CLUB SPOTLIGHT:
Monterey Peninsula Country Club

LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHIES
Hillcrest Country Club’s President and General Manager Share Insights

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A Message from the Director

The Staff at Club Leaders Forum and our Board of Advisors would like to thank Platinum Club Licensees, subscribers, and authors, and welcome you to the second edition of the re-launched Forum. We are happy to say that our first electronic edition met with high praise from Managers, Presidents and Industry Leaders as our quest for Excellence continues.

The Forum is proud to celebrate over 20 years of production that has been, and is, designed for all leaders in the Private Club Industry.

In this edition, we continue to strive to provide current, relevant and informative content. In the following pages, you will find a very diverse cross section of articles that cover Platinum Clubs® of America, Platinum Clubs® of the World, Luxury, Technology, Human Resources, and many more industry topics not featured in other publications.

The Forum is distributed to all Platinum Club Licensees or can be purchased through a subscription. This edition is being sent complimentary to the 553 Clubs on the 2015 Platinum Clubs® of the World ballot. Voting closes next week, with the announcement for the 2015 Platinum Clubs® of the World scheduled before the Christmas holidays. Clubs that wish to receive future editions of The Forum may [click here to subscribe].

We are excited to announce that we will be conducting our inaugural Excellence in Platinum Clubs Forum event held exclusively for Platinum Club Licensees prior to the CMAA Conference in February 2016. Platinum Club Advisory Board member, Terry Anglin, will be co-hosting the breakfast event at the beautiful San Diego Yacht Club. It will be a unique opportunity for the Platinum Club Managers to network, participate in informative presentations and share philosophies. Invitations were sent out on November 23, 2015.

Please visit our Club Leaders Forum website for [past Forum issues], Private Club Assessment Services, Recognition Awards and a list of our Preferred Partners.

It has been my pleasure meeting and talking with many of you this past year. I wish you all a very Happy Holiday Season and please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of service.

Warm regards,

Dennis W. Burns
Director

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Holiday Greetings from John Sibbald

To the Club Leaders Forum Family

The Growth and Progress of the Club Leaders Forum and Platinum Clubs of America and the World is a delight to see. Since inception, I had a desire to establish Club Leaders Forum as the preeminent Private Club Industry Publication, and I am very pleased with the content and direction of the new digital Forum.

I would like to pass on my sincere appreciation for the commitment of the Advisory Board, many who have been great friends to me throughout my career. I am also excited to see the second edition of Platinum Clubs® of the World in the near future. As the industry continues to expand into emerging markets, it is rewarding to witness new Clubs who have a passion and desire for excellence.

Thank you all for the countless goodwill messages you have sent over recent months. I am feeling stronger and look forward to seeing each of you in the New Year. May I wish you and your family a happy and healthy Holiday Season and my personal best wishes.

Sincerely,

John R. Sibbald
Chairman Emeritus
Five Star Clubs of Excellence

Platinum Clubs® of America and Platinum Clubs® of the World

ON NOVEMBER 5TH, 2015, a Panel of 100 Private Club industry experts from around the World received their 2015 Platinum Clubs® of the World Ballot. This Ballot includes 553 of the most elite and prestigious Private Golf and Country Clubs in both America and the Rest of the World.

Platinum Clubs® of America was launched in 2013 and is considered the sister to Platinum Clubs® of America, which has been the leading recognition for Golf, Country, City, Yacht and Athletic Clubs for more than 20 years. There are a few differences in the selection process, criteria and categories between Platinum Clubs® of America and Platinum Clubs® of The World, although both were founded by the legendary John Sibbald and are orchestrated by Club Leaders Forum.

Platinum Clubs® of the World's focus is on Golf and Country Clubs, whereas Platinum Clubs® of America also recognizes City, Yacht and Athletic Clubs. The Platinum Clubs® of America vote is conducted in even years with the Platinum Clubs® of the World vote conducted in odd years.

Platinum Clubs® of America are elected after a Panel of Golf Connoisseurs and Private Club industry experts from 19 countries cast their votes utilizing the following criteria:
1. The Club’s Professional Service Levels and Overall Experience
2. The Club’s Excellence in Amenities and Facilities
3. The Club’s Quality of Membership
4. The Club’s Respect and Compliance with the Governing Bodies of the Game
5. The Club’s Governance and Management
6. The Club’s Universal Recognition

The Platinum Clubs® of America vote is not conducted by a Panel. Instead, two Ballots are provided to each Private Club in the Country; one Ballot is completed by the General Manager and the other Ballot is completed by the Club Owner or President, resulting in a vote among Peers in the industry.

Platinum Clubs® of America has often been referred to as the “Michelin Star of Private Clubs”. When Jay DiPietro, General Manager of Boca West Country Club, was asked about the benefits of being elected as a Platinum Club of America, he said, “We are proud to be recognized as a Platinum Club of America. Knowing how special it is to be voted a Platinum Club instills a sense of pride for the Board, Members and Staff alike.”

Recognized Clubs that secure a Platinum License enjoy many benefits that include:
• Use of the Platinum Club Logo and Likeness
• Complimentary copy of The FORUM
• Inclusion in the online Discussion Forum (launching January 2016)
• Option to purchase Platinum Club Cellars Wine
• Access to Platinum Club recognition awards
• Invitation to the Excellence in Platinum Clubs Forum

The 2015 Platinum Clubs® of the World Vote is set to be announced in December. Club Leaders Forum wishes all the Clubs listed on the Ballot the very best of luck in the upcoming Election.
Bloomfield Hills Country Club Discovers Harry Colt’s Lost Masterpiece

by PHILIP YOUNG, Club Historian, Golden Age Research

For decades, the members of Bloomfield Hills Country Club definitively knew which golf course architect it hired to create its first 18 hole golf course on its pristine 100 acre estate outside of Detroit in 1909. It was Tom Bendelow. They were also familiar with the second golf course architect hired to remodel the original design on the same, but enlarged 150 acre parcel in 1922. None other than Donald Ross.

Or did they? To confirm this fact, the Club has always relied on a detailed Ross design document of all 18 holes displayed on a wall in the guest wing of the Club. This document clearly shows every detail proposed for change and/or to remain the same. It only makes sense that the membership embraced this history. Since the 1980s, there were additional renovations that took place which included Robert Trent Jones Sr. in the mid-60s and Arthur Hills in the 80s & 90s.

In November of 2013, the Club was considering a future golf course renovation project, however before making that leap, it hired a golf course historian to review the heritage of Bloomfield Hills Country Club. The findings were extraordinary!

It started with a copy of a letter dated November 23, 1926. Written by Edwin S. George, Bloomfield Hills’ first President, it casually stated, “Having a very high regard for the quality of Mr. Colt, who so efficiently enabled us to correct the difficulties which existed in the original congested Bloomfield Hills golf course…” That unassuming sentence began a quest to find the truth. For if Henry Shapland “Harry” Colt designed a new golf course at Bloomfield Hills, it would represent the first new Colt design attribution since his death in 1931.

Harry Colt (4 August 1869 – 21 November 1931) was a golf course architect born in Highgate, England. At a time when a train trip was considered a major expedition, he began designing golf courses in England. Before long, he was considered the finest golf course architect in the world. During a 50 year career, he would work on more than 300 courses, literally around the world. Of these, 117 were the result of his hands alone and he partnered with Alister MacKenzie, Capt. Hugh Alison and John Morrison on the others.

The evening of November 30, 2013 would see the quest achieved when the Bloomfield Hills Country Club’s original Board minutes were located in an old safe. In them, it was recorded on May 26, 1913 that, “Mr. Barbour then read the report of Harry S. Colt on the conditions of the course and conveying recommendations looking toward its improvement and possible extension.” The recommendations included the purchase of 50 additional acres in order to accommodate the new Colt design.

Five months later in October, the Board gave approval “that work should proceed immediately” on the course that Colt had designed, having sent final plans and drawings to the club in the intervening months.

It would be further uncovered that Colt visited the club in April 1913 while traveling to Clementon, New Jersey where he would finish the design of Pine Valley, the course that has been recognized as the greatest golf course ever created from that day to this.

Imagine discovering a heretofore unknown painting created by Leonardo da Vinci and then learning that it was the work he did immediately before the Mona Lisa. That is what Bloomfield Hills discovered they had.

The golf course was untouched for the better part of ten years when the Club asked Donald Ross to make his recommendations for another remodel to the course. Board minutes clearly indicate that the plan presented by Donald Ross in 1922 was to be stored away in safekeeping for future consideration down the road. No action ever took place. In fact, Donald Ross was asked to return in the early 1930s to look at the improvement of the final eight holes of the golf course. Those plans and recommendations were also dismissed by the Club.

