

Sharing an IT Professional



BILL BOOTHE

This is a first for me – covering a subject that I have written about in the past. But this topic – Sharing an IT Professional – is so important and timely that I couldn't resist writing it again.

Back in 2002 I wrote an article entitled “*Ever feel like your club's computer systems are starting to run your life, rather than the other way around?*” Club computer technology has not only become more powerful and complex, but it has spread to most every department of the club.

Who at your club has the time – and expertise – to take care of all of the PCs, POS terminals, printers, servers, switches, cabling and software, not to mention the constant barrage of operations questions from the club's personnel?

For most clubs, these chores fall to the financial executive. Years ago that may have been okay, since computers were pretty much relegated to the accounting department. Today it's different – technology is everywhere, it's complicated; it requires specific expertise to understand and maintain, and when it doesn't work, the club can be in real trouble.

Previously we've discussed hiring a full-time technology specialist to handle computer-related responsibilities. That might work well for larger clubs, but most smaller clubs can't justify the addition of a full-time technology position.

So what those clubs really need is access to a technology specialist for about 20 hours per week, and more if an emergency arises. However, it is virtually impossible to hire a well-qualified professional for this work on a part-time basis.

Enter the personnel sharing concept.

Imagine that two nearby clubs decide to hire and share a single technology support individual – a true professional dedicated to just those two clubs and their computer users. Imagine this person working a half day at each club, every day, handling network and equipment issues, answering user questions, communicating with outside vendors to resolve problems, handling special projects as they arise. Imagine this person being immediately available to handle any emergency encountered by either club.

Is this a dream, or reality?

Not only is it reality, but also it isn't all that difficult to accomplish. Here's how it can work:

1. Two clubs (not three or four – that spreads the person too thin) get together and decide to make it happen.

2. Preferably, both clubs have the same core application software. That makes software and network support consistent between the two clubs. Preferable, but not mandatory.

3. The clubs arrange with an outside IT support company to provide a suitable candidate.

4. The IT support company recruits the IT professional expressly for the clubs, acts as the employer of record for the selected candidate and provides a complete pay and benefits package.

5. Management from both clubs work out a suitable schedule for the individual – a set schedule, which changes only in the event of an emergency.

6. The IT support company tracks the amount of time spent by the IT professional at each month, and the clubs are billed accordingly.

7. Management from both clubs conducts an annual performance evaluation and decides on whether the IT professional should be retained or replaced.

This process allows the individual to be employed full time while their work load is split between the two clubs that pay much less than for a full-time individual, since they really only need a part-timer. Most IT support companies will provide such a service for a 15-20 percent fee above the actual employee cost. Bottom line – it's an opportunity to acquire valuable and much-needed expertise at a reasonable cost.

You might be wondering if technology professionals would be attracted to such an arrangement. Our experience in technology recruiting for private clubs has shown the following:

- A high percentage of technology professionals are self-employed contractors with few or no benefits and no job security
- Many contract assignments involve travel, sometimes lots of it, which is a big detractor for those with families
- While contracting can initially be an exciting venture, for many it becomes a very lonely exist-

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What I hear most from member surveys and new member interviews is the need for more fun social events, whether in golf, dining, special events or activities. If you consider your total environment to be 360 degrees, you need to consider where best to apply and allocate your resources to embrace the broadest cross section of your 15-minute drive.

Consider this: Less than 5-10 percent of your market is likely capable of affording membership and only approximately 15 percent of those that can afford membership actually play golf. Now look at the market for social, fitness or aquatics...one hundred percent of the market that can afford membership.

The real benefit of looking at your two communities is the ability to form fit your offerings to serve both. As young families grow into income and time, get them into another category of membership. If they're not golfers, get your pro shop aligned with offering programs to get them to eventually upgrade.

Here's the bottom line. There is nothing in any club today that cannot be fixed if you understand your two communities and serve them *both well*. It's sustainable! **BR**

Rick Coyne is CEO of the Professional Club Marketing Association. He can be reached via email: rcoyne@clubmark.com

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you prepare and execute a well-conceived master plan, will greatly reduce the disturbances and overall expenses.

This is a key first step toward a successful upgrade that will sustain and reinforce your club's membership for generations to come. **BR**

Bryan D. Webb is principal, Marsh & Associates, Inc. He can be reached at (720) 266-2582 or via email: bwebb@marsharchitects.com



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What's hot in food and beverage trends: The food trends right now are fabulous! At the core of it all are a couple of hotties - ingredients, ingredients, ingredients – the freshest and best you can find and keeping the ‘experience’ at the forefront. Various food stations, especially interactive ones, lend themselves to this far more than a plated meal and presentation alone can change a whole event from boring to buzzing!

Making it happen...chefs and catering directors: Start this creative collaboration today. I guarantee it will ignite

your excitement all over again for this incredibly passionate industry of ours. Ask yourself – Where can we grow? Where can we change? What can we make more exciting? The answers are all around you and inside you. . .

If you missed our webinar – March Menu Madness, not to worry! Webinars are always recorded and available in our library on the ACCP website. **BR**

Lynne LaFond DeLuca is the executive director of the Association of Club Catering Professionals and a private club industry consultant. You can reach Lynne at Lynne@TheACCP.com, or visit the website www.TheACCP.com.

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tence, moving from project to project, never really gaining a feeling of accomplishment. A great percentage of contractors we have spoken with are tired of the routine and are “just looking for a real job”

- From a technology standpoint, private clubs offer plenty of intellectual challenge. The combination of sophisticated software applications, POS devices, operations nuances and, in this case, two separate but nearby sites, virtually guarantees an attractive intellectual challenge that most technology professionals will appreciate.

If your club has 25 or more PCs (including POS stations) and does not have access to at least a part-time technology

specialist, we recommend that you consider this approach, and discuss it with neighboring clubs.

You'll most likely find that they are in the same boat as you, and may be open to putting together a personnel sharing plan that will meet both clubs technology needs – at a much reduced cost! **BR**

Bill Boothe is president of The Boothe Group, LLC, an independent consulting firm that helps clubs understand computer technology, make good decisions and receive the highest value from their technology investment. During his 25 years in the club industry Bill has assisted more than 350 private clubs with the planning, evaluation, selection and implementation of computer technology in all facets of their operations. Bill can be reached at bboothe@boothegroup.com.