

Transforming Your Club's Approach to Technology

By Bill Boothe

As we begin to emerge from the trauma of COVID-19, our thoughts naturally turn to getting our lives – and our clubs – back to normal.

Unfortunately, normal for most clubs leaves a lot to be desired when it comes to technology. So here are some key strategies and actions clubs should be taking right now to *optimize* their technology for the future....

1. Get serious about network security: Sure, your club has a firewall and anti-malware. So, the network “doors and windows” are locked. But what about an alarm system when someone breaks in? That’s where network security monitoring takes over.

Forward-thinking clubs have hired an outside specialist company to monitor their network activity 24/7. Any attempts to compromise the network are tracked and reported. Any intrusions or unusual behavior are quickly identified and stopped. Quit procrastinating and get this done. It’s not all that expensive and is well worth the investment.

2. Get rid of the paper in accounting – part 1: You’re still printing and mailing monthly statements to your members. And handling payment checks mailed in by the members. This has got to go.

Advanced clubs have solved these headaches by notifying the members that the club is moving to electronic billing and payments and will be posting statements and check detail on the club’s website. And, that all members will be required to sign up for electronic payments via bank draft.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO NOW:

- **Get serious about network security** by adding a network monitoring service.
- **Get rid of paper in accounting by going paperless** with member billing and payments, invoice coding and approvals and vendor payments.
- **Improve software utilization** by providing refresher training for your staff to maximize their efficiency.
- **Generate useful business intelligence** by learning how to use your existing query and reporting tools.

Charge a fee for the laggards if you need to prompt them to get with the times. Of course, there will be exceptions for older members that do not have a computer (if you can actually find some) but don’t let the tail wag the dog.

2. Get rid of paper in accounting – part 2: You’re still routing paper invoices around the club departments for coding and approvals and printing a mountain of paper checks each week to pay vendors. Stop it.

Tech savvy clubs are using paperless A/P processing and payment systems to increase efficiency and transparency, and to eliminate the headaches associated with approvals and check signing.

Best of all, using a *virtual credit card* more than pays for all of the new technology! Clubs that are on top of this make the transition is less than a month. What are you waiting for? (By the way, we understand that COVID-19 is likely just the first of more such pandemics we will face in the coming years. Think how being paperless will help keep the club running in the future when staff is hunkered down at home.)

4. Improve your software utilization:

When’s the last time your employees were given any refresher training on the various software applications they are using? If you’re like most clubs, probably not since the programs were initially installed. There’s an easy fix to this – get some training!

Purchase refresher training from your club management software company that can be delivered online. And don’t forget your Microsoft Office applications like Excel, Word and PowerPoint. Lots of excellent and inexpensive training available for those programs too. As Tiger Woods says... “There’s always stuff to work on. You’re never there.”

5. Generate useful business intelligence:

Lots of buzz these days about business intelligence, and new third-party solutions that bolt-on to your club’s accounting software. But wait a minute. Do you actually know how to use the BI tools you already have?

All of the leading club management suites include query and reporting tools that – wait for it – most clubs under-utilize or don’t use at all. So, before you get mesmerized by some fancy dancy bolt-on, learn how to use the stuff you already have. An online training session or two for your CFO/Controller will give you an idea of what’s possible and what you’ve been missing! **BR**



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