Three other significant discoveries were also uncovered:

- 18 black and white original photographs taken of the Colt course in 1925-26.
- The original Colt layout document with pars and yardages with the new 1925 irrigation design drawing overlay.
- The original Colt Design layout as depicted in the 1922 Ross drawings with recommended changes added.

Indeed, as the few other courses designed by Mr. Colt in the United States had been lost to time, this discovery has an even greater historical importance to the game of golf as the golf course of Bloomfield Hills Country Club represents the only solo Harry Colt designed course in existence in the country. That is why the Club is currently considering plans to restore Harry Colt’s forgotten masterpiece.

In 1997 the Club’s Board wrote to the membership, “Bloomfield Hills is a unique Club, unique in many ways. Small membership, golf… only golf.” Little did they know just how true a statement that was.
Prezi: PowerPoint of the Future

It is no secret that Microsoft PowerPoint has become known as the “go-to” software when putting together presentations, with over 500 million users since its birth in 1987. However, a new software giant has recently emerged, with many people in the industry predicting that it is only a matter of time before PowerPoint becomes a software of the past.

PowerPoint has frequently been used by General Managers to present to the Club’s Board and Committees. However, the presentation world we have known for so many years is changing due to Prezi, a new cloud-based presentation platform.

Prezi brings a new concept to the industry in terms of visual aids. This new application gives the user the ability to create a presentation using a much larger blank page, as opposed to traditional slides used in Microsoft PowerPoint. One of the main differences between the two is that Prezi presentations are non-linear. Users have the ability to jump in and out of ideas, which in turn, creates far more flexibility.

Unlike PowerPoint slides, Prezi offers an unlimited canvas to layout ideas, while at the same time allowing the user to easily integrate text, videos, images, sounds and animations. Prezi also has the valuable ability to insert images at any angle imaginable. The user has access to many ready-made templates, similar to PowerPoint, but also allows them to match their brand - logo, colors and fonts - to any of their templates.

The most unique differentiation is Prezi’s zoom function. This allows the user to zoom into whichever area of the presentation they please, providing the option to easily and smoothly explore ideas. Instead of scrambling in order to find a particular slide, users can smoothly navigate their way around the presentation. Prezi also gives the user the ability to share their presentations online with up to ten other audience members with cloud-based storage available.

Prezi is a free web-based platform, which allows users to work from any computer with flash and an internet connection. This means the user doesn’t need to download any programs, nor carry an external hard drive in order to present their content. Not to exclude presenters without an Internet connection, desktop apps are available to both Windows and Mac users for just that purpose. Because Prezi is web-based, presentations can be easily embedded into webpages and blogs. Users can also design pages in a format that makes them appear as though they could be a magazine or newspaper article.

Prezi is a perfect platform for those who wish to break out of what some are describing as the “boring” PowerPoint rut, simply because Prezi offers a fresh take on the traditional presentation platform and has the capabilities to keep its viewers engaged.

60 million people are already presenting with Prezi, with more learning the values every day.

Understanding Men’s Luxury Brands

by IAN STEWART DANIELS
Owner, ShopTheFinest.com

If I asked you to name the best brand in men’s luxury fashion today, what would you say? If you’re like the average man in the United States, you would probably feel quite confident replying with a well-known name like Hugo Boss, Ralph Lauren, Giorgio Armani, Canali, or—in the truly great brands of Brioni, Cesare Attolini, Kiton, known men’s fashion brands are mediocre when compared to the great brands. As you peruse the racks of these brands, you’ll usually ask yourself, “Why do you always place your fabric into storage, instead of selling it right after producing it?”

He explained that his newly produced fabric must remain in wooden crates in a sauna-like hollow, which was built into the side of a mountain, for at least six months to a year before going to market. It is during this period of storage that the fabric, which has undergone an inherently strenuous production process, can regain water from the humidity that seeps through the walls.

Imagine that! Fabric must recover for six months to a year before being used! Just as fine wine must mature, so must fine fabric. The true luxury suiting brands understand this—and produce superior products because of it.

To help you better understand the depth of what goes into a great fabric, I will recount a story. Carlo Barbera, the founder and namesake of this prestigious mill, was once asked, “Why do you always place your fabric into storage, instead of selling it right after production?”

He explained that his newly produced fabric must remain in wooden crates in a sauna-like hollow, which was built into the side of a mountain, for at least six months to a year before going to market. It is during this period of storage that the fabric, which has undergone an inherently strenuous production process, can regain water from the humidity that seeps through the walls.

Imagine that! Fabric must recover for six months to a year before being used! Just as fine wine must mature, so must fine fabric. The true luxury suiting brands understand this—and produce superior products because of it.

So what makes these brands so much better than the rest? The three key ingredients that make a luxury suiting brand the “best of the best” are fabric, style, and execution.

FABRIC

Just as a Michelin-starred restaurant requires high quality ingredients, a truly fine suit must begin with outstanding fabric. The Kiton Company, based in Naples, Italy, was founded as a fabric merchant, and a love of fabric has always been at the core of what they do. To that end, they acquired one of the country’s best mills, Carlo Barbera, which is located in the Northern Italian town of Biella, and which has an extremely rich history.

This message, however, is not for the average man, it’s certainly not about average clothing. This article is for men who believe their fashions should aspire to something greater than being well-known—they should aim to achieve perfection. This is what I call the “best of the best.” It’s the right way to shop for you. But is it the right way to shop for you?

No matter what level of power, wealth, education, or prestige a man reaches in his life, he will still ask himself: why he needs luxury. Why does he need to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars for a Bentley or Rolls Royce? Aren’t they just cars? Why should he pay $7,000 or more for a high-end suit? Aren’t they just suits? Why should he pay $7,000 or more for a high-end suit? Aren’t they just suits? To personalize this notion of great style, I’ve had the privilege of meeting many clients over the years who never quite “got it” prior to wearing brands like Cesare Attolini, Kiton and Brioni. But after wearing one of these fine suits, they would always come back to me, recounting stories of how people processes bring everything together beautifully. And the resulting pieces look and feel not so much sewn together, but rather sculpted.

The typical well-known brands like Armani, Canali, Zegna, and Ralph Lauren must produce remarkably large volumes of product, and so they outsource their production in order to meet quotas. But true luxury brands like Brioni, Kiton, and Cesare Attolini perform their own production—and nurture it as well. Brioni and Kiton each have their own in-house schools for teaching, encouraging, and inspiring young up-and-coming tailors. The techniques and skills these craftsmen hone here are far beyond what is employed at better-known brands. As a result, these tailors are able to develop rewarding lifelong careers, keep the practice of centuries-old garment construction techniques alive, and offer you the best suit you’ve ever worn in your life.

A prominent man in the luxury goods market once told me a story about Cesare Attolini, the patriarch of the 85-year-old Cesare Attolini family brand that is now run by his son Marcellino and Giuseppe. He said that he should be awarded in honor of his patterns-making mastery, didn’t care if anyone tried to copy his patterns. In fact, he even offered to give his patterns away! The reason? He knew that no other company could execute the award-winning patterns with as much precision, craft, and artistry as his could. In the world of the greatest luxury brands, 2 + 2 doesn’t equal 4—it equals something far, far greater.

The “best of the best” brands exist because people want something more. Something better than adequate, something that exceeds the ordinary, something beyond what is obvious. They exist to provide to those who seek it out, the very best of the best. There is no question as to whether or not they are the best. They always come back to me, recounting stories of how people
Adopting a Meaningful Online Identity

The Internet is changing from black and white to color, from generic to specific. There are hundreds of new domain names available to tell the world exactly what your brand is about. Available domain names that can easily be identified with the Private Club industry include .GOLF, .CLUB, .TENNIS, .HEALTH and .FITNESS. Why should your organization consider this?

Where we’re headed
ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers), the governing body of the Internet, gave individuals and organizations the opportunity in 2011 to apply for what are known as new gTLDs - Generic Top-Level Domains. Since ICANN’s approval of new gTLDs, companies like Google and Amazon have spent hundreds of millions of dollars in order to secure the rights to dozens of domain names. Earlier this year, Google spent $25 million to acquire .APP. Setting aside gTLDs, think about what their action implies about the future of marketing and human behavior in relation to technology (read page 21 for an example of this).

