

Distinguished Club Awards Reward Your Club's Best

IT'S BEEN SAID THAT GREAT COMPANIES ARE NOT CREATED IN GREAT TIMES. GREAT COMPANIES ARE DEFINED BY HOW THEY WEATHER THE ROCKY STORMS IN AN ECONOMIC DOWNTURN.

The financial failures of the last few years have proven this remark. It's also the same in the private club industry.

During tough economic times, there are private club failures, and others, striving to survive, start looking at where and how they can cut costs - to the point of eliminating what some boards of directors view as "unnecessary" benefits and perks.

All manner of approaches have been tried - eliminating programs wholesale, cutting back on services, closing the dining room and other facilities, and of course, cutting staff and doubling the

work load for others. And as for spending the time and money on long range strategic planning... "well, forget it... we just can't afford it." In reality, this is a time when clubs really need long range strategic planning the most.

All these measures might, just might, get some clubs through the tough times so that they're still operational coming out the other side. At least for these ones, there's a glimmer of hope.

For other clubs, it doesn't really matter - they maybe haven't or won't survive a recession like the one the world has been going through during the past 18 months, and much of the reason is that they weren't prepared for tough times in the first place.

With these clubs, even in good times, there's been no plan or preparation as the club, its board of directors



JOHN G. FORNARO
PUBLISHER, BOARDROOM
PRESIDENT & CEO, APCD

and paid management, and the members of course, go along on a wing and a prayer (or the board's say-so)...and the occasional assessment or two, if there are still members around to pay the shot.

At the other end of the continuum are those clubs who were ready for the storm. Club boards and management, who planned well, had reserves in place, and who are prudent in their decision-making knowing what they need to do to survive. Ultimately these clubs may see these downturns as opportunities to grow and prosper.

These clubs approach these financial storms with a mindset that their club must remain that 'oasis in the desert', the 'home away from home', a place of solace amidst all the naysayers and confusion.

Programs and services continue, and the members support their club, board and management; staff supports the members and the members support the staff.

And *there is* one tried and true employee motivator that has withstood the test of time (and budget cuts) - *recognition, staff recognition.*

2009 DISTINGUISHED CLUB AWARDS

The *BoardRoom* magazine is now accepting entries for the *2009 Distinguished Club Awards* honoring clubs for outstanding achievements within their organizations.

Visit www.BoardRoomMagazine.com to download an application form.

For more information, call 949-376-8889 ext 120 or email requests to Distinguished@apcd.com

When recognizing management and staff, as club members you are telling these people how much you rely on them. You know the value of the service they provide your club. And when you admire them and the service they give you, recognition of them means, "I, and we need you."

Employee motivation rests on recognizing productivity as it happens because if it's not recognized when it happens, it's a lost opportunity.

Moreover employee recognition programs can help control costs and foster productivity; they help improve programs and member services providing those untimely benefits to members and their guests. What better way to impress potential members than to show the intangibles...the benefits that accrue to them as members?

However, to be effective, any club with an employee recognition program must motivate the behavior that directly leads to improved productivity, ensures consistency, provides accountability, creativeness, and improves moral.

It's not necessarily something that will happen by itself...but something that must be cultured, fostered and nurtured by everyone in the club from the board of directors on down.

Recognizing department heads, management and staff during tough economic times ensures organizational efficiencies, innovation and loyalty. Why?

Because during tough times additional stresses and higher expectations are placed upon this group, all while having little or no control to influence outcomes.

This group must try to perform in difficult circumstances since everyone's validity comes under scrutiny in tough times, but they must also meet the needs of two very disparate groups - those who report to them (staff) and those to whom they report (the GM, board, owners).

In reality, this group needs to be well empowered, because anything less has a ripple effect on the fragile psychological state of many employees already anxious about their security. They will be looking to the club leaders for reassurance and direction as the insecurities and ambiguities of today's club life increases.

There's no question the state of the current economy has forced us to reconsider our traditional forms of rewarding our employees for a job well done because with the belt-tightening, clubs have delayed or killed pay increases employees might normally expect. But there are options, which can also have a long-term effect as clubs seek to keep their especially valued, long-term employees.

What if a 'raise' comes in the form of lifting their self-esteem?

