% of 760 responding clubs reported that attracting hourly labor has become more difficult over the last several years, but the pressure may be easing. In an earlier study (November 2021), 52% of responding clubs described hiring as "extremely difficult." In the August 2022 survey, that number dropped to 27%.

Clubs are grounded in a sense of community with the interaction between members and employees at its center.

At a recent gathering of 60 club HRPs in Atlanta, the focus was on addressing staffing challenges strategically and in a way that will put the club on a healthy path to the future. Based on discussions and education sessions over the course of that two-day event, the following would go a long way toward positioning your club's HRP for success.

- Recognition and inclusion as a key member of the club's strategic leadership team.
- The resources and support necessary to rethink standard operating procedures and drive innovative programs that attract and retain top talent.
- Appropriate bench strength in the HR department to properly manage the club's most important and valuable asset—the staff.

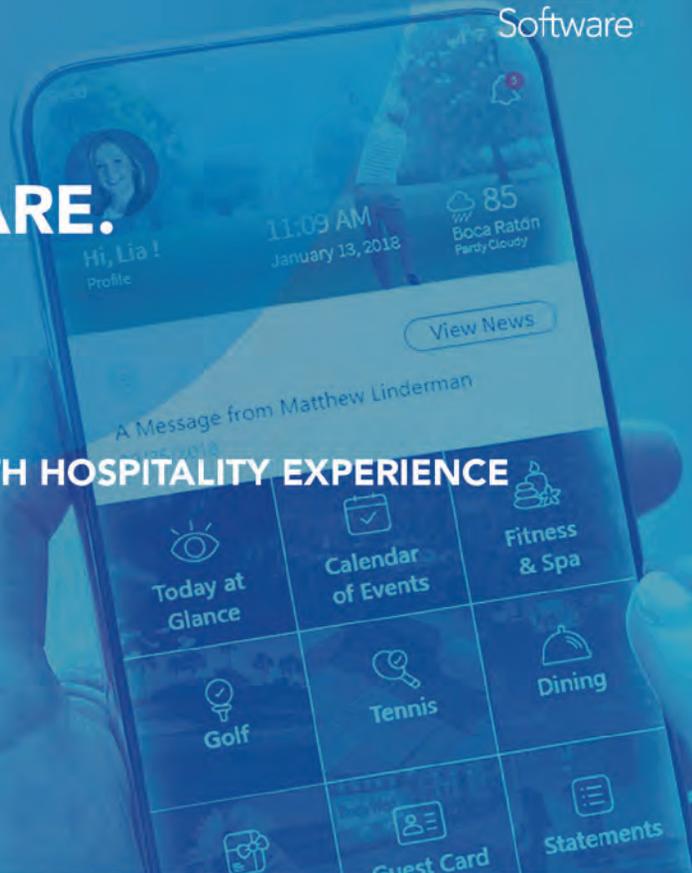
Does your HRP have what they need to make it so? **CD**

Jessie L. Hershey, MHR, SHRM-CP, PHR is a compensation & benefits specialist at Club Benchmarking. She can be reached at jhershey@clubbenchmarking.com.

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MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS



Brendan Butrimas

Did you know the average person checks their email inbox 15 times per day and is four times more likely to click on an email than a social media post?

How can my club make better use of our email communications?

THESE DAYS, all the talk seems to be around social media platforms and how significant time is being spent there. But did you know the average person checks their email inbox 15 times per day and is four times more likely to click on an email than a social media post? Given this information, it's no wonder that on average, 60% of marketers prefer emails over social media.

One of the features that can make email marketing a powerful tool for clubs is its capability to create automatic processes that send members targeted and relevant communications using member information. This widely available feature is known as automation and when used correctly is a great way to keep your members engaged with your club and fellow members.

Onboarding

Imagine you are a membership director creating your club's onboarding process to welcome new members. Would you like a process where every time a new member joins your club, you need to email your general manager and other key professionals to ask them to reach out to the new member? Or would you prefer one that automatically sends emails from the key individuals at your club, and to which the members can directly reply? Almost certainly, the latter will save everybody a significant amount of time.

Thanks to automation, this can be accomplished fairly seamlessly. All that needs to be done is to create the

templates of the emails for new members to receive and then choose the order in which you want the emails sent. Simply set them to begin once someone becomes a new member, and you're done. You could also build email automations that send birthday emails or reminders when a member has an upcoming or due membership payment.

Keeping Members Engaged

What is most important to remember with communications is that they should be as member specific as possible. For example, if you were sending out an email about an upcoming women's golf tournament, you wouldn't want to send it to a male member. Instead, you'd set the email to only go to women who have golf as their membership type or have played a round of golf at your club before. This would be effective segmentation.