Clearly the Internet is heading in a new direction, whether we like it or not, with .COM - which has been the go-to domain suffix for the past 20 years - being on the decline, and new, industry specific domain names being the way of the future. It’s likely to be gradual, but watch the space closely and you may already notice it: tour-eiffel.paris, generalmotors.green, apple.watch, thehungergames.movie.

Easy adoption
Private Clubs now have the inexpensive option to adopt either a .GOLF or .CLUB domain name, as opposed to .COM, .ORG or .NET. There is no doubt that .CLUB or .GOLF is more meaningful to the brand of a Private Club than .COM. But remember, this isn’t about abandoning your existing domain and leaving your website users stranded; your .COM can be redirected to your new domain. Ask your IT department how much it will cost (around $40) and how long it will take to implement (perhaps five minutes).

Alternatively, use your domain for something entirely different that offers current Members added value. We at Club Leaders Forum are looking forward to seeing how brands will get creative with the new gTLDs and how they might generate different marketing opportunities or entirely new business models.

Jeff Sass, of .CLUB Domains, writes, “We like to think that the new domain extensions will present businesses with new branding and marketing opportunities by getting domain names that are meaningful and memorable. A ‘company .club’ name, for example, can be used to represent a brand’s community of customers, or point to a loyalty or reward program. With the new extensions, marketers will have tremendous choice when looking for the perfect domain name for any aspect of their business. That should be a good thing.”

An additional benefit to adopting a GOLF or CLUB domain, is that it enables Clubs to provide their Staff and Members an e-mail address matching their domain name such as jsmith@inverness.golf or sue.jones@jonathan.club.

Protect your brand
While gTLDs make their way into the limelight, it isn’t something to ignore. When you don’t purchase these new extensions, you run the risk of a cybersquatter purchasing a domain such as yourgolfclub.golf or yourclubname.club. Not only could you suffer possible brand inconsistency, but it could be a costly error for your company to go back and clean up.

An additional benefit to adopting a .GOLF or .CLUB domain, is that it enables Clubs to provide their Staff and Members an e-mail address matching their domain name such as jsmith@inverness.golf or sue.jones@jonathan.club.

Visit godaddy.com, web.com or other domain registrars to see if your domain name is available.
Thereafter, the barista will hurriedly scribble your name on order with one important question, “What's your name?”

Whenever you place an order at Starbucks, regardless of how far out the door the line is, the barista will follow up your name. “In their place are names. In their place are names.” In his sixth principle, Dale Carnegie, the author of How to Win Friends & Influence People notes, “Remember that a person’s name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language.” Many top salespeople have utilized this principle by Carnegie to drive their business’ numbers and profits.

One writer argues that Starbucks is no different in adopting this principle. “Starbucks doesn’t have to handwriting names.” Rather, the author asserts that the gesture of baristas writing names on customers’ Starbucks cups is a strategy utilized by Starbucks to get to know their most loyal customers, while also making the casual consumer feel valued.

The challenge of name recognition is in the priority and delivery

Name recognition is a staple in the club space. Of course, every GM on the planet agrees on the importance, but the challenge is in the priority and delivery. You can’t just say it is important, you need to live and breathe it, but how? It depends on what camp you’re in — laggards or leaders.

Outsourcing Benefits

The life of a country club general manager can be challenging and certainly always demanding. To be successful, you must learn to allocate your time effectively and always keep Member and Staff relations a top priority.

Robert Lesinger, GM at Pensacola Country Club, learned that outsourcing Human Resources gave him additional hours each week to devote time and energy to enhancing member satisfaction, staff training initiatives and growing his club membership.

Robert Lesinger, General Manager
Pensacola Country Club

Laggard GM’s will rely on repetition and memory. “Once you hear their name, repeat it and then repeat it again.” This could work. Assuming all of your employees have a photographic memory and you never have turnover.

Platinum Club GM’s will rely on technology. Before a member even arrives, staff is notified with the member’s image, name and preferences. It’s simple, it’s discreet and it will work. Your employees can focus on service with a luxury mindset and let the magic begin.

Tech-enabled personalization is possible today because every member, big or small, is walking around with a smartphone. As much as our industry has tried to fend them off, mobile devices will be a critical element in delivering old-fashioned, good service. It starts with building the club’s app, and finishes with a seamless and personal service delivery that matters.

While the corner store and neighborhood bar may be a thing of the past, a few things are certain: your name is forever (except for Bruce/Caitlyn) and you never get tired of hearing it.
The President and General Manager of Hillcrest Country Club, Los Angeles, Share Insights

Relevance: Helping to Re-position a Storied Brand

by MILES TUCKER
General Manager, Hillcrest Country Club

LONG BEFORE MY ARRIVAL at Hillcrest, the club realized that in order to be as successful in its second century as it had been during the twentieth century, it would need to re-position itself as a club that was relevant to the next generation of luxury club members. Successive boards then started to wrangle with the issue of just how to be relevant, what facilities would be needed to meet the goal of attracting the next generation of members, how such improvements would be financed, how the club would operate within this new membership paradigm and how we would manage this evolutionary process without compromising our club’s storied values and traditions.

Needless to say, one of the key decisions to be made was whether or not to just start over – something that is more common nowadays than the path we chose – to remodel and enhance the existing clubhouse facilities, while also adding new facilities, products and services throughout the campus. Our goal was to enhance both current member satisfaction and future member recruitment and the decision to remodel or rebuild was a complex one. Ultimately, a full proposal was made to the entire membership to allow them to help prioritize the improvements that would be financed, how the club would operate and prioritize those lists before the board then consolidates and approves them. At that time, we intend to go forward with the project and proceed with the next steps.

The decision to remain in familiar surrounds within our clubhouse, improving existing facilities and adding new ones, has been vindicated and I personally am glad the club chose to embark on a massive improvement program instead of starting anew. There is history in the building and memories in the air – significant moments for individuals, our club community and the broader community have taken place at Hillcrest and the club has consistently enhanced certain facilities (more than doubling the size of our patio, where we host between 350 and 500 people for a casual al fresco dining experience [every Sunday night]) and we are working to put the right infrastructure in place to allow for both efficient operations today and growth opportunities in the future (spending significant sums to improve our IT infrastructure, mechanical systems and back of house areas). We have two phases of work left to complete: our private rooms, which will be under renovation next year, and our men’s locker room the following year. We have been fortunate to work with a truly world class architectural firm on every phase of the project (Gensler), which has lent consistency to both the design and project management processes.

Two trends have dominated our industry for more than a decade now: the increased importance of Health and Wellness facilities and the need to have a true family-focus. These trends were at the forefront of our thinking, as evidenced by the fact that while we were working in the clubhouse, we also built a new pool complex, doubled the size of our fitness center, constructed an urban farm and introduced some exciting new products, like bocce and programs that include summer camps, for our members to enjoy. Concurrently, Young Member and Young Family Committees were established to ensure that we were hearing from those segments of membership about projects that have been identified for consideration.

Engaging members in the future direction of their club at every stage of the process might sound like a no-brainer, or it might sound like a nightmare (depending on which desk you sit at), but for us it was essential. Our members have always taken great pride in their club and they recognize their responsibilities to the club and its future. As such, their engagement and ultimate satisfaction drive our thoughts and processes in all that we do.

So, Hillcrest has a plan, and we are executing it beautifully. In addition, we are constantly revisiting, tweaking, adding to and improving the plan. Our plan is funded (without the need for assessments) and our process is participative. We know where we are, where we are going and how we are going to get there (with a plan that evolves as circumstances change, and that is suitably flexible to allow for new ideas to be researched and potentially embraced).

At the same time, our vision statement is clear: “To be recognized as one of the leading country clubs of the World,” and to be at the very top of that list, we recognize that more needs to be done. That is why we reached out to the Club Leaders Forum to ask them to help us with a Private Club Assessment. The process was fascinating to work through and has given us incredibly valuable insights about where and how we can improve our club even further.

