



BILL BOOTHE

Member-Centric Technologies

The Newest Club Amenities

ENHANCING THE MEMBER EXPERIENCE...ADDING VALUE TO THE CLUB'S MEMBERSHIP...SURPASSING MEMBER EXPECTATIONS!

These and other buzz phrases influence the current discussion in private club circles. It's all about building loyalty to retain members and building a brand that signifies value for prospective members. That value proposition is simple.

Private clubs offer their members the ability to associate with those they choose, in a private environment that offers various amenities – golf, dining, fitness, entertainment – coupled with a high level of personal service.

Historically the concept of an amenity has been known as something physical, tangible. Something you can see and touch. That concept is changing.

The newest amenities for private clubs are member-centric technologies that enhance the member experience by meeting important communications needs that society – and your members – have acquired in recent years. And here's the best part: cyber amenities cost almost nothing compared to the physical amenities that have dominated club life for generations.

Let's take a look at a number of member-centric technologies that your club should be using today.

Interactive member website: The most prevalent tech amenity in the private club industry, offering members online access to their billing account history and transactions, real-time information on minimum spending/credit book/gift card balances, a member contacts roster, the club's calendar of events, online reservations, news, notifications and much more.

Almost all private clubs have a member website, but many have yet to implement the full complement of features available to provide a truly robust online member experience.

Member social networking site: An extension of the member website, social networking takes member communications to the next level with Facebook-like functionality that includes personalized family profiles and contact information, member-created interest groups, intra-club messaging, reservations capabilities that reveal who else has signed up for an event, and other user-friendly features designed to engage and captivate your members. Yet few clubs have pulled the trigger on social networking.

Mobile Access: This allows members to access the website and social networking site with their SmartPhones. Since more than half of all "affluent" Americans over the age of 55 now have SmartPhones, club members are expecting mobile access as a matter of course. While all of the major club website/social networking providers offer a mobile version of their products, sadly, most clubs have yet to implement this dynamic amenity.

Wireless Internet Access: This provides faster service for members using mobile or portable devices at the clubhouse. Such service is expected almost anywhere members go (shopping malls, restaurants, airports, at home) and can be added at a minimal cost. Yet, most clubs still do not offer this main-stream amenity.

Member technology center: Convenient for those members needing Internet access but without mobile/portable devices. Can be provided easily and inexpensively with a few older desktop PCs on your wireless network. Most clubs can find space for this amenity, but thus far, most haven't.

So what keeps clubs from going forward with these member-centric amenities? "Only a portion of our members would use these services, so we can't afford to make the investment," is what I hear most often from club managers and boards. Really? And what club doesn't have amenities that only a few members use?

Here's the bottom line. Clubs maintain expensive amenities that are only used by a fraction of their members, which is an important part of the private club experience. A majority of club members are "tech savvy" in that they use the Internet, social networking and mobile devices.

Member-centric technologies can be added at minimal cost and can add significant value to the member experience. So what are you waiting for? **BR**

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