

FUTURISTIC VISUALIZATION
"Winning the War Between Aesthetics
and Function in Clubhouse Design"

A passed issue of Golf Business featured an annual economic forecast of golf course development prepared by KPMG Peak Marwick LLP. A chart detailing the 10 regions of the country showed the development of 379 new golf courses that year. The venues extended from 333 public developments, including committees and resorts to 46 private facilities. This broad scope of development, running into the billions of dollars, has a decided profit motive.

Although the primary profit goals of the developers may be real estate sales, asset appreciation, room sales or the sale of memberships, the golf clubhouse profit center certainly will have an impact on the overall long-term success of the project. Making sure that the necessary function elements are included in the project occurs during the clubhouse design phase. During this phase, it is the responsibility of the owner/developer to set objectives while establishing operational criteria and program elements. The owner/developer must also take seriously their oversight responsibilities in reviewing the contract documents to insure their compatibility with company goals.

In most cases, owner/developers hire architects and planners for their professional design expertise. However, it is appropriate that owners not sit back and assume the experts will always deliver function. There is supportive evidence that the priority of the designer can occasionally come in conflict with the priority of the club.

Both the designer and the owner want an aesthetically pleasing facility. The owner needs a functional clubhouse, specifically customized to their needs. Aesthetics can come in conflict with function. Often, through the designer's initiative, aesthetics become a priority over function and the owner is the loser. Only through diligent oversight of the design phase, including proper review of the contract documents, can the owner realistically expect to realize the full benefits of the project.

To accomplish proper oversight, the owner must have the necessary operational expertise. Some larger development companies have a Club Operational Specialist (COS) on staff. Others may hire an outside consultant to represent the owner. A major tool used by a COS is futuristic visualization. This term was introduced in a 1990 article in Club Management Magazine called "Making the Pieces Fit." It is the concept of visualizing a newly designed and finished space in operation using the plans and specifications. Consider all the possible functions that can occur in that space and then match the operational needs to what is actually specified, insuring that all elements necessary to provide function are included. Several examples of operational elements include lighting levels, acoustics, power requirements, sound systems, floor covering, furniture style,

service accessibility, technology and communication needs.

Futuristic visualization of operations requires the ability to think operationally. Effective futuristic visualization can only be completely accomplished by someone with operational experience. By blending operations experience with the ability to read and understand contract documents, major and minor issue of function can be dealt with during the design phase and document review process.

Since the contract documents (plans and specifications) are a complete description of what the owner is buying, it is very important that the owner have a complete understanding of the documents. Many projects have a timetable with a target window that best maximizes future revenue opportunities. In many cases, the proper length of time for document review is reduced to meet construction schedules. This can be a critical mistake as it reduces the owner's oversight capabilities exposing them to potential change orders and cost overruns. More importantly function issues may not get addressed properly and important elements may be left out altogether.

It is obvious that the COS can and does play a critical role in the design and layout of the clubhouse. Futuristic visualization is just one of the many services the COS should provide. The COS can play a role in both the construction program and operational analysis. He can also offer internal corporate benefits if the COS is a permanent staff member. The construction, operational and corporate benefits are as follows:

I. Construction and Renovation

A. Marketing

- generic and customized surveys
- long-range planning facilitator
- focus group leader
- analysis of financing alternatives
- proforma development

B. Development of program elements

- site planning
- facilities layout
- flowcharts and traffic patterns
- image enhancement

C. Project management and operations

- plan review for operational efficiencies
- specification review and operational issues
- progress analysis
- punch list development and review

II. Operations Analysis

A. Opening Services

- checklists
- timetables

B. Systems Specifications

- management information systems
- security systems
- sound systems
- phone systems
- audiovisual requirements

C. Human Resources

- staffing schedules
- management procurement

D. Financial

- profit center analysis
- chart of accounts development
- five year plans

E. Membership

- marketing systems
- equity/non-equity issues
- cooperation agreements and buyouts

F. Operational Audits

- service quality identification
- federal and state laws
- secret shopper services

III. Internal Corporate Activities

A. Research and Development

- checklist development
- industry surveys
- creative planning

B. Marketing and Sales

- CMAA connections
- shows and expositions
- journal articles

C. Training

- seminar development for associations and groups (architects, club managers, PGA, owners/developers)
- internal training sessions

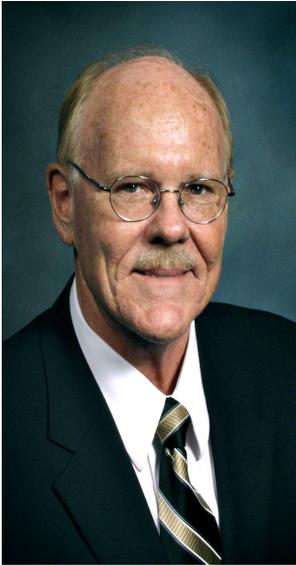
D. Intangibles

- reputation, credentials, image
- industry resources
- library

Owner/developers, must insure that function issues take precedence over

aesthetics if they are to achieve the expected benefits of a clubhouse project. They must use futuristic visualization in the design and document review process and they must have competent operational expertise representing their interests. Smart developers do not allow operational mistakes to undermine overall project goals.

About the Author



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