



SINGAPORE CLUB MANAGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CLUB MANAGERS' ASSOCIATION OF SINGAPORE

Surviving the downturn

• by David Brightling

The economy was never far from the discussions at the 82nd World Conference on Club Management in New Orleans. The CMAA ran several sessions on how the economy is affecting clubs and club managers, the latter both personally and professionally, and how managers can cope during these difficult times. While there was a palpable gloom in the air at some of these meetings, the mood at the International Symposium was surprisingly upbeat. Here the ideas emerging from the round table discussions weren't about cutting staff or otherwise reacting to the downturn, rather the ideas focussed on proactive responses.

Continued...



Peter Goh, our official representative at the 2009 World Conference on Club Management, addressing guests at the Allied Association Breakfast.

INSIDE

From the President

It has been of course a rather gloomy start to the new year ...



• Page 2

From the Editor



Welcome to the premier issue of Singapore Club Manager...

• Page 3

What's next for the Boomers?

We know that the Baby Boomers are an economic juggernaut ...



• Page 4

Extraordinary Communications



In this industry, like most, there are storms! In fact most of us encounter...

• Page 5

Surviving the downturn

• Continued from cover story



The topics, trends and tactics discussed included:

- **Membership Leaves of Absence, with a fee** (usually the same as that charged for out of country members), as a way to retain members with short term financial challenges. This could be coupled with limited “pay as you play” golf privileges, assuming these are carefully packaged and controlled. The rationale: it’s cheaper to retain an existing member than it is to recruit a new one.
- **Flexible memberships** – Thinking outside the box and introducing more flexibility into membership categories, fees and privileges is also a good way to retain members. In fact, flexible memberships – including temporary memberships, trial memberships, and restricted memberships – can also be a good way to attract new members.
- **Lessons for children** are usually the last discretionary expense to be cut, which means that family clubs are better suited to weather the downturn. However, such lessons and activities also exist in golf and yacht clubs – not always thought to be “family friendly” – and creating new activities is a tool to engage and retain members with children in all club settings. Remember, children determine their parents’ spending patterns.
- **Preserve quality; invest in marketing** – Despite the variety of Symposium participants (85 from 15 countries representing all segments of the industry), a commonly expressed view was: “Don’t compromise on quality, don’t compromise your brand and don’t compromise your marketing budget”. The message is that quality is a key competitive advantage for clubs, that clubs have high “brand equity” and that marketing is more important now than ever.

- **Incentivise members** – This can take a variety of forms, from out and out incentives (“one for one” promotions), to frequent diner rewards, to rewards for referring members, to free activities to keep members engaged, and so on.
- **Executive golf courses** – As those who are still working come under increased pressure – including time pressure – shorter par 3 courses may become increasingly popular as a way for members to enjoy a quicker round of golf.
- **Share financial information with staff** – As the former Chairman of SAS once said, an employee without information cannot be held accountable; an employee who has been given information cannot evade accountability. Sharing financial performance with department heads and even front line is a good way to engage them in the cost control process. As they are closer to the work, they may have some excellent ideas that you, as General Manager, may never have thought of.
- **Alternatives to layoffs** – Participants felt that staff layoffs should be a last resort, reflecting the long tenure of employees at established clubs. Hiring freezes, cross training and deployment, voluntary wage or hour cuts to preserve jobs and other creative human resources practices should be implemented long before considering staff cuts. Of course, those with significant part-time and casual staff can reduce their hours before dealing with full-time employees.

While these are, indeed, challenging times, the creativity, energy and enthusiasm of managers at the International Symposium bodes well for the global club industry. Remember, the Chinese character for “crisis” is a combination of the characters for “danger” and “opportunity”. There are, indeed, opportunities for proactive clubs in these difficult times.

From the President



Roy Higgs
President

It has been of course a rather gloomy start to the new year however I would like to remind colleagues that with every downturn there is always a point when it turns around. So keeping that in mind it would be useful to take stock and prepare for the inevitable return to better times.

