



A Club's Culture - It Must Be Nurtured

"I came to see, in my time at IBM, that culture isn't just one aspect of the game, it is the game. In the end, an organization is nothing more than the collective capacity of its people to create value." – Louis Gerstner, IBM

How do you build a club's culture?

That's a most interesting question we received from a client developing a new high end "towne" club in a vibrant central American city: What a great question – appropriate not only for a new club – but for existing clubs as well.

Culture is described by the *vision*, created by accomplishing the mission and perpetuated by maintaining the club's *core values*. It is what keeps members and attracts new members – what drives "word of mouth" exposure.

It can be described by words or combinations of words such as friendly, old line, innovative, established, personally attentive, high quality, consistently excellent, comfortable, caring and many more.

The first step is assuring an effective vision statement—one of the components of PCA's *first key to success* – "Do you know who you are?" The *vision* (along with the mis-

achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth."

This statement energized our country. There was no doubt in anyone's mind as to where we were going and what constituted success.

After the vision and mission statements are created or updated, you must develop (or revise) the club's "operating principles" which include the *core values*, *standards of quality* (SOQ); the *standards of operation and performance* (SOP); and the club rules and make certain all are stringently enforced *all of the time*. These club policies, the values, SOP, SOQ and rules support the expectations as defined in the vision.

Assuring the club's culture remains or becomes relevant includes maintaining or creating club traditions and ceremonies, keeping the vision in front at all times, and assuring the buy in of all stakeholders including members, owners, directors, suppliers, and the community at large.

Someone has to constantly monitor that the "culture" is being nurtured by maintaining the high quality of facilities, service, products, programs, and value.

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sion and brand position statements) tells the story of your club, where it is going and what it will be when everything is completed.

Unless you "know who you are", it is very difficult, if not impossible, to achieve your full potential for attracting new members. The club's *culture* is defined by its vision statement and perpetuated by successfully completing the mission. Hence, the vision is a mental image of the successful accomplishment of the mission and thus the purpose of the organization.

It outlines what an organization wants to be, concentrates on the future and is a source of inspiration. It defines the end state – the ultimate goal.

The best example we know came from President John F. Kennedy: "I believe that this nation should commit itself to

You maintain the culture by *not deviating* from the vision, and by not making decisions contrary to the club's culture. How important is this to an operating club? A new GM and new board members must understand the culture, how it came to be and what sustains it.

Any degradation in the respected and accepted culture results in lower admission and greater attrition rates.

If a brand change is necessary to keep the club relevant because of the changing world of private clubs (changes occurring at an accelerating rate, including the diminishing demand for golf, increasing need for attention to families, and expanding non-club competition for time and discretionary income), the board must assure that those components of the culture that remain relevant are supported. **BR**