Failing to use segmentation and aimlessly sending every email to every member will lead them to be less enthusiastic about your communications. Eventually, they may stop engaging with them entirely. What's even worse is that by doing so, they will miss communications that are actually relevant to them. This is known as email fatigue and can seriously hinder your email marketing efforts.

Integrated vs Non-Integrated Email Marketing Systems

When an email marketing system is connected directly to your customer relationship management (CRM) system,

you give yourself access to more relevant, real-time data. Having this data creates more options for custom automations.

An example of an automation that requires an integrated email marketing platform is our example earlier of statement due notifications. Thanks to the integration between platforms, your CRM can provide your email marketing system information on which members have due statements in order to send these communications. You can even create special notifications for those with overdue balances.

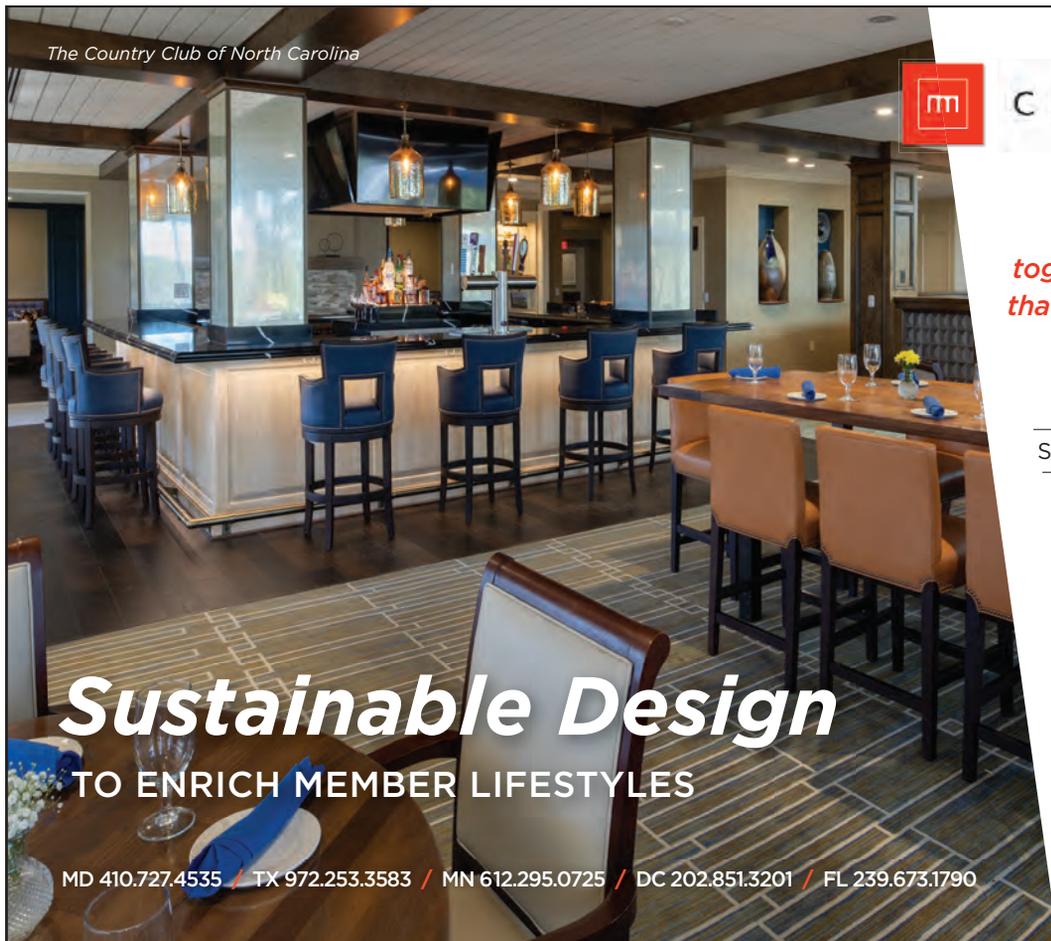
Integrated email marketing systems also don't require manual data uploads which means they are less time-consuming and less prone to errors. For these reasons, they are highly preferable to a non-integrated system.

What to Do Now?

If your club is not taking advantage of automations or not using email marketing entirely, start with something small. Create an automation that sends members a message for their birthday including a small discount at the pro shop. Assuming that goes well, you can move on to some of the more complex automations or segmented emails we discussed such as onboarding messages or a segmented message for a 55 and older golf tournament. You'll save yourself a lot of time and members will appreciate receiving more relevant communications. **CD**

Brendan Butrimas is a marketing associate at Jonas Club Software. He can be reached at brendan.butrimas@jonasclub.com.

If your club is not taking advantage of automations or not using email marketing entirely, start with something small.



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MEMBERSHIP



Henry DeLozier

What are ways to improve our member retention?