I am grateful to the various sub-committee members specially those in the CCOC for their efforts at last year’s conference. Thanks to Peter and his team. Thanks also to those in the Education sub-committee for the time spent on the new initiatives for the Diploma in Club Management which we hope to launch this year.

Finally cheers to David Brightling for his efforts to launch this new e-newsletter. It is something that we have been meaning to do for some time so we hope that members will use this forum to communicate their thoughts on issues that affects us all.

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the Premier Issue

• by David Brightling



David Brightling facilitating the International Symposium

Welcome to the premier issue of *Singapore Club Manager*, the quarterly e-newsletter of the Club Managers' Association of Singapore. The launch of this e-publication represents the culmination of EXCO's vision and plans over several years and I am honoured to have been asked to serve as Editor for Volume One. Which is a nice way of saying that I was in the restroom when nominations closed! Regardless, I do have some experience in this having edited publications for the Club Managers Association of Hong Kong and The Canadian Society of Club Managers, and I look forward to providing CMAS members with a timely, informative and interesting mix of local, regional and international news and views from the private club industry.

Our cover story focusses on the global economy, its impact on private clubs and how the best are coping. It is based upon my notes as Moderator of the International Symposium at the 2009 World Conference on Club Management. Peter Goh and I look forward to sharing highlights from other sessions in future issues. (If I can be volunteered, so can Peter!). This issue also features an article on demographics, particularly baby boom demographics, from the McMahon Group, world leaders in strategic and capital planning for clubs.

We are also pleased to present a special insert, "Using Extraordinary Communication to Weather the Storm!" from with Winter 2009 Issue of *Club*

Manager Quarterly, the Journal of The Canadian Society of Club Managers. Future issues will feature submissions from *The Private Club Advisor* and *Club & Resort Business* magazine, both highly respected publications from the US, and *The Golf Club Secretary* an industry gem published in the UK. Other regular features include *Who, What & Where*, *Diary* and *A Final Thought*.

Ultimately, however, the success of *Singapore Club Manager* will depend upon Singapore content, on contributions from you, the members of CMAS. Just as International Symposium participants learned as much from each other as from the outstanding professional

development opportunities at the World Conference, your fellow members can benefit from your experience. Have you introduced a new facility or service? Recently hosted a major event? Survived – or even better thrived – during a renovation? If so, please share your experience with your colleagues through the pages of *Singapore Club Manager*. Submissions large or small, photos, simple ideas, questions you would like answered in a future issue, will all be welcome. Please forward these, your comments and suggestions, to me at brightling@one15marina.com.

Until next issue.
David Brightling
Editor

ABOUT THE EDITOR

David Brightling is the General Manager of ONE°15 Marina Club, Singapore and was the moderator of the 2009 International Symposium.

DAIRY

Forthcoming events from around the world for club management professionals.

7-9 May 2009 - Asian Club Management Conference, Club Management Association of Hong Kong, Macau & China, Hong Kong.

3-7 October 2009 - Annual Conference, Canadian Society of Club Managers, Victoria, British Columbia.

15-20 October - BMI International, Club Managers' Association of America, Stockholm, Sweden.

What's Next for the Boomers

• McMachon Club Trends, Winter 2009



We know that the Baby Boomers are an economic juggernaut that will only grow in the significance over the next decade. Expert forecast that Boomer expenditures will account fully 40% of all U.S. spending by 2015 (Source: McKensey Quarterly). Part of this attributable to sheer size (45 million households), but much of it has to do with affluence – although this is unevenly spread among the Boomers. But nearly 25% of Boomers (over 10 Billion households) represent the core market for country clubs: those with incomes significantly greater than \$100,000 and a net worth in excess of a million dollars.

