



The Newest Trend in Member Amenities

Convincing club boards to spend dollars on computer technology has been a challenge for decades.

It's hard for computer networks, PCs, printers, telephone systems and the like to compete for capital dollars normally allocated to the golf course, clubhouse, spa, tennis courts – or just about anything else that is tangible to the members in their everyday club experience.

But things are changing rapidly as technology at the club becomes more tangible – and even indispensable – to the membership.

Forward-thinking clubs are deploying various kinds of technology to enhance the member's onsite experience as well as their experience away from the club. The most popular additions are:

Club-wide Wi-Fi: Clubs are rapidly adding high-speed Wi-Fi service for members, or upgrading their limited existing service. Using commercial-grade equipment that is now quite affordable, members and guests are able to access the Internet for email, text messaging and web surfing while they are on club property.

Some clubs have revamped antiquated rules prohibiting mobile device usage to allow data access while still prohibiting voice use in most areas. Members are able to maintain contact with “the outside world” while at the club without disturbing others.

Fortunately Wi-Fi access to the Internet, which is considered a great convenience by some members, and a dire necessity by others, comes at a very modest cost to acquire, deploy and support.

Mobilized websites: Recent data suggests that for most adults – no matter their age – more than half of their online activity is initiated on a mobile device. Club members are no exception. But many private club websites are not yet optimized for mobile access, forcing members to read and navigate around tiny print and graphics.

Progressive clubs are mobilizing their sites and taking advantage of responsive website design (RWD) features aimed at designing sites to provide an optimal viewing experience – easy reading and navigation with a minimum of resizing, panning, and scrolling – across a wide range of devices (from mobile phones to desktop computer monitors). RWD makes the club's website easy to navigate on any device, and encourages member use when away from the club.

Online reservations: Dining, events, tee times, courts, classes – you name it. Clubs have discovered that members really will make reservations online. Many that initially believed members would shun online technology now find this channel indispensable for all types of reservations. After all, why would members routinely make dining, air, hotel, rental car and myriad other reservations on line, but suddenly balk at using the Internet for club reservations?

The key point to remember here is that all of these advanced technologies embrace two critical factors: They greatly enhance the member experience, and they are very inexpensive compared to most any other capital investment the club might make. Plus, the ongoing cost to support these technologies is minimal. So let's see, greatly enhanced member experience...minimal upfront and ongoing cost. What more needs to be said? **BR**

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