



RESUSCITATE YOUR CLUB'S MEMBERSHIP

by Scott A. Samuels & Barry B. Peters

As a Club General Manager, if one of your many “jobs” is to sell Memberships, then you may be severely hindering the success of your club. Although Club General Managers may have exemplary sales skills, other duties and priorities (i.e. the day-to-day operational and fiscal responsibility of the club) may prohibit them from appropriately selling and prospecting for club memberships.

Through tough economic times, some of the “trends” we have seen, include:

- Loss of jobs due to lack of economic and financial support for Club General Managers and key Department Heads
- Cut back in a club's hours of operation and poor member and guest usage
- Deferred maintenance and repairs because of poor cash flow
- Under-qualified staff trying to deliver high quality member service and food
- Members leaving due to corporate downsizing, relocation, new jobs, dying of older members...the Club and the value that a membership currently provides no longer fits their needs.

Many Boards, and even some Club General Managers, do not recognize the true “value” of a employing a full-time Membership Director. To further illustrate this individual's role, we have provided an example of the key duties and responsibilities of a Membership Director.

POSITION FUNCTION

The development, deployment and implementation of the Club's marketing and sales objectives, tactics, programs, budgets, market research, concept positioning, promotion and public relations as approved by the Club Manager, Board of Directors and Membership Committee.

PRINCIPLE DUTIES

The overall objectives and goal of the Club's Membership Department is to develop, organize and implement marketing and sales programs that will create, optimally maximize and/pr increase all of the following:

- Club Membership Levels
- Initiation Fees
- Dues Revenues

Provide direct assistance and support to Club Management in the development of marketing and sales programs that will create, optimally maximize and/or increase the following:

- Member usage rates in the Club
- Member's satisfaction level
- F&B gross revenue
- Golf gross revenue

SPECIFIC DUTIES

Membership Sales: Responsible for the development and implementation of the club's sales plan, program and collateral materials to establish and maintain an appropriate membership level within the Club.

Membership Planning: With direction from the Club General Manager and Membership Committee, responsible for the preparation and recommendation of the annual Membership Plan for the Club which will include:

- a. Goals and objectives for new Member enrollments, targeted number of prospects and targeted closing ratios
- b. Goals and objectives for dues income growth of the Club through increased membership levels, enrollments and/or upgrades to higher classifications of membership, pricing/dues increases and Member retention.
- c. Goals and objectives for initiation fee revenues for the Club through enrollments and upgrades.
- d. Membership Department expense planning and control
- e. Strategies and tactics for the successful implementation of the sales plan
- f. Market research to support the plan



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Membership Programming: Prepares all documentation for review and approval of all membership programming for the Club.

Membership Policy: Responsible for the adherence to Club Membership Policy

Membership Communication: Responsible for all Member and Board Member and prospective Member communications with regard to membership sales and programming.

Market Research: Responsible for the development of the Club's annual internal and external market study to support membership and marketing strategies.

Marketing (F&B, Golf, etc.): Assists Club Management in the development and recommendation of marketing and sales programs that will increase one or all of the following:

- Member usage level
- Member satisfaction level
- Gross Revenues
- New Revenues

Maintaining a full compliment of Members requires an ongoing, day-after-day, year-after-year campaign. It is not a two times a decade "membership campaign" that some clubs use in desperation. Many clubs are realizing, however, that finding this key department head is not an easy task. Membership Directors must possess a unique balance of sales and prospecting skills along with extreme member sensitivity.

A declining membership may be caused by numerous reasons. We do not profess that hiring a Membership/Marketing Director will solve this problem entirely. However, it could be your first necessary step to reverse this negative trend and get your club moving in the right direction.

Scott Samuels is President & Barry Peters serves as Regional Vice President of Kansas City-based HORIZON HOSPITALITY ASSOCIATES, INC., a Management Recruiting and Consulting Firm for the Private Club Industry. Send your questions or

comments to: Horizon Hospitality Associates, Inc. 14516 Woodson Street, Suite 200, Overland Park, KS 66223. (800) 530-9875 FAX: (320) 215-8126 Email: careers@horizonhospitality.com. To learn more about Horizon Hospitality Associates, you can visit www.horizonhospitality.com