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TECHNOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

A Quick Study of Your Club Management Software

Over the years, I've written articles encouraging club managers to up their technology game.

The driving principle of those articles has been simple: The CEO of any complex organization should understand technology basics to properly oversee all the various functional departments. Of course, gaining the necessary knowledge to become "tech savvy" can be a bit tricky, since there is no formal technology education available for club managers.

So, here's an alternative to formalized education that should help you gain a basic understanding of the major software applications being used in each club department. The idea is to observe this software in action and learn from that observation. Let's start with what you should observe.

Dining point of sale — Start by having your dining POS champion (the staff person most knowledgeable about operating this software) show you these operations:
- Opening a member check and viewing member information
- Ringing in menu items, modifiers and special instructions
- Sending orders to the kitchen and bar
- Splitting checks by seat and by item
- Closing a member check
- Adding food and beverage items and modifiers to the menu
- Running item and member sales reports
- Reviewing the orders printed in the kitchen with the chef.

If you're like most club managers, you're now asking yourself, "Why should I do this? I'm not running the POS system. That's the job of my F&B staff." True, this is not your direct responsibility. But the more you know about the software being used in each club department, the better prepared you will be to deal with situations like:
- Employees blaming the software for various errors or missteps (real or covering for their own shortcomings?)
- Staff pushing for "new and improved software" (is it really needed?)
- Board members suggesting "software improvement and efficiencies" (realistic or "pie in the sky"?).

The point here is this: If you don't know the basics of how your club's software operates, you're dependent on someone else's opinions. And that can be troublesome, if not downright dangerous. Let's keep going.

Banquets and catering — Work with your champion to review:
- Booking a banquet/meeting room
- Creating a BEO/function sheet
- Creating a member contract and invoice
- Posting charges to member accounts
- Adding food and beverage as well as service items to the menu
- Running sales and forecasting reports.

Golf/tennis shop POS and inventory — Work with your champions to review:
- Opening a member check and viewing member information
- Ringing in sales items (merchandise and services)
- Closing a member check
- Adding inventory and services items to the menu
- Running category, item, service and member sales reports
- Receiving inventory and taking physical inventory counts.

Accounting — Work with your champion to review:
- How the annual budget is constructed
- How monthly financial reports are constructed and produced
- How account expense details can be analyzed
- How revenue and expense budget variances are tracked and reported
- How payroll costs are tracked and how payroll budget variances can be predicated.

Lodging — Work with your champion to review:
- How reservations are made – online by members and by in-house staff
- How members/guests are checked in and out
- How folios are designed and produced
- How room rates are created and managed
- How yield management and RevPAR operate.

Of course, there are a number of other departments within your club that are not addressed above. I trust that you can use your imagination and experience to create the needed review lists for those departments.

The bottom line: Many club managers feel safe in leaving technology decisions to their accounting staff and/or their IT staff/outsourced service provider. That can be a perilous approach since today's technologies touch the members directly in so many ways. Beef up your tech quotient by spending some time reviewing with your staff. You'll be better prepared to make good technology decisions and your staff will appreciate that you cared enough to learn from them. **BR**