IN A RECENT STUDY of the 4,000-plus private clubs in North America, GGA Partners found almost nine in 10 clubs are full and experiencing significant waitlist growth. Certainly, the pandemic has brought unprecedented growth to private clubs. The question now is how clubs will retain all these members?

Here are three factors club leaders should monitor:

1. **Understand market evolution.**

During the past several decades, four factors most consistently influenced demand for club memberships:

- a. Favorable location, as most club members drive less than 18 minutes one way to reach their club from their homes or offices.
- b. Household income within the draw area of the club (the 18-minute reach).
- c. Employment status among the market audience; reliability and growth potential.
- d. Educational attainment within the market area—more highly educated people are usually most capable of the financial requirements of membership.

The pandemic has blurred the historic lines as people have become

less mobile and found private clubs to be safe havens for their families. Now, the market has evolved to maximize the influence of proximity, thus, proximity/location is of great significance. Current indications suggest this reliance on clubs will endure as many professionals work remotely and have more time that was previously required for commuting to and from work.

Club leaders and operators must remain current regarding market conditions, requirements and expectations.

2. **Monitor member satisfaction and engagement.**

Member satisfaction is the primary metric closely followed by engagement metrics. Knowing how engaged members are with the club is a simple measure of participation in special events, dining, new concepts and programs. Survey members regularly using brief and to-the-point member satisfaction measures.

Alarm bells should sound when members are less engaged and enthusiastic about the club's offerings.

3. **Watch for the canary in the coal mine.**

Traditionally, a live canary was used to monitor air quality in the mine and would die if the air was not safe to breathe. The idiom suggests the importance of an early warning system for the club. Three dependable "canaries" for your club are:

- a. **Membership Attrition.** Most clubs have historic reference points for how many members are lost each year to mortality, relocation—life. In lean times, clubs struggled

to sustain a balance between new members joining and those lost. Currently, more members want to join than wish to leave. Monitor the trendline as an early indicator.

b. **New Member Leads Traffic.**

Current demand for new memberships is very strong. It will cool as society evolves past the pandemic. Club leaders should consider the flow of new inquiries—people who wish to join the club—as an early indication of market change. Each club should know its own successful conversion rate and understand that it must maintain leads in excess of attrition since some leads do not convert into full membership equivalents.

- c. **Consumer Confidence.** Your club should make consumer confidence a part of each member survey using such simple questions as, "Are you confident for the club's future" or net promoter metrics to track. The Conference Board, a preeminent resource for organizational leaders, provides the Consumer Confidence Index, which you can use as a broad indicator—it does not replace the valuable guidance available from your own members.

Members are the lifeblood of private clubs. Recruiting them and retaining them is the difference between succeeding or struggling. **CD**

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



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GOVERNANCE



Kevin Carroll

Why Are Board Retreats Important?

BOARD RETREATS are an essential part of any club's governance and should be on the board calendar to occur annually. A retreat provides the board and management with time away from the club to have in-depth discussions monthly meetings do not allow. It also fosters stronger relationships among board members and management by making it possible for everyone to interact on both business and social levels.

Benefits to be gained from a board retreat are numerous, including:

- Building alignment on mission, vision, goals and values.
- Board members forming strong relationships with other members.
- Deeper and more meaningful discussions on timely topics.
- Being strategic in planning and decision-making.
- Accomplishing club business.
- Benchmarking with other clubs.
- Thanking and rewarding board members for their service.

In a recent poll of 24 clubs that conducted retreats, 20 replied that annual retreats are the norm. The majority of

clubs surveyed hold the retreat offsite at another private club; this provides privacy with fewer chances of interruption. It is also an ideal way to see another comparable (or better) club in operation for benchmarking purposes. A full tour of the facility, combined with golf and dining, provides social interaction while offering the opportunity to observe how another club performs. An invitation to allow remarks from the host club's president or general manager as part of the agenda can open channels of communication and facilitate idea-sharing.

The Strategic Plan

One of the most important topics for the retreat is reviewing and updating the club's strategic plan. Using an outside facilitator for this portion of the meeting allows an objective third party to lead discussions and review what the board has accomplished the previous year, while also setting goals, objectives and action plans for the coming year. Using someone with expertise in the club industry for this purpose will enhance the process by providing relevant resources and insights on current trends, capital planning and best practices in club governance.

If the club does not have a strategic plan, it is critical to set aside time to go through the planning process during the retreat. The board needs to take a deep look at the club by reviewing its mission and vision statements and conducting a complete SWOT analysis to identify the club's top strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. From here, the board can break down the top goals

as either facility- or non-facility-related, and then drill down into which goals can be realistically accomplished in the next 12 months.