We are committed to implementing the improvement opportunities identified by Club Leaders Forum, including boosting our universal recognition scores by sharing details of our successes through articles such as this. In addition, we will be hosting club manager meetings, and are always willing to give managers and members of other clubs a tour of our farm, golf course (where you can enjoy not only a classic Willy Watson track but also the best views of Los Angeles ANYWHERE), recreational amenities, clubhouse and surrounds; we are very proud of our club and would love to show you why.
The President and General Manager of Hillcrest Country Club, Los Angeles, Share Insights

Best Practices and 10 Lessons Learned
by JOHN GOLDSMITH
Board President, Hillcrest Country Club

"The boat goes faster the less you touch the tiller." That was the mantra of a storied sailboat captain I crewed for in my teens. Today this lesson informs my Presidency of Hillcrest Country Club. In conjunction with my Board of Directors, I see my role as an owner of a ship whose job it is to oversee the "captain," my General Manager and Chief Operating Officer, Miles Tucker. CCCM. I instruct Miles where I want to go and when I need to arrive. Through member dues, I am providing fuel for the journey and on time, I leave the day-to-day navigation in the hands of Miles and his team. Only if we are off course or behind schedule do I intercede. My governance model is really simple: I am a firm believer that your biggest asset is your people and when we invest in them, they will return the investment. One example of that would be when we recently opened what we believe to be the largest and most successful urban farm at any club on the West Coast. The seed (no pun intended) for this concept was sown by a member, who engaged with the Food and Beverage Committee to share his thoughts and ideas. The committee then thoroughly vetted the idea and together with management, commenced a feasibility study to determine whether or not this was a project that could be delivered in a cost-effective manner and also in a way that would be additive both to the membership and culinary experiences at the club. The committee toured other local farms, most notably at the Jonathan Club, and worked with the management team to secure multiple bids for the project. While this was taking place, Miles and the Executive Committee were working to integrate the project into the capital and operating budgets for the following year, while also working with the Greens Committee and superintendent to identify the optimal location and an effective strategy for the farm. As a result of the efforts of multiple committees and managers, the decision to approve the project was an easy one for the Board to make. Since the farm opened just under a year ago, it has proved to be a source of great pride for our members and staff alike, providing the culinary team with another point of differentiation against the many fine hotels and restaurants in our backyard.

Our Club had a deserved reputation for being run by committee, but several years ago we recognized that needed to change. Yes, we wanted to continue to have engaged committees (we have over 20, most all of which are over-subscribed when we invite members to apply to serve every year), but we also needed to establish a better governance system so that our employees felt more empowered. While this transition didn’t happen overnight, moving through it has resulted in our Club reaching unprecedented levels of success in terms of member satisfaction, member engagement and retention, new member recruitment and financial performance.

1. A good club manager is worth their weight in gold! We had quite a bit of turnover in the Manager’s office before Miles and his team got started three years ago. Since then, every measure we look at as a Board has improved dramatically.

2. These club managers really do know a lot about the business of managing clubs. I had the opportunity to attend the World Conference on Club Management in San Antonio last year, where Dick Kopplin’s one-conference workshop on Executive Leadership at a Higher Level was a real highlight. This year, I will be returning with not only our Vice President, but also other volunteer leaders from neighboring clubs.

3. Not all clubs are created equal and you’ve got to find a niche to thrive in that suits you! We are surrounded by some of the best golf clubs, dining clubs, health and fitness venues and hotels in the World, but no one offers the comprehensive lineup of five-star products and services that we do. We are pleased that there is room for all of us to succeed. We are in competition only with ourselves and we are very proud of our position as the most sought-after club in town.

4. Consistency is King. Whether referring to your club’s mission, your succession plan for volunteer leaders, or your strategies to attract and retain the best talent in the industry, keeping everyone together and focused on the same mission is the key to success.

5. The palette ink is better than the best memory. In all honesty, I struggle with this, but I have an exceptional team around me who have been busily ensuring that purpose statements, policy manuals, strategic plans, etc., have all come together to provide everyone with a clear sense of direction and understanding with regard to where we are going, how we are going to get there, and who is responsible for each aspect of our continued success.

6. Empowerment starts with how you treat your GM, but it doesn’t end there. We needed a manager who could handle a large, complex and demanding environment, and when we found him we empowered him with progressively more autonomy and responsibility. In turn, we have now charged him with developing and fostering a culture of empowerment that is embraced by all levels of the organization.

7. No matter how good your Manager is, some things are best left with the Board. I am really talking about two things here: admissions and member conduct issues. At Hillcrest we believe the members should determine which applicants best fit with our Club’s culture, and on the rare occasion when there is a disciplinary situation, we believe that peer review is the most effective way to resolve the situation amicably.

8. No matter how good your Board is, some things are best left to the Manager. Allowing your manager to both establish and then manage their team is critically important. Board members, no matter how well-educated, qualified or committed, will never get the 360 degree view of operations and performance that the manager and his team will.

9. Your people are your biggest asset. Work hard to get the best possible people into positions of leadership at your Club, empower them with a clear mission and governance structure and watch them fly (being there to offer support, assistance, encouragement and rewards as necessary).

10. It all begins and ends with the same thing: MEMBERS. It shouldn’t need to be said that members are the life-blood of any club, but I am consistently amazed by my interactions with employees at other clubs. I once heard Miles ask someone what the best thing was about working at another club. I don’t recall what the employee’s answer was, but Miles told me he was pretty sure 90-95% of our employees would say the same thing—"The members." I checked when I got back, asking various employees what they most liked about working at Hillcrest, and he was right."

While we are rightly proud of our management team, making things happen at Hillcrest is always a team effort and a great example of that would be when we recently opened what we believe to be the largest and most successful urban farm at any club on the West Coast. The seed (no pun intended) for this concept was sown by a member, who engaged with the Food and Beverage Committee to share his thoughts and ideas. The committee then thoroughly vetted the idea and together with management, commenced a feasibility study to determine whether or not this was a project that could be delivered in a cost-effective manner and also in a way that would be additive both to the membership and culinary experiences at the club. The committee toured other local farms, most notably at the Jonathan Club, and worked with the management team to secure multiple bids for the project. While this was taking place, Miles and the Executive Committee were working to integrate the project into the capital and operating budgets for the following year, while also working with the Greens Committee and superintendent to identify the optimal location and a build-out strategy for the farm. As a result of the efforts of multiple committees and managers, the decision to approve the project was an easy one for the Board to make. Since the farm opened just under a year ago, it has proved to be a source of great pride for our members and staff alike, providing the culinary team with another point of differentiation against the many fine hotels and restaurants in our backyard.

I am here to integrate the paid and volunteer leaders of the Club behind our vision of being recognized as one of the leading country clubs of the World; something that we are well on the way towards achieving and that I am proud to have played a part in moving along.

If you ask Miles what he likes best about our Governance model, he would tell you that it brings great consistency of leadership. I am fortunate to have followed some exceptional Past Presidents and, while my term will not come to an end until next summer, we have already identified the next President and leaders of our Club.

In my pleasure to share the following ten lessons I have learned during my Presidency with you in hopes that it will help your club enjoy similar successes to those we continue to enjoy at Hillcrest:

1. A good club manager is worth their weight in gold! We had quite a bit of turnover in the Manager’s office before Miles and his team got started three years ago. Since then, every measure we look at as a Board has improved dramatically.

2. These club managers really do know a lot about the business of managing clubs. I had the opportunity to attend the World Conference on Club Management in San Antonio last year, where Dick Kopplin’s one-conference workshop on Executive Leadership at a Higher Level was a real highlight. This year, I will be returning with not only our Vice President, but also other volunteer leaders from neighboring clubs.

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I am a firm believer that your biggest asset is your people and your biggest priority as a leader should be to assemble a great team that can accomplish great things together. In a private club setting, the challenge is made more complex by virtue of the fact that you have to integrate the thoughts and actions of both volunteer leaders and paid professionals. I am incredibly fortunate to be able to lean upon arguably the most active, passionate and engaged membership anywhere in the country. However, we often started to hit top gear when we developed the right balance between channeling this passion of our members and the need to empower our exceptional management team and broader employee community, to deliver the operational performance and service standards demanded by our members.
Why Golf Must Attract Millennials

by GEORGE STAVROS, Founder & CEO, Pacesetter Technologies

LOOKING AT THIS YEAR’S MAJOR Championships, golf doesn’t seem to have a Millennial participation problem. The average age of those who hoisted a Major trophy in 2015 was slightly over 27. With Millennials classified as 18 to 34 years old, one might look at the Majors winners and assume golf is successfully reaching and recruiting the Millennial generation.

That assumption is wrong.

When it comes to attracting Millennials to the game, golf has a big problem. According to the National Golf Foundation, in 2014, six million Millennials played 90 million rounds of golf annually. This level of play generates $5 billion worth of golf spend by Millennials annually. Sure, that’s a significant amount of money, but this is the generation that is responsible for golf’s biggest decline in the past 30 years. In the early 90s Millennials dominated the market, but now, something’s trending and it’s not golf. Today, their participation reflects a 36% decline from those glory days. Here’s why this is a big deal: In 2015, Millennials became the largest living generation in the United States. And also this year, Millennials will outnumber Baby Boomers, who account for 56% of the golf spend.

