Job One – Placing Your Time and Energies Where Most Needed

While club general managers have many responsibilities, there is one that is pre-eminent – member relations. This is so because of one simple fact – if member dissatisfaction with the club grows into a groundswell of criticism or if one or more particularly influential members dislike the way things are going or form a negative opinion of the job you’re doing, it’s only a matter of time before you’ll be looking for a new job.

This may not be fair in any objective sense, but it’s the reality of our profession. No matter the progress you are making to improve quality, service, and the bottom line, it’s the members’ perceptions that will determine your standing as the club’s GM. So the critical skill of a successful club general manager is, first and foremost, the ability to establish and maintain a good working relationship with the club’s governing board, its various committees, and the membership at large.

At the root of this ability is an impressive skill set – the tact and nuance of a diplomat, the sociability of Mr. or Ms. Congeniality, the business acumen of an acknowledged hospitality professional, and the influence of a strong and effective leader. To the truly gifted few (the Rob Duckett’s, Chris Conner’s, and Tim Mervosh’s of the world, to name a few of my acquaintance*), this skill set is second nature. For the rest of us, it requires hard work, continual effort, professional self-improvement, and most of all the time, energy, and focus to make member relations Job One.

Given the many requirements of running a successful club operation, though, it is often difficult to give the proper time and attention to the demands and details of member relations. It is for this reason that every general manager should organize his or her operation to run as effortlessly as possible through sound organization and structure; well-defined expectations; detailed standards, policies, and procedures; ongoing, consistent training of all staff; and strict accountability for departmental performance.

When this happens, the general manager has the time to focus on the many details and aspects of member relations. In doing this, he or she can monitor the pulse and attitudes of the membership, advance the progress and understanding of important management initiatives, and deepen the relationship bond between members and management – and in the challenging world of club management, there is nothing so important.

*Rob Duckett, GM, Mountaintop Golf and Lake Club, Cashiers, NC; Chris Conner, GM, The Floridian, Palm City, FL; Tim Mervosh, GM/COO, Starmount Forest Country Club, Greensboro, NC.

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