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Don't Leave Board Members in the Dark...

Missed Opportunities for Management

BOARDROOM MAGAZINE, YOU SEE, IS 15 YEARS OLD THIS YEAR. IT'S BEEN AN INTERESTING 15 YEARS AND WE WANT TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT. SO WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

During its initial publishing period, BoardRoom faced many challenges as we sought our niche in the private club industry. What was the reaction to BoardRoom?

Well, we can say some of our readers have been with us since day one.

"I have been a faithful reader of *BoardRoom magazine* for your 15-year history," commented Joseph Travaglio, general manager and COO, Inverness Golf Club, Inverness, Illinois.

"It continues to amaze us how relevant and timely your material is as if your publisher had been sitting in on our previous month's board meetings. Inverness Golf Club has valued this information as it has assisted us through the eco-

suggested Gregg Patterson, general manager of the Beach Club of Santa Monica, and a regular contributor to *BoardRoom* over the years.

"Those who do love reading 'stuff' written by those who've 'been there and done that' because the stories they share and the insights they provide resonate with those of us who are 'doing club' day in and day out. Each story becomes a parable with life lessons for other clubs, everywhere.

"*BoardRoom* provides a forum for professionals who are out there in the club world fighting the good fight, addressing problems, finding solutions, getting bruised. *BoardRoom* works because the magazine is grounded in **experience**," Patterson stressed.

The objective from day one has been to provide an informative educational package, but initially in the early

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Joseph Travaglio, general manager and COO, Inverness Golf Club, Inverness, Illinois

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"The board of directors and I view your magazine as the club industry leader for timely and useful packed information of interest." Kind words of praise!

"*BoardRoom* is the 'Go To' publication for those who are responsible for 'making things happen' in the club business – Directors, managers, supervisors and committee chairs,"

years many general managers seemed reluctant to pass along any information, stories, or copies of *BoardRoom* to their board members.

Why? Perhaps because of the questions *BoardRoom* raised or perhaps because of the difficulty in pointing out different approaches in governance or club best practices that boards might not want to read or hear about.

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“Our boards, our management teams and we managers need ideas about ‘what to do’ in these interesting times,” Patterson emphasized. “And *BoardRoom* publishes experiences and perspectives from every corner of the club world – different clubs with different managers and different experiences, each of those managers and each of those experiences providing insights and ideas that can be twisted and spun and woven into solutions for my club.”

And one of the ‘best practices’ *BoardRoom* has always professed is for the board to set policy and then let the club’s general manager and staff take the board’s policies and run with the club’s day-to-day management.

For some boards keeping their fingers out of management’s pie has been difficult. Letting go of the micromanagement of the club’s operation for some hasn’t been, and still isn’t easy.

The second five years, as *BoardRoom* gained credibility with its reading audience, and as readers placed more trust in the content, many general managers began to use *BoardRoom* as solid reference material for their boards of directors.

Now in our 15th year, *BoardRoom* has found maturity and our focus provides a strong source of information for boards, general managers and others associated with the private club industry.

In fact, many clubs now have multiple subscriptions for their entire boards, club committees, and executive staff because of the timely, relevant material *BoardRoom* publishes. *BoardRoom* raises questions and presents solutions and often publishes information offered by general managers. At least one club now subscribes to 50 copies of each issue.

The point: Clubs that subscribe to *BoardRoom* are able to use the information for the betterment of their club.

BoardRoom helps me grow and develop my relationship with the board of directors by letting them discover information...that it is not just my opinion on certain subjects but it is also an opinion shared by others within the private club industry. BoardRoom also helps the board be in front of today’s issues, thus allowing them the ability to be proactive instead of reactive. BoardRoom helps bring credibility to a club manager’s stance on today’s issues

Scott Bertrand, CEO and general manager, Ozaukee Country Club, Mequon, WI.

“The urge to micromanage rears its ugly head from time-to-time, but it’s become easier to quell as most board members understand their role as liaisons, directors of policy and visionaries,” explained Frank Cordeiro, general manager, Hacienda Golf Club, La Habra, CA.

“This is something I’ve often been able to quote from your publication.

“Many, not all, of my board members that read your publication and have become more sophisticated and knowledgeable about our business. Thus, they’ve become allies and supporters versus cynics and obstacles. In essence, they’ve become more productive and more effective board members,” Cordeiro enthused.

As we have learned, a little information can be a ‘dangerous thing’, and open, transparent information can be a ‘good thing’ leading to healthy discussions.

