

Before You Begin Your Membership Marketing Program... Part I of III

By Ted Robinson

“FACE REALITY AS IT IS, NOT AS IT WAS OR AS YOU WISH IT TO BE.” - FORMER GE CEO JACK WELCH.

The foundation of any successful club is a full membership roll. Without enough members everyday is financial struggle.

We all know the dues line (monthly dues revenue) has to exceed the monthly fixed costs – and this can only occur by replacing resigned members and adding new members to the club’s roster (for fortunate clubs – maintaining or increasing the waiting list). Successful private clubs retain and attract new members by achieving the “Optimal balance between member experience and financial performance.” This article addresses how to define that experience – perhaps different from “what is”, “was” or what some “wish it to be.”

Private clubs consistently successful in attracting an adequate complement of new members have very firm foundations: a deep set of *core values* (*Golden Rule*), a readily understood *vision* (“*We will put a man on the moon by the end of the decade – President Kennedy*”), an effective *mission statement* (“*To organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful*” Google) and the *brand position statement*.

Let’s start with crucial membership marketing questions:

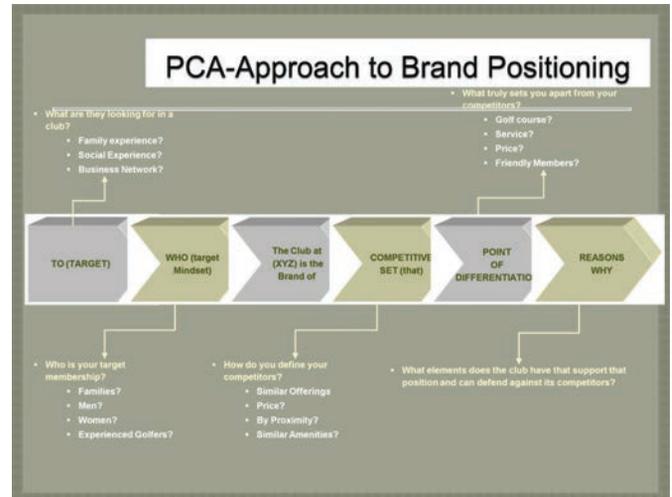
- Does your club know what it is?
- Do you know your target market?
- Do you know what your target market wants?
- Does your product fit that market?
- What are your points of difference from your competition?

For example, are you requiring an \$85,000 initiation fee for a \$25,000 product in a market with a \$35,000 potential?

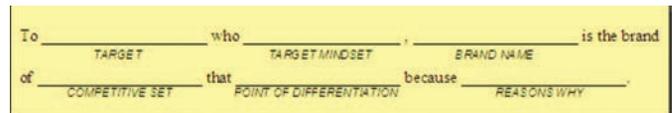
A well-constructed *brand position statement* gets you to *today’s reality for your club*. Until you drill down to answer these questions, you limit your potential because of a lack of clarity.

Step one is creating a brand position statement through which all club decisions are made. The club’s brand position statement is the foundation for all marketing, not just membership. Your brand defines how you articulate who you are to potential members and why this prospect should select you over the competition. With a clear brand position your membership marketing will be focused and effective.

The following Chevron Chart outlines the process developed for determining a club’s brand. The board (or owner), staff and members all need to be a part of this important first step.



When you answer these questions you can use this template to create your brand statement:



Example: *To avid golfers in the South _____ area who are looking for a traditional golf club experience and business retreat, the Golf Club of _____ is private club in _____ that offers the best traditional golf experience because of a great Tom Fazio layout, no tee time policy, incredible men’s locker room, guest cottages and convenient yet secluded setting.”*

Once you know who you are (product, price, place,) and who your target market is, this “brand” is the foundation to construct your annual membership plan. Successful membership directors recognize that membership marketing is a true “sales” process and to be effective they must use professional sales procedures to develop programs and track the effectiveness of their efforts. Stay tuned for the next installment. **BR**

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