

## **WINNING STRATEGIES**

### **From the Consultant's Perspective - "Your Club's Foundation – Is It Structurally Sound?"**

There is an old story of a man who had a crack in his plaster wall. He kept getting it fixed only to have the crack reappear a short time later. Finally one repair man said he couldn't help. From the professional's opinion, the problem was not the crack on the wall. The problem was that the man had a shifting foundation. For many clubs, the major problem is that they are in the same boat. The organization does not have a clear set of principles that make for a solid organizational foundation that the club can rely on from year to year. Leadership changes and with those changes the club shifts direction – the foundation moves.

#### **A Three Step Process for Success**

Great clubs do three things well. First they lay out the organizational objectives based on solid operating and strategic goals and objectives. Second they have a solid system of communication between leadership management and the membership that builds trust between groups. Third they stay focused and on task, not changing direction based on how the wind is blowing at any given time.

Certainly this does not mean that the club should ignore the environment. Change is ongoing and clubs should be proactive. It means that with a solid foundation in place, any club can deal with change effectively.

#### **To Win You Must Understand the Game**

Recently CMAA spent a lot of time refining governance in clubs. The problem was not a lack of principles. The problem was maintaining a solid foundation from year to year. If one were to poll the top 100-200 clubs nationwide, I believe you would find that most have the following characteristics:

- A solid and ongoing system of governance that has been battle tested
- Effective, productive Board and Committee meetings
- A strategic plan that is a living document used year to year with an emphasis to stay focused on the mission of the organization
- Regular use of planning retreats
- Quality orientation and evaluation of not only staff but also club volunteer leaders

#### **It is All About Leadership**

The industry has built up the general manager's role to that of COO. To be a COO is all about leadership. You cannot lead others where you are not willing to go yourself. Leadership is not easy. Many times it is about drawing a line in the sand when it comes to foundational issues. Because of the nature of club politics, leadership requires partners. Progress requires solid officers and directors that are

willing to make the right decisions in time of concern or even crisis. The present economic times are just such an occasion. The clubs that went into the crisis with stable foundations are the ones best likely to make good decisions and least likely to be negatively effected.

### **How is Your Club Doing?**

It may be time to do a little self-audit with the Board. This exercise will allow you to compare your club's foundational practices against the best practices of top club organizations. Many times it may require only minor modifications to get on track. Other times the club may want to hold a retreat to address significant shortcomings. Whatever the situation, now is the time to act and bring your club current with the best in the business.

There is an old church saying that goes "If you find someone with a Bible that is falling apart, then the person probably isn't." These individuals have stayed focused on sound principles in their life that have guided them to good long-term decisions. It is the same with clubs. Staying focused on a solid foundation and remaining on task is the key to success.

Now complete the checklist and take action.

- The club has adopted progressive governance practices reflecting principals identified in the Director's Guide for Understanding Club Governance or the new CMAA Governance Model.
- The bylaws have been reviewed and updated to reflect any changes regarding the club governance structure that meets the best practices adopted by the Board.
- A comprehensive membership survey has been completed to identify organizational strengths and weaknesses and deliver a member driven strategic plan that will build trust.
- A Board procedures document is in place detailing all interpretations of the bylaws or general policies made by the Board that effect relationships between the Board, committees, COO, staff and membership.
- A strategic plan has been developed that includes prioritized initiatives.
- Annual operating goals are completed that detail the area of responsibility and timeline for completion.
- Committees and department heads have developed an annual vision of how they will complete their mission, goals and objectives for their area of responsibility.
- There is an extensive orientation for new Board members annually.
- There is an annual retreat to identify strategic initiatives and review operating goals. At this meeting and annual vision is developed by the Board and COO.

- The annual business plan (goals, objectives and initiatives) have been communicated to the membership.
- A management document has been developed to track all strategic and operating goals, objectives and initiatives.
- Monthly the Board is provided a short list of plan changes or goals and initiatives that are off target.
- The full plan is reviewed quarterly for progress against expectations.
- A year end plan review is made identifying successes and possible failures and a year end report is developed for the membership.
- Potential Board nominees have been introduced to the club planning process and have committed to it prior to being nominated as a Board candidate.

Jerry N. McCoy, MCM, is the President of Clubwise, LLC, a consulting firm specializing in strategic planning, master planning, operational audits and governance issues. He is the author of The Director's Guide for Understanding Club Governance, The Governance Checklist and The Board Resource Manual all of which are publications of CMAA's Premier Club Services®, the new Strategic Management Handbook for private clubs and is an extensive contributor to the new CMAA Facilities and Amenities Texts Volume I & II which are available through Bookmart. He can be reached at [www.clubwiseconsulting.com](http://www.clubwiseconsulting.com) or [CMAAMCM@msn.com](mailto:CMAAMCM@msn.com)