The Boomer story, however, is not all about money. No other generations has quite had this one's flair for innovation, creativity and optimism. When novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald offered that "there are no second acts in American lives," he could have not imagined the Boomer phenomenon. As leisure time expands and nests start to empty, the Boomers will be open to all sorts of new experiences and lifestyle changes. Here are some important dimensions of the Boomer story that are likely to intersect rather directly with the fortunes of private clubs.

More single living

In part of legacy of higher divorce rates, we expect that almost half Boomer households are likely to be headed by single persons.

Greater need for social connectedness.

With greater numbers of singles and with traditional sources of community, such as neighborhood and religion, waning in influence, many Boomers are likely to be searching for new sources of community – and this can mean new openness to appeal of a country or city club.

Increased of cultivation of interests.

Increased of cultivation of interests. Individual pursuits like cooking, cinema, and yes, golf will assert themselves as important organizing principles for not only leisure, but bigger aspirations linked to personal development.

This is a big opportunity for clubs; but it is also an opportunity for other institutions, organisations and businesses. Clubs must recognise that the prospect of belonging to an engaged and active community is a value-proposition with real resonance. Young members are a key the future of private clubs, but real opportunity exist now for those targeting this 45- to 65-year-old age group.

WHO WHAT & WHERE

Managers on the move, keeping in touch, and much more.

Robert Bird

Has moved to Raffles Marina.

Brian Toft

Will be leaving the British Club in September. His Deputy Manager, **Carsten Kledgman** will be succeeding him and his promotion takes effect from 1 April.

Josie Tulipano

Former General Manager of the American Club, now lives in Dubai and will be getting married this summer.



Using Extraordinary Communications to Weather the Storm

By Kevin MacDonald and Shelley MacDougall



In this industry, like most, there are storms! In fact most of us encounter many storms throughout our career, no matter what the industry. If it was smooth sailing all the time, anyone could do it. To enhance a successful career in club management, it helps to have the attitude that storms happen; so unless they are avoidable, we need to prepare for and deal with them.

Storms can show up in many forms. They can literally come from the weather, but they can also come in the form of an economic downturn, some tough political issues, dealing with difficult people, or even losing a job.

When we get the opportunity to coach club managers, they often talk to us when they are in the middle of a storm. Our job is to set them up to weather the storm and thrive on the other side of it. One of the ways we support them in weathering the storm (and sometimes avoiding it all together) is to continuously work on building strong communication skills.

We recently heard an interview with someone who observed that whenever he made decisions that came from his passions he had success, and when he made decisions based on fear he paid the price. We believe that fear is the absence of trust. When you raise your skills as a communicator you raise the likelihood that you will create environments where trust will exist.

In his book "The Speed of Trust," Stephen Covey talks about the fact that in a relationship where trust exists, you can say the wrong thing and the other person will likely understand your intent



and know what you mean. Conversely, in a relationship of distrust you can choose your words very precisely and they can still be misinterpreted.

When we are training people on communication we often say that extraordinary communicators don't just focus on what they say but more importantly they focus on how it lands. We believe that the communicator gets better when they care about how the receiver receives the message.

Great communication often comes down to reducing or eliminating fear, building an environment of trust and having powerful intentions. As a club manager, it would be helpful to look at these three components in terms of your relationships with your board, your staff and your members. Before doing that, it is most important to look inside to really see how fear, trust and intentions impact your communication, your behaviour and your success.

Although we often don't want to admit our fears, storms can be scary. The scariest element is the uncertainty. The unknown can cause us to imagine the worst and to start while making decisions and communicating motivated by fear. When

this happens, we usually don't present our best selves. We appear scared, angry, and defensive. Which can speak much louder than the words we choose. Building an environment of trust begins with our ability to be trusting and trustworthy. Has the way you have been communicating added to or inhibited the likelihood of others putting trust in you? Are you able to give trust to others? If not, can you help them understand how to gain your trust? What are your intentions? Do you intend to have everyone win? Do you intend to prove that you are right? Do you intend to win at the expense of others or collaborate with others to navigate through the storms?