What if there's a recognition award system symbolizing

the value and importance of the work? That's the goal of *BoardRoom magazine's Distinguished Club Awards*, which recognizes 'those that go above and beyond for their departments.'

For the inaugural year of the Distinguished Club Awards, the categories include:

- Junior Golf Program (Department Head)
- Wine Program (Department Head)
- Governance (GM / COO / Board)
- Club's Green Initiatives (GM - superintendent)
- Locker Rooms (Locker Room Manager)
- Special Events / Weddings (Department Head)
- Course Maintenance (Golf Course Superintendent)
- Clubhouse (Food and Beverage Service)
- Technology (Membership Director)
- Merchandising (Department Head)
- Swim/Pool Program (Department Head)
- Tennis Program (Department Head)
- Membership Program (Department Head)
- Menu (Chef/ Kitchen)
- Spa/Fitness (Department Head)
- Regattas (Department Head), and
- An Open category.

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The category winners will be announced in the January/February 2010 issue of BoardRoom magazine.

And any club awarded five or more Distinguished category awards will qualify for a GM/COO Award of Distinction as well.

In addition, any club awarded 10 or more Distinguished category awards will qualify for the Distinguished Emerald Club Award that goes specifically to the club.

Friday, October 30th 2009 is the deadline for submissions. So, get the process going now before time runs out.

Wayne Ostrander of San Clemente, CA is working with BoardRoom as executive director of the Distinguished Club Awards, and we've seen a lot of activity so far for all categories, including the Open category.

"Our expectation is that all categories will expand in future years," Wayne enthused.

"The Distinguished Club Awards serve as reinforcement to top industry performers and sets benchmarks for other industry participants.

"We believe the end result will be improved service, and an overall increase in a member's satisfaction, usage and retention. By being compared against your peers at

other clubs, you gain visibility within your club and its members who see that a particular department is doing a 'bang up job.'

"The Distinguished Clubs will inspire other clubs to improve quality and member satisfaction by trying to improve as quickly as possible. Our independent outside board of experts will recognize the department manager and the department, thus adding the necessary level of accomplishment," Ostrander explained.

"By increasing the visibility for the department, it will also help differentiate the club compared to its peers, and give the club and the members another reason to be particularly proud.

"Lastly, today's consumers are always looking for a trusted source. The new private club member is no different. These awards provide prospective members with assurances that the club they have chosen is among the best in meeting the needs and requirements of its members."

However, a dichotomy exists in the private club world...some "private clubs" are more private than others. "Private" means just that..."private."

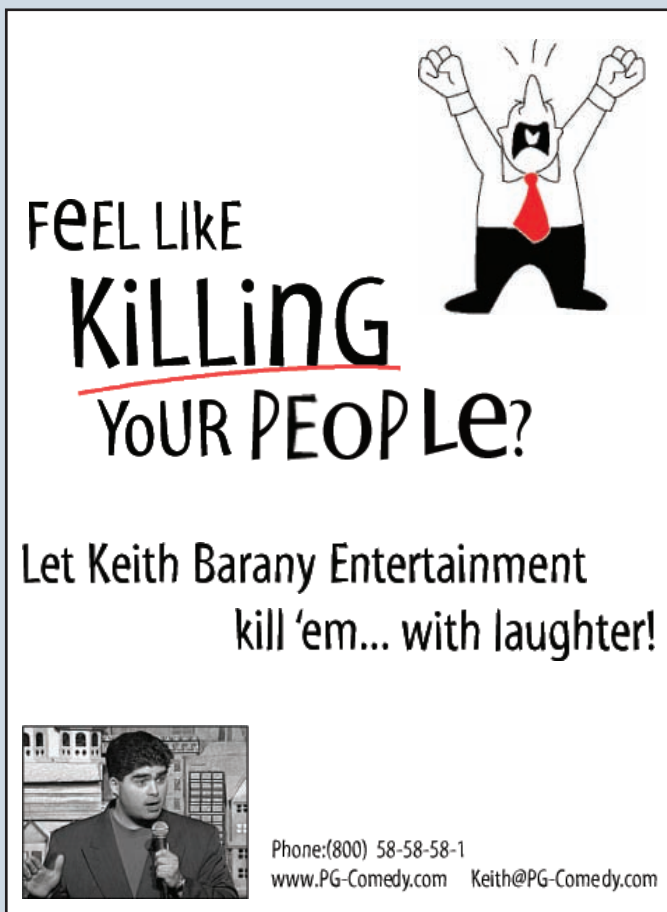
For some, The Distinguished Club Awards recognition can be public. These clubs' boards of directors, members and general managers welcome the public acknowledgment. It can be good for community acceptance and certainly helpful for the club.

