

*Are You Ready to Hire a Shooting Star
"A Case Study"*

It just wasn't happening at the XYZ Club. A few years earlier they had invested several million dollars in a new swim - tennis facility including a beautiful indoor building. The tennis professional had been there for many years, and although there was nothing really wrong, there was no excitement.

New members had flocked into the club and activity was high. The swimming program was the best in the region and guests envied the beautiful pool complex. Tennis programming on the other hand was just flat. Finally the committee had waited long enough. They suggested to the General Manager that it might be time for a change. After discussion they all agreed that the program needed to be revitalized. The members wanted to hire a great professional that would come in and turn the program into one that would compete with the best in the state.

The GM was in total agreement. However, he noted that the club would have to sweeten the pot on the compensation program if it wanted to get the right person. It was suggested that the club would have to pay another \$20,000 or so. The Board authorized the increase and the GM went about the process of advertising the position and culling the resumes down to about a half a dozen good candidates.

The committee was actively involved in the interview process and after some jostling over the final two individuals, a new professional was selected. They believed they had found the right person to bring real excitement to the tennis program. The members wanted a better junior program, more competition at the higher levels of adult play and a higher quality selection of merchandise. They hired the right man for the job.

This individual was a real dynamo. He was highly respected by his peers and had delivered a tremendous athletic and social experience at his last club. He came in with guns blazing. There were immediate improvements in all areas of programming, merchandising and maintenance. He expected and delivered excellence even to the point of stepping on a few toes of certain members and other fellow department heads. But it was obvious he was right - most of the time. If anything the GM had to hold him down a little.

The members were enthusiastic and new members started joining just to be a part of the excitement. Everything was great - except one thing. Any good manager will tell you that they need resources to accomplish great things. He used solid arguments and pressed hard for more money at every turn. In two years the tennis budget went from \$150,000 to \$225,000.

The finance chairman thought that things were out of control. Budget issues were no strangers to the XYZ Club. It seems tennis was a big sponge that just sopped

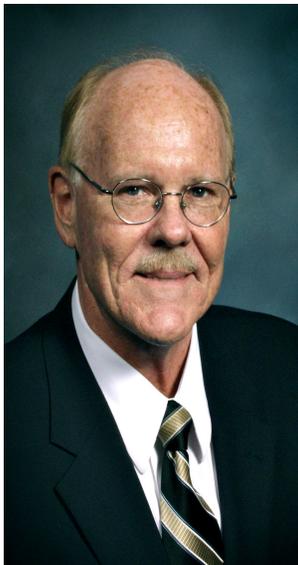
up resources without generating any new operating revenue. It is easy for Board members to stay in the operating mode and forget the new member initiation fees and ongoing dues contribution.

Does this story have a happy ending. So far - so good. Things have slowed down some. The budget has stabilized and even a few small cuts have been made. The program is still dynamic and is a feather in the cap of the XYZ Club. What is the moral of this story?

Be prepared for the following:

- A shooting star will expect more resources so they can accomplish their goals. If they are not given the financial budget support they need, they will get very frustrated and probably will not stay. Evaluate the fact that maybe the club was not spending enough in that area before the shooting star was hired.
- They will step on a few toes. A shooting star will make a few enemies. They will, however, generate a lot of support for their successes.
- A shooting star will raise the bar for others in the organization. Members may begin comparing other department heads to the shooting star and may become disgruntled in other areas. Remember - it is all about making positive change in the organization.
- The GM will always be judged by whom they hire, even if there is complete support from the committee. The search and selection process may be the most important thing a GM does at the club.

About the Author



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