

**CRAIG MARTIN**

Craig Martin, CCM is vice president, DENEHY Club Thinking Partners, a leading executive search and consulting firm serving private clubs and boutique resorts. Learn more about CTP at www.denehyctp.com. Craig can be reached at 561.662.4379 or via email: craig@denehyctp.com.

Passing The Baton

Successful Transition of Board Members

In many instances, the annual board transition of outgoing and new board members is a sensitive period.

It requires general managers to draw on their skill set and experience to handle and lead the process seamlessly. Ensuring this goes smoothly is no easy task even for the most experienced general manager.

Here are valuable tips I've assembled over my 40 years in the industry to help make the process go as smoothly as possible. First and foremost, the general manager is responsible for leading the transition to ensure the handoff goes seamlessly.

STEPS FOR SUCCESS

Upon election, a thorough orientation for all new board members is mandatory and should include the general manager and club president

- A professionally prepared presentation of material and information should be given to the new board member to use as a resource during their tenure. Consider using one of several app-based platforms to warehouse industry, club, board and committee information
- A tour and walkthrough of the entire facility and campus helps assimilate the new board member and broadens their viewpoint to the back of the house, which they may have never seen before. A general introduction to the key department heads during the tour helps them learn about each manager's business unit and area. Consider having those department leaders drive the process in their respective areas
- Each new board member should meet with the general manager and the professional liaison they will work with as chair of the committee. Outlining the history of the committee, structure of the committee, past minutes, key projects, and a high-level department overview sets the stage for getting off on a good start for all. This is a great time to review the committee's charter and grants and limits of authority
- A personal note welcoming each new board member helps foster a good rapport and earns respect on building a solid relationship

General managers should take the initiative to encourage new board members to engage in meeting new club members. Most new members like to know who they can communicate with on the board. This gives the new board members a feeling of gratification and engagement to their role

- Getting professional pictures of the newly formed board and new members to display in the club gives a sense of pride and awareness to those who are volunteering their time
- Periodically general managers should invite new board members to meet for coffee or lunch one-on-one to foster the relationship and open the lines of communication.

TRANSITIONING OFF THE BOARD

- Recognizing each outgoing board member at the annual meeting is very important as it shows respect and recognition for their term on the board to the membership
- Symbolically a customized plaque or gift is presented to each outgoing board member at the annual meeting
- The general manager should schedule one-on-one time with each outgoing board member over coffee or lunch and glean constructive feedback from their tenure on the board
- It is helpful for board members and committee chairs to learn potential areas of improvement by meeting with staff liaison and/or general managers
- Departing board members should be encouraged by the general manager and club president to remain involved in committees and help ensure continuity by being an ambassador supporting the club's vision and leadership. Don't allow board members to leave feeling their time was wasted as a board member. Invite them into focus groups or remain involved on committees.

Imagine a relay race of distance runners who pass the baton from one runner to the next. Each runner relies on their teammates to be in sync and hand off the baton without dropping it. If the baton gets dropped, the rhythm is lost.

With the general manager leading as coach, the transition will keep everyone on track and running harmoniously. Your new team will win. Building a strong foundation and successful working relationships with new and outgoing board members pays big dividends and will keep the club environment positive and respectful to all involved. **BR**