HERE ARE SOME TIPS ON COMMUNICATION THAT CAN HELP YOU AVOID OR NAVIGATE THE

STORM: DO YOUR HOMEWORK – WHAT IS THE REALITY? Are you facing a storm that isn't even there? Are you facing one that is worse than you imagined? Before you act - find out what is real! Perhaps you just heard from a Board member about what the membership is thinking based only

continued...

Using Extraordinary Communications to Weather the Storm

continued ...

on what the three people in his foursome are saying. Before you take action, you might want to check the validity of those statements. Another example is deciding to follow the media – just remember that they are primarily looking for evidence of what is wrong. How often do we do that with a spouse, a teenager, a member or a president? Step away from emotion and preconceived beliefs and try to see what is real. Maybe what appears to be unwarranted criticism has some validity. Maybe the storm that appears to be a huge challenge has some opportunity.

ASK QUESTIONS, AVOID ASSUMPTIONS!

One of the biggest obstacles to seeing reality is our incredible ability to assume. We think we know what they meant before they finish the sentence! We think we know how to handle a situation before we know all of the details. We think if we ask questions people might think we don't know everything. One thing for sure is "We don't know everything!" When we ask questions, we gain knowledge, build trust, eliminate assumptions, and employ one of the most powerful communications skills of all - we can listen!

LISTEN!

As coaches we are trained listeners. Quite honestly, sometimes we are very good and sometimes – not so much. We aspire to listen without memory, judgment and desire.

If you are listening to someone and you are thinking about things they have said or done in the past, you are not listening. If you are listening to someone and you are focusing on the fact that you believe them to be wrong, you are not listening. If you are listening to someone and you are only focusing on the result you want, you are not listening. Just try to listen to someone without memory, judgment and desire and exist entirely for them for even a few seconds. Watch what happens to your communication.



TAKE THE HIGH ROAD! HAVE GOOD INTENTIONS!

Sometimes when you are in stormy situations people may communicate to you from their weakest most unattractive places. They may say harsh, hurtful, cutting remarks because they are hurt, frightened or feeling negative about themselves. Did you ever have a member who was always pleasant but after suffering some kind of loss he or she became miserable and irritable? We believe that as extraordinary communicators we have a choice. You can react and get down in the mud, or you can take the high road and help build others up.



SEE VALUE IN THE OTHER PERSON!

It's simple. If you don't, you will certainly pay the price! When others know that you see their worth, you develop rapport and trust. When those are evident, great wins can happen for both parties. Even when you have to deliver bad news, if you have acknowledged their value, the other person will be much more willing to accept the news and move forward. Anyone can see what is wrong with others, it takes courage, respect, and caring to see their value!



DON'T AVOID THE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS!

When we avoid difficult conversations we build a bigger chasm between each other. We tend to make the difficult conversation more difficult. So many interpretations and assumptions are made when we avoid these crucial conversations. The reality is that once the conversation is over, we often find that it wasn't as bad as what we thought it would be. Getting through the storm sometimes means feeling uncomfortable. Have the conversation anyway!



KNOW YOUR WORDS MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

The words you choose are powerful! The words you choose can make the storm worse, or calm the waters. Powerful words can help avoid the storm in the first place. What words will you choose to help people see the storm in a very different way

If you are in the midst of a storm, please contact us to allow us to help you navigate the waters. For more information about being an Extraordinary Leader, visit us at www.thecoachingdept.com. Kevin MacDonald, Clarity Success Coaching Ltd. 1-604-507-1288 kmacdonald@dccnet.com Shelley MacDougall, New Reality 1-403-441-7074 shelley@newreality.ca

A Final Thought

“Owners of capital will stimulate the working classes to buy more and more expensive goods, houses and technology, pushing them to take more and more expensive credits, until their debt becomes unbearable. The unpaid debt will lead to bankruptcy of banks, which will have to be nationalised and the State will have to take the road which will eventually lead to communism”

-Karl Marx, Das Kapital, 1867