As the number of Millennials in the United States rises, one thing is clear: It’s time for golf to shift course and begin marketing to this generation’s needs and interests. But how?

There are two things that golf must focus on to attract Millennials to the game: Community and Technology. These two factors are keystones for Millennials in every buying decision they make. Millennials want to feel as though they are part of something bigger than themselves. Similarly, they never want to leave their friends behind from whatever they are experiencing. Through both of these pursuits, they want to be tapped into technology so they can share their experiences with an even broader community.

A great example of a company that has married community with technology, and subsequently attracted Millennials, is Topgolf.

In 2000, Topgolf’s brothers, the Jolliffes, were just two guys wondering where their golf balls landed on the driving range and why the experience itself wasn’t more fun. This question led the two to create a golf experience rife with community competition and technological engagement.

At Topgolf, players compete against one another to hit targets and their golf balls are outfitted with microchips so that their landing spot is precisely determined. Through on-site technology and the download of the Topgolf app, players can see where they stand against friends and other competitors worldwide.

Topgolf broke golf’s mold. It strayed from the solemn seriousness of the driving range and built indoor facilities blasting with music, drinks and energy. In turn, it made practicing golf social, by allowing participants to engage in a community experience centered on technology.

For Topgolf, the experiment of breaking golf’s mold to blend community and technology into the game has worked out famously.

Annually, Topgolf sees 8 million visitors worldwide and the company expects significant growth over the next 3 years. Those numbers alone should be all it takes to convince every club manager in America to prioritize community and technology into their business strategies.

The thing about Millennials is that they don’t want what their parents want and they certainly aren’t looking to enjoy what their grandparents enjoyed. The irony is that country clubs are still serving the same stale experiences. They communicate in the same lackluster ways and worst of all, they are ignoring that mobile technology is a way of life. Millennials are a generation who have always known technology and they are most comfortable when it is at their fingertips.

If clubs wants to attract this group – and their significant buying power – they must adjust their game and meet Millennials where they are, at the corner of friends and their smart phones.
RECOGNIZED AS ONE of the top country clubs in the nation and home to two nationally acclaimed golf courses, the Shore Course and Dune Course, Monterey Peninsula Country Club rests on over 450 acres of natural dunes and forest, spanning two miles of the California Coastline. MPCC prides itself in also offering a full suite of Member services and social opportunities. The Club operates six successful fine and casual à la carte dining venues, which draw in an excess of $5 million annually. Founded in 1925, the Club has an active membership of nearly 1,100 Members.

MPCC first achieved Platinum Club recognition in 2010 and has maintained this status ever since. The recognition is representative of the Club’s mission to consistently “exceed the expectations of Members and guests.” The Club’s success is attributed to the leadership of General Manager, Michael Bowhay, and his executive management team. For over 25 years, Mr. Bowhay has been at the helm of the organization. During his tenure he has overseen capital improvements over $50 million, including construction of the Shore Course in 2003, renovation of the main clubhouse in 2003, construction of a golf house in 2006 and, currently underway, the 2015 renovation of the Dunes Course, slated to open winter of 2016.

A project spanning over eight years’ time, to renovate the Dunes Course, is led by the Dunes Course Master Plan Committee, co-chaired by Michael Chandler and Mr. Bowhay. The Committee selected the Fazio Design team made up of architects Fazio Design and Jackson Kahn Design. A plan was set to establish goals such as improving drainage, installing a modern and efficient irrigation system, eliminating concrete cart paths, improving aesthetics and playability with distinction from the Shore Course and reducing irrigated turf acreage as water continues to be in short supply. In February 2014, the Membership voted on the capital improvement project with a price tag upwards of $11.7 million and overwhelmingly approved the proposal with an 86% approval rate.

MPCC held a final tournament on the Dunes Course in conjunction with their 90th Anniversary Celebration on April 11, 2015. An intimate groundbreaking ceremony took place on Monday, April 20, with the Board of Directors and Dunes Course Master Plan Committee. Construction was underway the following day. The Membership anticipates the re-opening of the new and improved course in early 2016.

Today, Monterey Peninsula Country Club’s 749 regular Members and nearly 500 social Members take a full measure of enjoyment in the two championship courses and the ambiance of the beautiful, spacious Clubhouse, Golf House and Beach House.

Reflecting on their heritage, the members’ sentiments are well expressed by a comment made years ago by Bing Crosby, “I shall never cease being grateful to that eminent sportsman, Sam Morse — the man whose vision, dedication and almost religious devotion to quality, tradition and deep sense of the dramatic, made the Monterey Peninsula one of the showplaces of the World. Without Morse, there would be no Pebble Beach, Cypress Point, Monterey Peninsula Country Club, or anything. It would all be Coney Island!” The renovation includes an upgrade of the infrastructure assuring year-round playability, creating 18 distinct holes and providing more tee pads to accommodate all levels of play.

The Club’s Culture and Core Values includes a statement: “...bound together by their love of golf as well as differences with their backgrounds, experiences and interests, our Members value the opportunity to meet new people and develop long-lasting friendships.” This attention to “Member experience” and social connectivity contributes to the unique environment at MPCC. Truly, a fine example of what a Platinum Club of America represents.
T O PREPARE FOR a global, digital, and fast-paced future, there are three questions we should ask of tomorrow’s leaders:

1. How diverse is your network?
2. Do you have the courage to abandon the past?
3. Where are you looking to anticipate change?

1. How Diverse Is Your Network?

Creating Minds
by Howard Gardner
This book was first published more than 20 years ago, but its insights into the creative process remain just as relevant today.

Thinking in New Boxes
by Luc de Brabandere and Alan Iny
When people think in new boxes, they learn how to ask the kinds of questions that will unlock creativity, innovation and opportunity.

The Idea of Justice
by Amartya Sen
The theory of justice from multiple perspectives, rather than through a lens shaped exclusively by one’s own context and understanding.

The Social Animal
by David Brooks
Two characters come together despite having grown up on opposite ends of the social spectrum. A compelling reminder that diversity can make for strong bonds and great collaboration.

What Matters Now?
by Gary Hamel
In today’s world, you have to be comfortable with change and willing to adapt. This book features case studies of companies that had the courage to abandon tried and true management models in favor of new ways.

You Learn by Living
by Eleanor Roosevelt
A source of practical lessons, this book defines fulfillment as a combination of professional and personal satisfaction.

2. Are You Courageous Enough To Abandon The Past?

You Learn by Living
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A source of practical lessons, this book defines fulfillment as a combination of professional and personal satisfaction.

What Matters Now?
by Gary Hamel
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You Learn by Living
by Eleanor Roosevelt
A source of practical lessons, this book defines fulfillment as a combination of professional and personal satisfaction.

Mandela
by Anthony Sampson
There’s no shortage of insightful books about Mandela. This one provides an objective and comprehensive perspective on how he was shaped by the world he lived in, and how he in turn reshaped it.

3. Where Are You Looking To Anticipate Change?

Transforming Leadership
by James MacGregor Burns
Stories about leadership in settings as diverse as monarchies, tribes and academia.

Own the Future
by Michael Deimler
50 powerful ideas to help you chart your organization’s path to future leadership in an era of accelerating change.

Lighting the Way
by Karenna Gore Schiff
Profiling women who were true trailblazers. They were ahead of their time on socially controversial issues, and they faced huge odds in trying to instill meaningful change.

The selection criteria for consideration as a Platinum Club of America comprises of seven fundamentals of excellence in the private club industry. Club Leaders Forum offers onsite assessments to Platinum Clubs who wish to improve their national ranking, Clubs that are seeking Platinum recognition in 2016 and Clubs who would like to benchmark against the finest golf clubs, country clubs, city clubs, athletic clubs and yacht clubs in the country.

A comprehensive evaluation is now available to conduct an onsite evaluation for your club by utilizing the Platinum Clubs of America selection criteria.

1. Universal Recognition
2. Excellence in Amenities and Facilities
3. Caliber of Staff and Professional Service Levels
4. Quality of Membership
5. Governance and Prudent Fiscal Management
6. Adapting to Changing Times
7. Overall Experience

ONE DAY ASSESSMENT

Upon arrival, a Senior Club Leaders Forum staff member will take an in-depth tour of the club. Subsequently, a meeting will be conducted with the General Manager and the Senior Management team. The Club President and/or Board Members will be invited to attend a discussion luncheon that will include an initial assessment. Each of the seven Platinum Club criteria will be addressed during the meeting. The afternoon session will consist of reviewing other aspects of the operation with one-on-one meetings with department heads.

A comprehensive Executive Summary Report will be created and provided within 30 days from the conclusion of the site visit.

