

# Private Club TECHNOLOGY update

*Helping Private Clubs  
become educated technology  
consumers.*

December, 2018

## Software Champions



One of the most difficult challenges in managing software for private clubs is providing adequate user support. Traditionally, clubs have looked to the software vendors to provide support – in the form of online/call-in customer support, documentation, how-to videos, user-group meetings, online and on-site refresher training, etc. The common ingredient in all of these approaches is the same: *the assistance and expertise are provided by the software vendor.*

For years we've been encouraging our clients to add a critical ingredient to the traditional support recipe – *support and expertise provided internally by club employees.* This approach has proven extremely effective in clubs that have adopted it and kept it alive over a number of seasons. The key players in the approach are called *software champions.* These champions are existing club employees (not technical specialists) from each club department, with primary responsibility for the core application software (accounting, membership, POS, inventory, website, reservations, communications) used within their home departments.

Our experience has proven that champions can greatly improve the club's success in implementing and maintaining today's complex application software. Yet it is rare to find a club that supports a formal champions program. Instead, clubs depend on a few "computer literate" individuals to surface and "volunteer" for the champion duties. We recommend that clubs create a formal champions program to assure that new systems are implemented properly, and that existing systems continue to function at optimal efficiency.

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### About PCTU

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### Services We Offer

The Boothe Group, LLC provides independent, unbiased technology consulting services to the private club industry, including:

- Strategic IT Planning
- Software Reengineering
- Software Evaluation & Selection
- Network Security Analysis
- Online Technology Education



### Champion Responsibilities

Software champions are responsible for a number of tasks. The ultimate success of the club's software rests heavily with the dedication and capabilities of the champions. Listed below are the champion's duties within a formal champion program:

1. Master the Software Applications. First and foremost, champions are responsible for mastering their appointed software application(s). Champions should receive complete and thorough training from the vendor on each application, and should become familiar with all available documentation for those applications.
2. Pilot Test the Software. If new club management software is being installed, champions should lead the pilot testing program. This program calls for the club's champions to perform detailed testing of all software functions prior to taking the software live. The process includes documenting any functionality issues identified during testing and reporting them to the software vendor for resolution.
3. Take On-Going Responsibility. Champions take the lead role in operating their assigned application(s). For some champions this might include sole responsibility for an application, as in a small club with a single person (the controller) responsible for general ledger. Or for a larger club, one F&B champion might have the primary responsibility for menu maintenance, with another champion responsible for new server POS training. The key to success is to have champions responsible for assuring the on-going operational success of the club's core software applications.
4. Interact with the Software Vendor. Champions are in the best position to understand the club's specific software problems/issues, and effectively communicate with the software vendor. In fact, the vendors are very supportive of the champions concept, knowing that well-trained club employees are far superior to untrained individuals in solving software issues. To emphasize this value, some vendors specify that only well-trained individuals should be contacting the vendor support lines.
5. Interact with the Club's Technology Professional(s). For those clubs that employ their own professional(s), as well as those outsourcing that function to a local provider, champions act as their "eyes and ears" on the firing line to report issues as they occur. Experienced champions can provide critical insights for determining the actual source of systems problems, and help separate the application software issues from problems related to network or equipment issues.

### Lead and Back-Up Champions

Historically, a major challenge of private club management has been handling employee turnover. To minimize the effect of a champion leaving the club, we recommend that, where practical, each application have a lead and a backup champion. Backup champions are generally a bit less experienced than lead champions, but receive all of the same training and attention afforded the lead. This redundancy in expertise comes in handy when any champion leaves the club.

## Formal Responsibilities

To make sure the champions approach takes hold and stays active, we strongly recommend that the lead and back-up champion responsibilities be included in the club's human resources procedures. The following will help guarantee the on-going success of the champions program:

1. Add Champion Duties to Job Descriptions. By including the specific champion responsibilities in the appropriate job descriptions, management can demonstrate its commitment to the program and emphasize the on-going importance of the champion role.
2. Perform Regular Evaluations of Champions. As part of the employee's regular performance evaluation, management should include performance criteria to cover the unique champion duties assigned.
3. Reflect Champion Duties in Compensation. As with any special skills or responsibilities, champions should be rewarded financially for their efforts. In most cases, champions perform their special work in addition to their regular job, and should be recognized financially for this important contribution to the club's success.

## Conclusion

Clubs that use the champions program find that the initial implementation, and the on-going operations of their computer software, are greatly enhanced by the work of their software champions. For a minimal financial investment, management can formalize the champions procedures and reinforce their on-going use in all club departments. A successful champions program offers great value to the club, by enhancing the overall success of the club management software, increasing member satisfaction with the club's technology, and maximizing the club's return on its technology investment.

## F&B POS Access to the Internet

Let's start with the bottom line – configuring F&B POS terminals with Internet access is generally a bad idea. Rarely is there a need for dining room wait staff and bartenders to access anything legitimate on the Internet. Yet we frequently find that club POS terminals in dining are wide open to the Internet. In most cases club management is unaware of this access, or does not understand the perils of such access. When you restrict POS computers and terminals from accessing the Internet, you protect them from exposure and potential security threats such as viruses and other malware. POS systems should be connected only for necessary POS activities and should not be available for any general Internet usage. One click on a malware-infected site by an employee on a POS device could be disastrous for the club. So, check with your IT professional to make sure POS access to the Internet is properly restricted. (PointofSale.com)

# Final Edition of PCTU

Just a brief announcement that this will be the final edition of Private Club Technology Update. I published PCTU from 1999 to 2005 when I was a partner with RSM US (formerly McGladrey), took a break for a few years, and resumed publishing in February 2016 with my own firm. The newsletter has provided a forum to highlight important technology issues for the private club industry, and I trust that it has been helpful to our subscribers over the years. As much as I have enjoyed writing and publishing PCTU, I'm finding that the opportunity to publish in The Boardroom Magazine is more than sufficient. Many of the key PCTU articles are picked up by The Boardroom, and the opportunity to publish there has expanded greatly in recent years. So, I've decided to redirect my efforts to The Boardroom – which has a much wider subscriber base than I could ever hope to have with PCTU. I encourage you to subscribe to The Boardroom Magazine (if you don't already) and offer my heartfelt thanks to the hundreds of club executives who have subscribed to PCTU over the years.



## About Our Services... IT Strategic Planning

This is one of our most popular consulting services for private clubs. We begin with a thorough review of each club department's technology needs—software, equipment and connectivity. Our review explores all facets of technology available to the club. We then evaluate and prioritize each area of technology. Finally, we create a five-year technology implementation plan and budget – to create a roadmap for management to follow over the coming years. For more information on this and other services we offer, visit our website at [www.boothegroup.com](http://www.boothegroup.com).