

BoardRoom's Distinguished Club



Program

Focuses On the 'Member Experience'

BY DAVE WHITE, EDITOR

"People join their private club because of the tangibles, but they stay because of the intangibles," enthused John Fornaro, CEO and president of BoardRoom magazine.

And with that, Fornaro announced the launching of BoardRoom magazine's refined **Distinguished Club Program**.

For fine private clubs that operate at the highest standards, BoardRoom's Distinguished Club Program is a club-specific rating system recognizing the club, its management, and its staff.

BoardRoom's mission is to help strengthen the private club industry by recognizing and awarding the top 25 percent of clubs (*Distinguished Clubs*) and the top five percent (*Distinguished Emerald Clubs*) for their best practices relating to the club's **Member Experience**.

This program is related directly to the private club industry through a Membership and Criteria Committee comprised of 30 outstanding club and industry representatives from across the country.

The Distinguished Club Program is based on certain criteria, and the evaluation process focuses on a club's member experience including:

1) Credibility: The Membership and Criteria Committee must nominate a club before an evaluation can occur.

2) On-site visit: There will be an on-site visit and evaluation by BoardRoom using our proprietary formula rating the club's member experience.

3) Audit: The club evaluation goes through an auditing process by BoardRoom.

4) Report: A confidential report is issued to the club's general manager.

5) Recognition: There is recognition for the award status of *Distinguished Club* and *Distinguished Emerald Club*, as well as individual department leadership awards based on the club evaluation.

"This is a brand new approach and it's all about 'Member Experience.' It's fantastic that the club industry's national associations are investing time and money to grow the industry, but it's really important that we grow the private club industry at the grass roots level," Fornaro explained.

"We have to take responsibility for growth and it all starts by identifying the clubs that have truly done an excellent job in defining their club's **Member Experience**. We've been working with this program over the last four years, and it's taken time to realize why it's so important to this industry.

"We needed to review and refine what we've been doing, and look at what other groups, for example, Michelin Guide, the AAA Diamond Ratings and Forbes Travel Guide, have been doing with their programs.

"The number one thing for private clubs is the member experience, and although that can be extremely hard to quantify, by working with some of the brightest minds in this industry, we've developed an outstanding criteria for this club-specific rating program," Fornaro explained.

KEITH JARRETT THE LEADER

One of those bright minds is Keith Jarrett, who 16 years ago founded BoardRoom magazine with Fornaro. Jarrett

SEE COVER STORY - PAGE 22

takes over as the Distinguished Club Program president, and will initiate the 'conversation' with potential Distinguished Clubs and Distinguished Emerald Clubs.

"Keith knows the private club industry. He has been a club member and knows what today's members want from their club.

"People might join a club because of the physical amenities, its location and other such tangibles, but they stay because of the intangibles...the culture, the history and most importantly, their friends," Fornaro added.

"The 'why' for this program is quite simple," explained Jarrett. "Private clubs have always played a valuable role in bringing together like-minded people who share similar values and enjoy doing some of the same things together.

"We at BoardRoom magazine feel that the need for private clubs is greater now than at any time in history. Our concern is about where clubs will find their future members.

"We feel that the new, young generation of potential members have not yet understood and grasped the great value of being a member of a fine private club...they don't feel or see the way previous generations have enjoyed the **Member Experience**, and if you haven't been a member, you cannot understand the **Member Experience**," he added.

The contention is that there's been a paradigm shift in this industry with clubs now focusing more on facilities and the product – food, golf and other sporting options – rather than the club members.

"We feel strongly that the emphasis once more should be on the **Member Experience**, including specialized personalized service from a staff that knows a member's personal needs and likes," Jarrett explained.

SEE COVER STORY - PAGE 107

Membership and Criteria Committee Vital for The Distinguished Club Program

A key component of BoardRoom Magazine's Distinguished Club Program is the Membership and Criteria Committee.

This group, comprised of the top private club general managers and industry experts, will help in identifying the top 25 percent of clubs as *Distinguished Clubs* and the top five percent as *Distinguished Emerald Clubs*, for their best practices relating to a club's **Member Experience**. Committee members serving a two-year term will nominate clubs across the country for evaluation.

"The committee members' involvement helps to maintain the value and integrity of BoardRoom's strong commitment of strengthening the private club industry by recognizing fine private clubs," explained BoardRoom's CEO John Fornaro in establishing the committee.

Twice a year, the committee meets to hold a workshop on the criteria used for the on-site club evaluations. BoardRoom magazine will submit a yearly report to the committee outlining the overall process used, training certification of surveyors and the outline of the criteria formula that is used to review clubs.



"In addition to this member-centric focus, we also believe the finest clubs are those that place a strong emphasis on 'intangibles'...including the club's culture, history, traditions, image governance, and that special feeling members sense when they enter their club. It makes them feel part of a family and proud to be a member of their home away from home.

"These clubs have captured the essence of a fine private club," Jarrett opined. "We want to recognize those clubs that have distinguished themselves by providing a great **Member Experience** based on personalized service and a feeling of pride as a result of the club's intangibles."

How will this happen? The Distinguished Club Program has developed a proprietary rating system based on **Member Experience**.

To begin, there's a peer review. A Membership and Criteria Committee

member must nominate a club to begin the process. The rating is done with a series of questions and a very important site visit. It's not an inspection, nor a mere evaluation of the staff or management's effectiveness. It is a thorough process that effectively measures the **Member Experience**.

The formula is as follows: **Member Experience** equals Facility Quality plus Product Quality plus Service Quality

plus Governance Quality plus Intangible Quality, or simply put: $ME = FQ + PQ + GQ + SQ + IQ$.

The criteria is more highly weighted on the three things that provide the finest **Member Experience** and the things that make the club exceptional. **GQ (Governance Quality)**, **SQ (Service Quality)** and **IQ (Intangible Quality)** have the highest rating of all.

This is why the Distinguished Clubs Program and rating system is different from any other rating system. For the first time, the private club industry will have the ability to identify the top private clubs in the world based on the most important aspect – **Member Experience**.

"We believe that if the industry focuses on the **Member Experience**, the future for private clubs is brighter than ever," Fornaro concluded. **BR**

For more information regarding BoardRoom's Distinguished Club Program, contact Keith Jarrett: keith@boardroommag.com



Distinguished Club Program Benefits

BoardRoom magazine's Distinguished Club Program confers a number of important and valuable benefits:

1. You will understand your club's strengths and weaknesses with an on-site evaluation. A comprehensive and confidential report will be compiled and presented to you based on **Member Experience** using our proprietary formula.
2. Among all private clubs in the country, your club will have the potential to be officially recognized as a *Distinguished Club* (top 25 percent) or a **Distinguished Emerald Club** (top five percent). Recognition will be ceremoniously bestowed and then publicized in BoardRoom magazine and through other media platforms.
3. Through enhanced recognition and awareness, your club's brand equity will grow leading to increased membership and enhanced membership retention.
4. Leadership and staff engagement will be strengthened as your club's management and department heads are recognized with individual *Distinguished Achievement in Leadership awards*.
5. Leveraging the transparent and verifiable process used to evaluate your club, you will fortify your position and performance perception as you present to your board and ownership how awards and recognition have been earned. **BR**

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