



Maintaining a Full Membership at your Club

By Scott Samuels & Marcia Mata

Clubs that continue to flourish have done so primarily because they have maintained a full compliment of Members. A Club will live or die on the strength of its membership and the dues income, food and beverage revenue, golf cart revenue, etc. that it receives as a result. Membership should never be taken for granted. It is the sole heartbeat that keeps any club alive and must be carefully charted and navigated for the full cycle of a club's life.

Membership Development is a process, an ever-changing natural growth, and it is important to recognize each of stage of this development to maintain a healthy organization. Only when a clear understanding of these stages is identified can that natural unfolding flourish. Rarely do individual club leaders get to lead the process from inception to the maturity of a club's lifeline. Often, this leadership comes from the Club Manager who must evaluate the next steps to move the original positioning of a club to one providing more opportunity for effective use and growth.

In order to follow a club's life cycle through this continuum we must actively **establish, enroot, enlarge, flourish** and **mature**, then **create a legacy** with the mission of your own club. By asking your management team and key members the following questions, and exploring opportunities along the way, this process will indeed become natural growth vehicle for your Club.

ESTABLISH - What is the essence of this club?

A club must be established around some commonality for its Members. Be it location, facilities, prestige, love of a sport, culinary attraction, social connections, business networks

or just wonderful traditions that attract the family; there are important aspects that draw the members to your club. Explore these unique qualities and write a mission statement, one that clearly encompasses all that you are. Keep it handy and updated, cautiously avoiding change. Use it with all new members, staff and at all decision points to keep you on course. Used wisely and with reverence, this mission statement will establish what and who you are to the market.

ENROOT - How can we communicate our mission to everyone?

Now, armed with a clear understanding of what and who you are, set about educating everyone inside your circle of influence about your mission. Train your staff, at every level, to understand what they are charged with creating. Establish programs and traditions that illustrate your Club's uniqueness. Create your annual and five-year business plans to move from your original position with steps that bring you closer still to your mission. Use your communication to enroot your club firmly in the lives of your present members and the community of your market.

ENLARGE - How can we grow?

Growth is critical for every Club. It might be membership escalation with either number of members or value of each individual membership. It can be reached through increased sales of golf rounds, guest fees, and additional meals sold. Maybe it is higher usage by present members in special events, tournaments and programs. This is the question to be posed when creating your budgets and any necessary long-range planning. Continuous growth will help your club to enlarge and grow in the marketplace.

FLOURISH - How can we stay healthy and flourish?



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Board and member committees are great sources of feedback for this question. Membership satisfaction surveys, employee surveys and meetings, comment cards and simply walking around and listening for complaints and areas of satisfaction will steer you here. Stay abreast of exciting new hospitality trends and practices. Visit the competition. Most of all remember to celebrate your success.

MATURE - How do we stay fresh?

Wise clubs and associations do not resist change - they cautiously create dynamic organizations. They mature with a young heart and reinvent themselves as demographics change their marketplace. They outlast trends by growth with cautious risks and investments. They are always open to continuous improvement.

CREATE A LEGACY - Why do we belong?

A truly healthy club is one that touches its members' lives. Traditions and conviviality are something to count on there. A member is proud to belong, proud to recommend and proud to visit their club. A family looks forward to special occasions. Grandchildren learn a sport for life. The community knows the club by its involvement and support. The club will endure and stand the test of time. The mission, once held so dear, is reality now and still protected at all costs.

After exploring the process of Membership Development as it unfolds in the many stages of your club's maturity cycle, try to determine where does your club fit into this model. Begin by asking these basic questions to the leaders of your club and most importantly, establish a vision for your Club's success and stay on course!

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