PRIVATE CLUB ASSESSMENT FEE
$7,500 plus travel expenses that will be agreed to prior to the execution of the Evaluation Agreement.

*Two-day Assessments and Platinum Clubs® of the World Assessments are also available.

CLUB DETAILS:
Name: 
Club: 
Address: 
City: 
State: Zip: 
Daytime Phone: 

BILLING INFORMATION:
☐ My check or money order is enclosed
☐ Charge my: ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express
Cardholder’s Name: 
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City: 
State: Zip: 
Daytime Phone: 

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Private Club Top Guns

JOHN SIBBALD, the Founder of Club Leaders Forum, first published “Top Guns” in 1999. Mr. Sibbald reports that this was one of the most popular features in the publication. Today, we bring back Top Guns for your reading pleasure. In this issue, three General Managers are profiled and a series of leading questions about themselves and the Private Club Industry.

EBEN MOLLOY, Woodfield Country Club

Mr. Molloy is the General Manager of Woodfield Country Club in Boca Raton, Florida, recognized as a Platinum Club of America. Woodfield Country Club is a full-service private community club. The year-round club caters to a diverse demographic, featuring social programming for children as well as mature adults. Woodfield’s impressive amenities include an 18-hole championship golf course, a nationally recognized tennis program, expansive resort-style swimming pool, comprehensive fitness center, spa/salon and an array of casual and fine dining restaurants. Mr. Molloy is responsible for the financial and operational performance of the Club as well as all of the Club assets and facilities.

Prior to joining Woodfield, Mr. Molloy was the Clubhouse Manager at Farmington Country Club in Charlottesville, Virginia. Preceding this post, Mr. Molloy held a variety of management positions at the Chevy Chase Club in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Both Clubs hold the Platinum Club distinction.

Mr. Molloy is a graduate of American University in Washington, D.C., a CMAA Certified Club Manager (CCM) and a member of the Florida Club Managers Association of America (FLCMAA).

Who has had the most influence on your club career and why?

Kirk Reese. Reese spent countless hours mentoring me and guiding me through new challenges. He has always made himself available through the years to provide support and insight.

What is your crowning achievement in your club career to date?

We are in the final year of completing our $6.5 million renovation. It has been a five-year process from survey writing to construction. It has been a great journey.

How do you intend to give back to the industry?

I have served on various committees over the years and continue to serve as a guest speaker at Florida Atlantic University. I believe the best way to give back is to mentor the next generation of Club Managers.

What is the primary motivation that drives you to success?

I am very passionate about quality and excellence. I have a competitive nature and steadfast commitment to continuous improvement.

What were your reasons for a Club Manager what would you be?

I am not certain, but it is likely I would have chosen a path related to golf and country clubs in some fashion.

What is the “next big thing” in Clubs?

Challenging the status quo and adapting to the ever-changing model of how members spend time and money. Creating daily relevance and value in order to compete for disposable income is critical.

What was the last book you read?

The Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren.

MILES TUCKER, Hillcrest Country Club

Miles Tucker graduated from one of the top five business schools in the UK (Cardiff Business School) with an Honorary Degree in Business Administration with Hospitality Management.

Following college, Mr. Tucker was fortunate to secure a position on the much coveted graduate management training program at The Savoy Group of Hotels & Restaurants. Following an intensive 30-month program, he received offers from both of his training properties, Claridge’s and The Savoy, along with an offer to become the youngest director manager in the history of The Connaught Hotel. He chose The Connaught, and it served him well.

While working at The Connaught, Mr. Tucker won an Educational Scholarship to attend Cornell University. He secured his PDP in Strategic Hospitality Management but, more importantly, met his Californian wife, Sadie. Now married with two children. Mr. Tucker’s primary motives always reflect his commitment to his family.

Sadie had been working for Harrah’s Entertainment at the time they met, and they sponsored Mr. Tucker into the country to take a role in Hotel Operations at their Flagship Lake Tahoe property.

After a year at Harrah’s, Mr. Tucker transitioned into the Country Club Industry, taking up the position of General Manager at Green Tree Country Club in Midland, Texas. After two years, he was recruited to take up the same position at Sand Creek Country Club in Indiana, where he remained for three years before moving his family back to California.

Mr. Tucker’s most recent position prior to joining Hillcrest was GM/COO of Manhattan Country Club in Manhattan Beach.

Tell us a little about Hillcrest Country Club.

Founded in 1920, Hillcrest is the Premier Full-Service Country Club in Los Angeles. The Club has a deserved reputation for providing some of the most discerning members in the country with a five star member experience. Hillcrest is full with a waitlist.

In recent times, the Club has invested considerably into new fitness and family oriented facilities, products and services. This has resulted in Hillcrest becoming extremely attractive to “the next generation” of Club members.

The average age of admissions in the past four years at the club was 49.9, bringing the overall population’s average age down to 69.2, and the Club continues to invest in the members prescribed by its strategic plan (so as to further enhance member satisfaction and demand for membership).

Who has had the most influence on your club career and why?

My wife, Sadie. The fact that she was also a hospitality executive (with a $32 million budget and over 900 employees) meant that she understood the nuances of our business. In addition, she saw, appreciated and supported my ambition.

How did you get into the Private Club Industry?

While studying Strategic Hospitality Management at Cornell, I met a Club manager by the name of Geoff Hasley. Geoff was the Manager of Green Tree Country Club in Midland, Texas. When Geoff received an opportunity to move on to new pastures, he was kind enough to recommend me to the search committee at Green Tree, and they graciously provided me an opportunity to get into the Club business.

What have been the highlights of your career?

While becoming the GM of Green Tree Country Club at the ripe old age of 27 was a real highlight, there have been so many, and I genuinely live for the moment. As such, continuing to play my part in helping Hillcrest to hit unprecedented heights of financial, operational and experiential success is something I am very proud of.

How do you give back to the Industry?

Giving back to our industry has come in the form of multiple volunteer leadership positions (within various different professional associations), mentoring (both within my Club and within the industry) and developing networking opportunities to share ideas and best practices in my local area. Finally, I like to think I’ve been there to support friends, colleagues, other Clubs and the Club community whenever called upon.

What is the “next big thing” in Clubs?

In the same way that association health plans and other group purchasing programs have afforded Clubs tremendous cost-saving opportunities, there continues to be countless opportunities for smaller Clubs to collaborate on other expense categories. Items such as cyber-security, for example, may be too costly and complex for one Club to tackle, but a group of Clubs in the same market could potentially engage a firm to provide them all with an audit, recommendations, and possibly even service proposals.

story continued on next page
CHRISTINE POOLER, Merion Golf Club

Christine R. Pooler, CCM, has been the General Manager of Merion Golf Club in Ardmore, Pennsylvania since January 2007. She has worked in the club industry since 1994 and previously served the members of Wilmington Country Club in Wilmington, Delaware, The Country Club of Rochester in Rochester, New York, and Vineyards Country Club in Naples, Florida. For Ms. Pooler, embracing Merion’s culture was a priority from the beginning. She is focused on improving member service and educating the Merion staff on the importance of productivity.

Since her arrival at Merion, the Club has implemented a four-year strategic plan that included: the building of a new state-of-the-art, green maintenance operations building and a new golf learning center; the renovation of the historic Grille Room, practice range tee and short game practice area; and the construction of a new halfway house on the historic East Course. Capital dollars were also spent to include renovation of the clubhouse library and living room, employee locker rooms and an employee break room. Most recently, the Club completed the addition of a year-round facility to replace the tent structure that was utilized as a meeting and banquet space since the 1971 U.S. Open. The Hugh Wilson Pavilion provides members with an attractive space for meetings, banquets and dinners, while remaining consistent with the Club’s iconic farmhouse design.

Ms. Pooler coordinated the hosting of the 2009 Walker Cup matches at Merion and oversaw preparations for the 2013 U.S. Open, which was held there in 2013. She has been a guest lecturer for university-based hospitality programs at the University of Delaware and is the University’s CMAA Student Liaison. She is an active board member of Philadelphia and Vicinity Chapter of the CMAA. Ms. Pooler serves on both the NCA and NCA Foundation boards and is co-chair of the Membership Committee.

In 2014, Ms. Pooler was the recipient of the James H. Brewer Award for Excellence in Club Management.

Please provide a brief description of your Club.

Championship golf and champion golfers have long been intertwined with the mystique of Merion Golf Club’s East and West Courses. The East Course has hosted more USGA Championships than any course in America and is home to some of golf’s greatest moments. From Bobby Jones’ completion of golf’s elusive Grand Slam at the 1930 U.S. Amateur to Ben Hogan’s awe-inspiring performance and now legendary one-iron on the 72nd hole during the 1950 U.S. Open, the East Course has helped shaped the game.