“The articles are relevant and insightful from contributors who are knowledgeable in their various disciplines,” opined Michael McCarthy, CEO and general manager, Addison Reserve Country Club, Delray Beach, FL. “Each of our board members and department head receive their own copies of the magazine.

“Often at various meetings, topics in the magazine are discussed among my staff and board members. As we focus on constantly improving communication between management and the board, *BoardRoom* offers just one more way in which we are exposed to the operational side of the club industry.”

McCarthy stresses the point that he is “supported by a board that appreciates the governance model we employ at Addison Reserve. I’m a strong believer in education and *BoardRoom* placed a great educational tool in the hands of

the managers and in the hands of the board members at Addison Reserve.”

Generally, club managers feel *BoardRoom* has helped raise relevant, current issues in a complex, competitive and challenging industry.

“The *BoardRoom* magazine has an amazing ability to bring to the directors of the club a concise and realistic status of the private club industry. A board member or manager can pick up an issue, invest an hour or so and receive a clear and accurate picture of what the current trends are.

“Armed with this information the individual can intelligently and confidently speak about the industry and make decisions based on the good of the entire organization. This is a great resource,” offered Ron Banaszak, general manager and COO, St. Francis Yacht Club of San Francisco.

“The positive points of *BoardRoom* for me are the views of individuals who work in the industry, offering their opinions on today’s issues and what best practices have been used to address the issues,” says Scott Bertrand, CEO and general manager, Ozaukee Country Club, Mequon, WI.

“*BoardRoom* helps me grow and develop my relationship with the board of directors by letting them discover information...that it is not just my opinion on certain subjects but it is also an opinion shared by others within the private club industry.

“*BoardRoom* also helps them be in front of today’s issues, thus allowing them the ability to be proactive instead of reactive. *BoardRoom* helps bring credibility to a club manager’s stance on today’s issues,” Bertrand added.

“Your offerings are consistent and concise, presenting timely information on the burning issues of the day. This helps broaden the boards’ awareness of the industry, helps them appreciate the uniqueness of our business

and how it varies greatly at times from conventional business theory and practice,” Cordeiro suggested.

Cordeiro would like to ensure that *BoardRoom* “balances the content evenly with perspective and content from academia, consultants, vendors and managers.

“All the various stake holders of our industry bring their own unique perspective to issues, having the benefit of hearing those broad and varied perspectives can help us better understand the big picture issues,” he explained.

“I get 10 copies each issue – six for my club’s executive committee members (we call it operations committee) and three to other managers – two that are CMAA members and one that is a PCMA member,” related Boyd Holk, general manager, The University Club, Boston, MA.

“I don’t really know how much my ops committee reads these issues, but

they do infrequently make comments about aspects contained in some of the featured articles that leads me to believe that they more than peruse them. I personally like the magazine and find the articles informative and comprehensive and share the magazine with my ops committee members so they know that I, at least, am availing myself of good club management resources.”

That’s been another major focus for *BoardRoom* ...providing vital board resources.

Rhett J. Robicheaux, general manager and COO of the Naples Yacht Club, Naples FL, suggests, “*BoardRoom* gives us the opportunity to share our business with our boards.”

But...“The one thing I will say is that all clubs are different and many times things are not perceived that way in articles.”

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Good point because the duties of one person at one club may be quite different from the duties of that same position at another club, it can be helpful if our stories make that distinction more clearly. That becomes a 'working point' for us.

Overall, these general managers express the idea that *BoardRoom*, as a board resource is also a useful tool as they work at being better general managers.

"Not all the stuff is directly applicable, but generally nuggets of information I glean from the maga-

zine pop up later to help me out in a time of need," offered Holk.

"It's beneficial to me at the Naples Yacht Club," intoned Robicheaux.

"It has helped in giving us tools to continue to grow and become more vibrant in the future."

Robicheaux often uses information from *BoardRoom* "when writing my article for the Naples Yacht Club's monthly newsletter, to educate the whole membership as to what is going on not only in our club, but also around the industry."

Joseph Travaglio of the Inverness Golf Club professes *BoardRoom* has "assisted me personally with affirm-

ing many of my previous recommendations thus allowing (the board) to build trust and confidence in the general manager."

And Travaglio now includes *BoardRoom* "as part of the new member orientation. The old adage 'readers are leaders' applies here," he says.

"One of the educational points quickly learned by a new board member though reading your magazine is that leading a private club is much more involved and difficult than previously assumed and better prepares them to contribute on a much higher level.