But what do we do for those "private clubs" who wish to remain "private?" How do we recognize folks who are doing such great work at their clubs while the club wants to avoid a "public fora?"

We know a Distinguished Club Award to a club employee can have a strong motivating impact and without relaxing the award criteria, we'll give the nominating club the option of deciding whether or not they wish to make notice of the award public. It can remain "private" within the club and its membership, without any public announcement, if that's what a club desires. The fact is, the Distinguished Club Awards aim to inspire private clubs to greater distinction with improved quality and member satisfaction; setting benchmarks for others, all of which cultivates member satisfaction, club usage and member retention.

One "private" club general manager has already told us these Distinguished Club Awards will be "strong motivators for clubs and staff. And it's a way of reinforcing the value of BoardRoom magazine, where it really counts, with the club boards," by allowing clubs to remain discreet, if they wish.

The Distinguished Club Awards have an incremental benefit as an image-builder, because the club can leverage the award to help grow membership.



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The Distinguished Club Awards embody two years of work in deciding the best way to help promote all that is good and strong in the private club industry.

Following this extensive research and multiple focus groups at San Francisco's St. Francis Yacht Club and Big Canyon Country Club, Newport Beach, CA, we realized that our task would be very difficult and confusing.

Initially, the facility drew the focus and attention. But it wasn't too long before our research took us in a much different direction.

What product are you putting 'out there' for members that creates the 'Wow' factor? We soon realized that some of our clubs have 100 year-old facilities, yet retain an incredibly strong and loyal membership, and it's the members that make the club, not necessarily the facilities.

We have some facilities that are huge, state-of-the-art and grand on every scale, yet remain empty and unused by their members.

So the question remained: How can we promote the clubs, gain awareness for our industry and benchmark the 'specifics' that make a great club 'great'?

Well, after long debate it all circles back to service and the member experience. And the Distinguished Club Awards come down to a recognition program for the departments within a club and the department heads who manage them in "a distinguished and excellent fashion.

"We realize that it's also important for department heads or staff and their careers to be associated with a prestigious Distinguished Club Award," Ostrander emphasized. "It's concrete recognition of what you as a member can expect from them, and a solid indicator that your club is doing better than the average club, all which embodies the feeling of camaraderie and fosters staff morale.

"We've had tremendous feedback from clubs across the country since the Distinguished Club Awards were launched earlier this year." To wit:

"You and the entire staff and team at BoardRoom need to be congratulated for thinking outside the box," responded Tom Merrick, general manager and COO, Transit Valley, Country Club, East Amherst, NY.

"There are several GM/COO recognition programs but it appears that you and your group have got the message. GM/COO leadership is critical but it is only a small part of 'where the rubber meets the road.' I applaud you."

Club employees are working especially hard around the country in these economic times.

It's incredible how so many clubs are adjusting and adapting in so many ways, to survive and thrive. They're certainly weathering the storm and there are a lot of great things happening in our industry that needs to be spotlighted.

Outstanding private club departments need to be recognized as shining lights and a positive force for those in our industry. They need to be recognized across the country, as well as in front of your club staff, board of directors and members.

This is part of what makes a great club 'great.'

By using the Distinguished Club Awards in this fashion we can establish true benchmarks for the departments and for the club. Remember time is running out; ***if you think your club might qualify please send in your application by Friday, October 30, 2009.***

We cannot wish our way back to prosperity today. There are no magic bills to solve this crisis. The truth is: Anything worthwhile takes hard work- otherwise anyone can do it.

As club leaders today - both the volunteer board of directors and the club's paid management - there's a need to make a solid commitment to best practices from everyone in order to achieve success for your club.

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. 4 or 105 or via email: johnf@apcd.com

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