

Winning Strategies

Good Advice for Corporations

Good Advice for Clubs

Remember - A conclusion is the place where you got tired of thinking.

A recent article in a national newspaper grabbed my attention. It was titled 'Be prepared to change strategy' by a senior business consultant in Maryland. Oliver Schlake has been an international management consultant and strategic advisor for leading companies in Europe and North America. His advice for company or major team leaders is "When the forces drive a particular market change then you need to change with them. He says the winners are the ones that anticipate change and react early to stay ahead of the competition. Let's examine a few of his points from the club industry perspective.

1. Remember Members are both Owners and Customers

Owners want the highest return on their investment value. Customers want the best products at the lowest prices. Neither one wants to pay more. Club leaders must provide reasons why their decisions are best for both the member as investor and the member as a customer. As long as a member is getting a high level of satisfaction and good value, based on the excellent service received, they will be happy to advertize, market, promote and sell the club to their friends and business associates. The club membership roles will be enhanced and long-term success should be a direct result. Remember you can't continually cut service and expect enhanced value.

3. Commit the Time Necessary

Too often managers have a difficult time getting the Board to commit the time necessary to plan effectively. In this case there may be a leadership vacuum at the top Mr. President. It is very important that the President lead by insisting on certain expectation from the individual prior to a member's election. Don't let people get elected that aren't dedicated to doing the job right.

4. Understand Member Needs and Expectations

The Club's product is not golf, tennis, swimming, fitness or food and beverage. The product is member satisfaction based on value. Unfortunately member satisfaction is a very fuzzy product. The only way you know what the majority of the members think is to survey them. Beware of the member who says they know what the members think. They only know what their own circle of friends think. There are a variety of ways to survey. The results will give you the ammunition you need to make quality decisions. Once benchmarks have been established then you can measure progress by comparing present

satisfaction levels to those from the previous survey. Make sure that the club conducts a comprehensive survey at least every two to three years.

5. Plan Strategically

A comprehensive strategic plan requires a thorough knowledge of all stakeholders. A good strategic plan will dissect the club into four parts: membership, operations driven by management and staff, facilities and the system of governance. Each of the four parts must be analyzed as to their effectiveness in meeting the organizational mission and vision. Every strategy should be tested against the vision and mission.

Start the year with a strategic retreat to establish strategic direction and general initiatives. Manage the initiatives to track progress. Set aside a portion of every Board meeting to discuss the plan. Make a report card to the membership at the annual meeting. Once the program is initiated it becomes a living process. Each year the existing vision and mission is revisited at the beginning of the year and modified where appropriate. New goals and objectives are added and others modified or removed.