"The 2010 November/December 'State of the Industry' issue sparked a market research study to help crystallize the Inverness Golf Club 'point of difference' and essence," Travaglio explained.

"This process involved speaking with people intimately familiar with the club. Numerous one-on-one interviews and two focus groups were held to gain insights. This research was conducted as a result of suggestions from information delivered by *BoardRoom Magazine* to hone our messaging and build the IGC brand."

And so it also goes for general manager Bertrand at Ozaukee Country Club.

"*BoardRoom* helps our club generally by providing guidance and ideas on addressing today's issues. A number of programs that we have installed here at Ozaukee are a direct result of ideas presented."

Patterson, well known for his timely, relevant presentations to clubdom around the world, has a particular affinity for Publisher's Perspective.

"*BoardRoom* has always been provocative and that's why I've enjoyed the read from the begin-



BoardRoom has always been provocative and that's why I've enjoyed the read from the beginning. My board and I have found the Publisher's Perspective particularly stimulating because it's written with a 'no holds barred smack 'em in the face' attitude. It has always been an 'agent provocateur' giving pithy and sometimes biting comments on 'the way things are' and the 'way things should be.' Never sugar coated, more of a 'spit in the eye' approach that shakes us from our lethargy and inspires a new way of looking at the club experience. Great stuff!!!

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He also views *BoardRoom* as "a vibrant 'idea engine' for those of us who care deeply about clubdom. It provides a network of people, places and ideas. It alerts us to challenges coming 'our way.' It provides a forum for Deep Specialists in everything from turf grass to locker room management to give us Deep Generalists the insight we need to smack down the competition.

"*BoardRoom* raises our aspirations – of the board, of the manager, of the club –provokes the discussion and gives us who "do the doing" the tools to achieve."

PUBLISHER'S FINAL THOUGHTS

So where does *BoardRoom* go from here? We look to continue improving.

Boardroom magazine goal is to provide the most up-to-date information primarily for every board member, committee members and club owner.

We need to continue working on removing the emotion from board meetings by 'replacing emotion with facts.'

Many clubs today use *Boardroom magazine* as a guideline for their board meetings. The greatest bene-

fit to the volunteer board and committee members is that they are all reading the same relevant, current information. Without a resource such as this, you are opening the doors to uninformed opinions and that's precisely when a board becomes less productive.

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Boards of directors establish policy and then commit to having the club's management follow through on the board's policies. This has always been a focal point of *BoardRoom* discussions. To do otherwise encourages that scourge of micromanagement, and micromanaging and manipulating the club's paid management is one of worst things a board can do, especially at a time when boards and management should be working collaboratively.

Believe it or not, boards members often believe micromanaging is a form of accountability. Not so!

True accountability is proactive and preventative. Micromanagement is reactive and fear-based. Having your board members read Boardroom magazine will help guide to a path that proactive and preventative...absolutely it will help displace micromanaging.

And a couple of other reminders. Your board members, especially new board members, from day one, need a proper orientation program (not just board manuals and a tour of your facility) to more fully understand their commitment as board members.

Board and committee members need to know their roles and responsibilities and know clearly what's expected of them.

Without this, how can your club be assured that their board members are capable of guiding your club while leaving the day-to-day operations to the club's paid management?

This leads us to the *BoardRoom Institute* (BRI) as the resource of choice for private club boards, their directors, committees, committee chairs and others associated with private club governance.

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Certification through BoardRoom Institute shows private clubs how they can operate through collaborative governance, so they can govern in most efficient and effective manner to optimize the membership's investment. If boards of directors govern their clubs the way they should, the clubs will operate with the least investment while obtaining the highest results. The Return On the Member's Equity (ROME®) is highest when private clubs are governed through collaborative governance.

BoardRoom Institute:

1) Provides a tool box (white papers, books, forms and templates) for club governance,

2) Certifies private clubs. Through certification, BoardRoom Institute is effectively showing private clubs how to operate with collaborative governance.

3) Provides seminars, workshops online, and

4) Provides customized consultation for clubs.

Our Mission: To help clubs operate efficiently by optimizing the relationship between the volunteers and the paid executives through collaborative governance.

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As we celebrate our 15th year, *BoardRoom magazine* will continue training and providing board members with the information they need to make educated and informed decisions...not emotional ones.

At least that's the way I see it! **BR**

John G. Fornaro, publisher

If you have comments on this article or suggestions for other topics, please contact John Fornaro at (949) 376-8889, ext. 105 or via email: johnf@apcd.com

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