Who has had the most influence on your club career and why?

My Club industry mentor, Mr. Stephen Klee (GM/COO of Rolling Rock Club in Ligonier, PA), who taught me that it takes one million things to go right for one member to have a great experience.

What sparked you to become a member of the Club industry?

People are my medicine. I like to make them happy and care for them in a family atmosphere.

Why have you been successful?

I am not afraid to fail. You can only learn from failures.

What is the crowning achievement in your Club career to date?

Our Team’s successful execution of the 2013 U.S. Open Championship was an incredible accomplishment. Also, the nomination from our Club President and selection by my peers for Excellence in Club Management was gratifying and equally humbling.

How do you intend to give back to the industry?

Lead and mentor students and young managers to commit to this industry. If we show them the opportunity for reward, they will gravitate to success.

What is your favorite activity outside of your profession?

Sailing. An activity where you manage your ability to move through the force of the wind, the wind providing that force is totally out of our control. You must pay 100% attention, make quick decisions and be patient in order to move and be safe.

What was the last book you read?

Golf’s Sacred Journey: Seven Days at the Links of Utopia by David L. Cook - a very special book and one to live by. It was a gift from the 2011 and 2013 Walker Cup Captain.

When your club has a claim, you see that PREFERRED CLUB is not just another fair-weather insurance provider. We offer the highest-quality insurance program to the best-managed public and private clubs.

We look forward to helping you properly insure your club facilities, board & employees. Please have your local insurance agent contact us at your next renewal.

Make your club’s insurance right as rain with PREFERRED CLUB, your Platinum Partner.
The Mah Jongg Revolution in Private Clubs

by ANN M. ISRAEL, Attorney and Author of Mah Jongg: The Art of the Game

ANY YEARS AGO I took Mah Jongg lessons at The Cosmopolitan Club in New York City. A group of twelve women signed up and only six survived the four-lesson course. Back then there wasn’t much interest in the game.

Fast-forward to 2015 - I am now the author of the critically acclaimed and best-selling book, Mah Jongg: The Art of the Game - A Collector’s Guide to Mah Jongg Tiles and Sets, as well as the popular daily blog, Mah Jongg and Me. I am also the Member-Teacher at The Cosmopolitan Club.

The Cosmopolitan Club offers two Mah Jongg classes: a Beginner’s Class and a Supervised Play for Advanced Beginners Class, and cannot keep up with the demand. Private classes have also produced a waiting list. To assist in introducing the game to Clubs around the country, I have developed a two-day accelerated course on how to play Mah Jongg.

It seems that throughout the world, people today are very interested in learning how to play Mah Jongg. Mah Jongg is an incredibly social game, quite different from the serious pastime of Bridge. There are no partners in Mah Jongg, so there is no arguing about mistakes made. It is a visual game played with beautiful tiles, generating laughter and camaraderie.

Secondly (and perhaps most importantly), many Asian countries have some of the longest life expectancies in the world. Researchers believe that Mah Jongg is one of the reasons why people in Mah Jongg-playing countries live long lives. A mentally stimulating game, scientists believe Mah Jongg can help stave off dementia as people grow older and the social aspects of the game also support longevity.

HOW DOES MAH JONGG BENEFIT A PRIVATE CLUB?

First and foremost, the game stimulates Member usage and satisfaction. The Cosmopolitan Club has experienced growth and interest among all age categories of the membership as the game continues attract more players.

Mah Jongg has definitely benefited the Club’s food and beverage revenues. As the game is more social than other traditional Club games, Members meet for lunch prior to classes, cocktails compliment the game during class, and when class is over Members retreat to the Lounge and discuss their latest session.

After Members have learned the game, Mah Jongg players continue to gather at the Club socially several times a week to play with friends. They then progress to playing in organized tournaments at the Club, often with more than 100 players.

Mah Jongg is clearly enjoying a tremendous resurgence in popularity, with studies showing that over 800 million people around the world are now enjoying the game. A small amount of time is all that is needed to learn how to play Mah Jongg.

Offering this international, exotic and mysterious game to your Members will provide greater value and benefit in Membership and stimulate Members to propose candidates for Membership so they can enjoy the game.
UNDERSTANDING THE DEMOGRAPHIC and profile of a membership is critical in managing and operating a Private Club. After conducting a recent study of the twenty most prestigious Private Clubs in China, we learned some very interesting traits of the “typical” Chinese Private Club Member and how they differ from Private Club Members in the United States.

- The average age of a Chinese Private Club Member is 38
- They own three cars and four luxury watches
- They take three international vacation trips annually
- Their preferred destinations are France, the USA and Singapore
- Their top three investments are watches, wine and art
- Favorite brands for males are Louis Vuitton, Hermes and Piaget
- Favorite brands for females are Chanel, Cartier and Gucci
- Less than 5% have read the Rules of Golf
- Less than 10% have an official handicap

Other Interesting Facts:
- The Communist Party in China has recently banned Club membership for all 88 million of their members.
- 85 Private Clubs have been closed down by the Government in the past 12 months.
- Shanqin Bay is the only Top 100 Course in China.
- 35% of Chinese Private Club Members are optimistic about China’s economy.
Wellness and a Sustainable Healthy Lifestyle

A conversation with JOANNA ROCHE, the director of The Westmoor Club’s Wellness Center on Nantucket Island in Massachusetts.

Tell us about your background and how you gravitated toward Health and Wellness?

I joined Canyon Ranch in 1993 and so began my love affair with healthy living. I was 24 years old and had no idea that my life was about to be changed forever. Working in the spa industry in those early days was like sailing on the Mayflower to the new world. Working with Mel and Enid Zuckerman was a true privilege and they taught me that spa was just a sexy word for a place people came to learn how to be healthy. I stayed for 8 years and soaked up all the wisdom I could and left knowing that my philosophy of health, wellness, and spirituality had been grown and nurtured in a time and at a place that could never be recreated or experienced again.

Life, however, is also practical at times, and I became not only skilled in programming and operations, but also in marketing and public relations for luxury brands. No career is complete without a stint in NYC, including mine, where I was the EVP of a PR agency specializing in lifestyle and beauty. As a matter of course, consulting took me to other parts of the country and the world, most frequently London where I worked for a startup called Tribesports. The common thread though all my work has always been “spa” – giving people the tools to live healthy lives. The why is easy – inspiring people to wellness is my passion.

You’ve been with The Westmoor Club for more than three years and have worked to transform a high-end fitness center into a world-class wellness center. Talk about your philosophy and this progression.

My philosophy is simple – inspire people to better versions of themselves. We’re a multidimensional group, us humans; we need more than a gym. Healthy living is about creating balance in all the areas of ourselves and living to our potential. A fitness center can offer a single dimension, but a wellness center can offer all the tools one might need on that journey. Joining The Westmoor Club gave me the opportunity to curate wellness experiences for our members that are personal, powerful, and speak to sustainable lifestyle change.

You’ve introduced a lot of new programming in the Wellness Center at The Westmoor Club.

Wellness is a holistic endeavor with seven components – social, emotional, intellectual, physical, environmental, occupational and spiritual. We try to offer education, tools, and experiences in each of these areas so that our members are challenged to look within and to consider balance as a wellness goal. Of course, there are specifics like personal training, Pilates, meditation, acupuncture – all the services we offer are aimed at helping members be engaged in their quality of life and aware of creating healthy habits which in turn manifest in balance.

What are you providing your membership?

Inspiration, education, and opportunity to be healthy – no matter what your age or limitations. If we translate that to “clubspeak”, we want member engagement. When members are participating in all the activities, services, events, and amenities at a particular club, synergy is created, community is built and the membership buzzes with energy.

Where is the club industry headed in terms in wellness and fitness?

Spa, fitness and wellness are the fastest growing business segments in the club industry. Wellness is no longer considered a trend; most people see and understand the benefits of regular exercise, good nutrition, and self-care. Members who may have been introduced to wellness or spa vacations at destination resorts or through adventure travel over the years have realized that they can use their clubs as a way to continue practicing healthy habits and to truly create sustainable lifestyle change.
The Marque: LinkedIn for Industry Leaders

by ALASDAIR HADDEN-PATON, Director, The Marque Global Ltd.

THE MARQUE IS THE GLOBAL success-based online business network that operates on by invitation and referral only policy. It is rapidly building a powerful membership base around the World, having launched in London earlier this year and more recently in New York.

