

Q How do you optimize your management team? What are the most critical components of an effective management team?

A Many managers spend a significant amount of time doing the wrong things very well or the right things very poorly. The responsibilities and goals of a private club management team include accomplishing performance objectives and supporting the mission and vision of the organization. If a club doesn't have a "real" mission and vision, the first step to success is to define these with clarity. With these in hand, clear direction can be established with the efficient and effective use of resources and human capital.

Boards respect management teams that focus on results that make a direct impact on the member experience.

Clubs across the country are unique in their culture and offerings, but what sets successful clubs apart from the pack are three crucial factors: clarity in vision, a strong sense of identity (who they are and who they are not) and leadership teams with the right set of attributes described below.

People

A club has limited human capital and a limited number of hours in a day to get things done. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities help to ensure that the right people are doing the right job. The best general managers identify and leverage their staffs' strengths that go beyond their normal role and responsibilities. Knowing the skills required for each position and applying the strengths and capabilities of the team empowers club leaders to use these individuals more effectively and can maximize individual and team performance. All top executives intrinsically understand that they cannot manage anything else until they can manage their own time and their team.

Equally important, is investing in people. As students of the industry, the best club managers set examples as coaches and mentors. The best managers lead and care for individuals, while not compromising the standards and vision of the organization. They cut underperformers loose after a dedicated but

short period of time because they owe it to the high performers to not tolerate underperformance for too long.

Expectations

The planning and goal-setting process starts at the executive level. It is the responsibility of the chief executive to ensure his or her goals and objectives are conveyed to and reflected in the work of all team members in the organization.

Each department head must clearly understand their individual and departmental role in accomplishing these objectives and ultimately achieving the club's mission. When the organization has a comprehensive performance plan in place, the management team needs to celebrate it by sharing it with the board along with periodically reporting the results once the plan is implemented. Boards respect management teams that focus on results that make a direct impact on the member experience.

Communication

Communication is important in any relationship, but the best leaders excel at it. They understand that there are many ways to communicate: Quantitative, qualitative, formal, informal, written, verbal, emotionally or with the relative absence of emotion ... one size does not fit all. The best managers can quickly assess the most effective way to relate to a group or an individual.

Goals and objectives must be well defined and communicated effectively so everyone is clear about expectations. Consistent feedback is essential and should be provided formally and informally on a regular basis. The most productive management teams allow for open communication and input as well as feedback and ideas from all departments. Constructive criticism is useful and necessary. By establishing an environment that supports a meritocracy of ideas, the club wins overall.

Leadership Planning

Peter Drucker and Yogi Berra were pals in the early 70s. They each seem to view leadership and planning in different, yet similar ways. Drucker: "The best way to predict the future is to create it." Berra: "Prediction is very hard, especially when it's about the future." The takeaway is to create a clear vision, develop a plan to achieve that vision and acknowledge that there will be bumps along the way. ■



Dan Denehy is the president of DENEHY Club Thinking Partners, an executive search and management-consulting firm that has handled nearly 300 projects for more than 100 private clubs and boutique resorts. He can be reached at dan@denehyctp.com or learn more at www.denehyctp.com