

Recruitment, Retention, Remodel?

By Rick Ladendorf

THERE IS NEVER A GOOD TIME TO REMODEL! BUT NOW MORE THAN EVER, MANY PRIVATE CLUBS ARE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING REMODELING THE CLUBHOUSE FOR A HOST OF REASONS, MANY OF WHICH MAY SURPRISE YOU.

Michael DiPietro, CCM, chief operating officer/general manager of Aberdeen Golf & Country Club, West Boynton Beach Florida, recently completed what he refers to as the fitness, tennis and aquatics facility of the future.

“Although, value should have always been important to a club’s leadership, in today’s turbulent economy, it is essential in order to retain and attract members.

“Our goal was to design and implement several trendsetting and innovative approaches into our new facility aiding in the reduction of the standard capital and operating costs while at the same time providing a member experience second to none,” DiPietro said.

“The result is our capital investment and operating costs are lower than the industry standard, members are spending more time enjoying the amenities and we are seeing trends of membership growth.”

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

Neighborhoods change, socioeconomic status changes and lifestyles change. With 10,000 baby boomers retiring every day and couples having children later in life, the amenities they desire to match their lifestyle should be considered when remodeling the club.

REMODELING COMMITTEE

Every remodeling project needs a plan, good leadership and a remodeling committee. Representatives should include the general manager, two board members, marketing/membership director, events manager and a member or two. The committee should agree on the required amenities before interviewing architects, designers or builders.

STAY WITH YOUR VISION

Most remodeling committees outlast the original board members that started the project, so it’s important to document everything. While there may be some minor modifications to

the original vision as new members are invited to the process, it’s important to maintain the integrity of the original vision.

Adrian Johnson, president and CEO of ELAN General Contracting who recently completed a \$5 million renovation said, “We persevered through three boards, three general managers and numerous marketing folks all of whom had to have their input.

“The project was completed according to the original specifications, with some minor modifications, but dealing with multiple board members was challenging.”

SELECTING THE CONTRACTOR

Hiring a project/construction management firm early on in the pre-construction phase will help in the transition to the construction phase. Selecting the contractor should be based on recommendations from your remodeling committee. The contractor you select is critical to maintaining good relations with the members and mitigating risk for the board of directors.

Paul Levy, president club operations and development of the Sunrise Company has developed many properties in his 30 plus years in the industry and comments.

“Every project we embark upon at Sunrise starts with a vision of what we want that property to be to our members, then comes the detailed planning with our team of executives and consultants. We will often go through 15 sets of plans of a clubhouse or sports club and spa, fine tuning and value engineering every detail before construction starts as to minimize any change orders during construction. This is the key to staying on budget and completing the project on time with minimal unexpected complications.”

Your current members have been part of a tradition and have created a legacy that will live on for many years to come. It is important they understand the importance of remodeling the clubhouse to meet the changing demographics.

The three things to consider before remodeling are: 1) Understanding the needs and wants of new and existing members 2) Selecting a remodeling committee and 3) Staying focused on the plan. **BR**

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