By joining, members gain three unique benefits: a private online platform for networking, a managed public profile and business intelligence via bespoke newsfeeds. The members represent some of the most successful leaders across a broad range of industries and are major contributors to business, arts, media, culture and sports.

Many people at the top of their field are conscious of the advantage of online networking but require additional levels of privacy. This is exactly who The Marque caters to.

Members benefit from joining a secure platform to interact and share professional insights, without the distraction of advertising and unsolicited approaches. Along with this, the addition of public profiles give members control over how they are represented online by displaying the most accurate and up-to-date business information. A dedicated Relationship Manager is on hand to keep profiles current and provide assistance on demand. These profiles aim to become the irrefutable source of information for people researching and writing about The Marque’s Members.

Personalized news feeds guarantee each member is delivered valuable business intelligence to keep them current with their network. Real-time business news related to each Member is displayed on their public profile and monitored to ensure all information is derived from credible global publications.

Along with Andrew Wessels, British Consul General, Danny Lopez, recently hosted an evening at the British Residence to celebrate the launch of The Marque in New York. The launch was attended by some of New York’s most prominent business names, representing over 25 business sectors. London founding members include; Sir Charles Dunstone (Chairman, Dixons Carphone), Dominic Murphy (Head of UK & Ireland, KKR), Johnny Hornby (Chairman & CEO, The&Partnership), Nadja Swarovski (Executive Board Member, Swarovski), and Ric Lewis (CEO, Tristan Capital Partners).

“We are delighted to have launched in New York,” said Wessels. “This city is home to some of the world’s most talented individuals in business and has a truly meritocratic approach to industry. It was an obvious location for our first launch outside the United Kingdom. We are incredibly excited by the positive response we’ve had from a dynamic and high-achieving group of people thus far, and to be able to welcome such illustrious new members to the ranks of The Marque.”

British Consul General Danny Lopez went on to say that “The Marque is exactly the kind of company we, at UK Trade & Investment, enjoy partnering with. They have identified a true gap in the market and created a product that we can see is already gaining serious traction on a global scale. We have thoroughly enjoyed welcoming them to New York City.”

Following the hugely successful launch in New York, The Marque has been featured on Bloomberg Radio and Bloomberg Television. The future is looking very exciting for this ever-growing company as more city-launches are planned before spring 2016.

Right: Sample bio on themarque.com.
Run your Club Tournaments like a PGA Tour Event

EVERYDAY MORE THAN 200 golf tournaments around the World are run by GolfBox using their tournament software. They manage them all, from small Club events to Professional tournaments.

Since GolfBox launched their new tournament software in 2014, more than 100,000 tournaments have been organized using the software from the relatively small and unknown Denmark-based company.

GolfBox was founded in 2003 and hosted the first tournaments in 2004. From the beginning, the focus was to simplify administration using technology to ensure easy-to-use products that worked for everyone.

Co-Owner and CEO of GolfBox A/S Christian Færgemann, a former playing professional, is proud of the new tournament software. It was developed using ten years of experience from the previous version, and considered the demands of today’s golfer and Tournament Committees. “We spent over 30,000 hours developing the new software on a new platform, built to be mobile and take advantage of new technology,” says Færgemann.

The best way to describe the new software from GolfBox is simple, but rich. Simple in design, but rich in function. It’s easy for the Tournament Committee, players, and for spectators to use.

The idea behind the new tournament software was the focus on compatibility on all mobile platforms. GolfBox wanted everything, from setting up the tournament to viewing the final scoreboard, to work on any device. Users expect nothing less in today’s market.

And Members expect their Clubs to provide them with an information flow that they are accustomed to in daily life. Just a few years ago live scoring was only used in Professional Tournaments. Today, with the help of GolfBox, Members can follow Club Tournaments on television monitors or their handheld devices, with live leaderboards, hole-by-hole scoring and a variety of other statistics.

Entering scores is simple for Club and tournament administrators and can be done from any device. The Tournament Committee or Staff at the Club can use a tablet or a smart phone to register the scores. All they need is a mobile device and access to the internet.

Major National Golf Associations around Europe and Australia use the GolfBox software. This year, the Walker Cup used the new technology during the match played at Royal Lytham & St. Anne’s. Click here for more about GolfBox.

Finding the Right LED Solution For Your Club

LED Lighting saves between 50-85 percent of the lighting cost in a club, so it’s become an attractive way to reduce expenses.

However, finding the right LED lighting solution for every lighting application in your club presents an incredible challenge, as the right products are not easily found in typical purchasing channels. The other challenge is that the manufacturers don’t provide products for all the club’s applications that are the best fit for the club.

We have found that while one manufacturer makes a great lamp for a chandelier in the main entrance to the club, they may not have the best LED solution for replacing a fluorescent lamp in the kitchen. You can try to buy LED on your own, but you are most likely NOT going to have a successful outcome. With high, medium and low output options, varying brightness, beam angles and light temperatures, the bottom line is, if you’re not in the LED business, you’ll most likely make mistakes.

When you buy from a retail outlet, you also get residential-grade products. After all, there is a reason they call it “Home” Depot. Commercial-grade LED’s have a longer life and better components. The other common mistake on buying LED is going for the cheapest. All cheap LED’s we have seen have high failure rates and therefore wouldn’t qualify for utility company rebates. In the long run, they become more expensive if they prematurely fail, and more importantly, the net-cost of a more expensive rebate-qualified lamp is less expensive by using commercial-grade products.

Using a professional company is paramount in finding the right solution, administering the rebate applications, procuring the right products, installing them correctly and servicing warranty issues. Let us know how we can help!

Nelson A. Scott is the COO of SES Lighting and can be reached at NScott@SESLights.com or (855)594-4878 x703
How do you Safeguard Your Personal Data?

Seemingly, there are reports of data breach in the news daily. We hear of major companies' private records being hacked into and personal information stolen. Although it is not possible to completely ring fence yourself or your Club from such activities, there are some initiatives that you can employ.

Enable Disk Encryption
Apple products that include iPhones and iPads turn on disk encryption by default. However, if you own a Windows or Android device, this is not the case; you must turn it on manually. So if a laptop or phone that doesn’t have disk encryption enabled is lost, it provides the individual who finds your device access to all of your data too.

Let a Robot Keep Track of Your Passwords
Remembering multiple passwords is a challenge and selecting secure passwords is also difficult. Many of us use the same password for all of our protected accounts. Therefore, once a hacker breaks through, they use the same password to login to our other sites which often gives access to bank accounts and credit cards. Using a password manager - a software tool for mobile devices and computers that will pick secure and random passwords for each of the sites you visit - is a prudent choice. It will also sync passwords with multiple devices. iPass and LastPass are two good options for a password manager.

Use Two-Factor Authentication and Get a U2F Key
Another safeguard is to make sure that even if someone learns your password, they won’t be able to log-in. To accomplish this goal you must enable two-factor authentication, an additional security feature that can be added to most online accounts. In some cases this additional step sends a random number to your phone via a text message. You may also run a special app on your smartphone that generates one-time log-in codes. Recently, a more user-friendly form of two-factor authentication has been made available in the form of a U2F security key. This device is similar to a thumb drive which you insert into the USB port when you log-in to an account from a new computer.

Encrypt Calls and Text Messages
Inexpensive equipment makes it possible for third parties to hear your phone messages and read your texts. The voice and text message services provided by phone companies are not secure. Look into Internet-based mobile apps that are more secure. Apple’s Facetime and WhatsApp on Android are both very good options. For stronger security, there is a free tool called SIGNAL available on Apple’s App Store.

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Board Self Audit

Board of Directors, whether they reside over profit or non-profit organizations, know that it is necessary to step back and evaluate themselves and their operations. Often, outside consulting organizations can provide third-party objectivity, opinions and input.

This Self-Audit provides the ability for the Boards of Private Clubs to take stock of their respective operations. The comprehensive form is the outgrowth of thousands of privileged conversations with Club Boards, Search Committees and Managers. Its fundamental purpose is to provide Club Boards - of all types and sizes - with a standard and comprehensive structure by which to assess their Club’s overall condition.

This Self-Audit allows each Director to report his or her own judgment about the Club. Following these independent assessments, the President may elect to compile a composite of the results.

The five main sections of the questionnaire are:

• Club Governance
• Financial Analysis
• Club Operations
• Membership
• Human Resources

The Self-Audit contains 87 questions that apply equally to city, athletic, country, yacht or golf clubs and allows the Board to take a look at more precise areas of particular interest or concern. This self-audit is available for $300.

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