Other Topics

Other important agenda topics for a board retreat, in addition to creating or updating the strategic plan, may include:

- **GM/COO State of the Club Report.** This is more in-depth than the usual monthly reports from management. KPIs would be reported in-depth, including member and staff turnover and statistics, net promoter scores for each, and a high-level overview of staff performance and the goals achieved.
- **Board Self-evaluation.** An electronic survey should be distributed to the board in advance of the meeting to critically evaluate the board's leadership based on metrics that have been established in advance. The retreat will allow time to review the results and plan for improvement.
- **Evaluation of Committees.** The annual retreat is an ideal time to review the goals and objectives of each committee and establish new ones for the coming year. Committee members' performance can also be candidly discussed, as part of assessing their potential to become future board members.
- **Budgets.** The retreat allows in-depth operating and capital budget discussions to occur without time constraints. 

Kevin Carroll, CCM, CCE, ECM, is vice president of Club Consulting, McMahon Group. He can be reached at kcarroll@mcmahongroup.com.



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2022 Club Benchmarking Labor Survey

Source: Club Benchmarking
clubbenchmarking.com



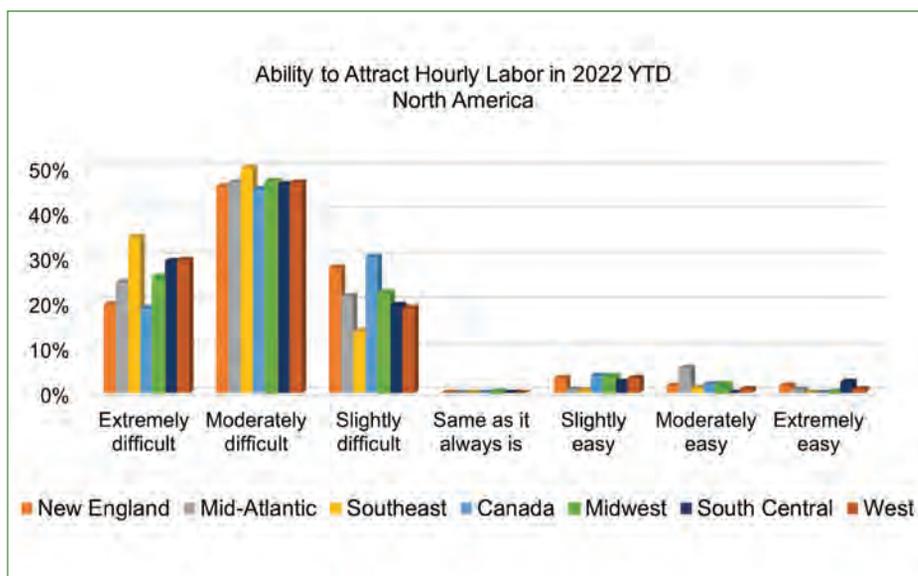
DIFFICULTY ATTRACTING and retaining staff and upward pressure on hourly wages have challenged the private club industry the last several years. In August 2022, Club Benchmarking (CB) conducted a labor survey to quantify the extent to which clubs have been affected by those challenges and the ways in which they are addressing the subsequent financial pressure. More than 750 clubs participated in the 2022 survey and the findings provide interesting context for CB’s previous labor survey conducted in November 2021.

Only 5% of clubs responding to the 2022 survey described their ability to attract hourly staff as “easy,” but the data suggests some improvement. The percentage of clubs that described their ability to attract hourly staff as “extremely difficult” in 2022 was 27%, down from the 52% reported in the 2021 labor study. Nearly half (47%) chose “moderately difficult,” marking an 11% increase from the prior year.

Hourly Wages

The 2022 Labor Survey looked at a representative set of hourly club positions and asked clubs to report on the maximum and average hourly wages for each. The results were analyzed both regionally and by position:

- À la carte servers.
- Banquet servers.
- Bartenders.
- Bus staff.
- Dishwashers.
- Cooks.
- Course maintenance laborers.
- Golf outside operation staff.
- Housekeeping.
- Building maintenance.
- Lifeguards.



Hourly Wage Survey Sample À La Carte Server	
Region	Avg. Wage
West	\$26.23
Canada	\$22.80
Southeast	\$21.87
New England	\$21.77
Mid-Atlantic	\$21.36
Midwest	\$20.84
South Central	\$20.06
National Average	\$22.35

Covering Costs

In the private club business model, member dues are intended to fund the majority of the club’s operating expenses. Sufficiency of member dues revenue must be evaluated as clubs strive to address the realities of rising payroll costs and inflation.

Clubs were asked to report or estimate the percentage dues increase for a full member in 2023. Of the 760 clubs reporting, 130 have already set 2023 dues. The remaining 630 clubs responded with

estimated 2023 dues increases. In the final report, findings were analyzed both regionally and by club type. [CD](#)

2023 Dues Increase for Full Member—All Clubs		
25th percentile	Median	75th percentile
5.0%	6.0%	9.0%

To learn more about the Labor Survey Report, contact **Mike Morin** at mmorin@clubbenchmarking.com.



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