

Detailing Your Club Operations

At root our business is about details – the specifics of the products and services we provide and the manner in which we provide them to meet the expectations of our members. Given that private clubs entail a variety of distinct businesses based on the amenities provided, the tally of daily details easily runs into the thousands across the full spectrum of club operations. And it's the way a large number of employees consistently attend to and execute those details that create and sustain members' perceptions of the value of their club experience. So while it's the big picture of strategy that sets the course and trajectory of the operation, it's the daily attention to detail that creates the expected level of quality and service.

So who is responsible for delivering that quality and service? Ultimately it's the general manager, though for practicality sake, the authority to do so is delegated through the club's department heads and managers to the employees who deliver the service. But delivering a consistent level of service and quality requires that a vast amount of knowledge, information, guidance, and ongoing training be provided to employees by perhaps 15 to 20 supervisors and managers. This can only happen if all employees are immersed in a well-defined and continually reinforced culture of service.

This is easily said, but far more difficult to create and sustain in the dynamic and fast-paced environment of club operations. Clearly the solution is to build as much of the details of service as possible into the structure and routine of the organization. Here are the necessities:

- Understand the expectations of your members. Without a basic understand of what they want and desire, you may miss the mark and all your efforts will be for naught.
- Ensure [consistent and unimpeded communication](#) of [organizational values and culture of service](#). There is so much for service employees to know and understand that any impediments to the open flow of information will defeat your efforts from the get-go.
- Identify, prioritize, and focus on the details of departmental [touch points](#). These are the logical starting point for all your efforts to improve quality and service. As these are mastered, continue to uncover and address deeper levels of organizational detail.
- Provide [thorough and consistent training](#) of all employees. Understanding the touch points of your operation does little good if that understanding is not passed on consistently to each new employee and generations of employees.
- Foster [employee empowerment](#) to deal with the unscripted moments and challenges of service. Management can never foresee all the contingencies of service. Employees, with the full backing and support of their supervisors, must be encouraged within the parameters of their training to use individual initiative to overcome any service challenges.
- Utilize [organizational structure](#) to institutionalize consistent service delivery. What we do ain't easy! Help yourself and your employees by structuring the routine to happen routinely. This takes both the will and the [organizational discipline](#) to make it happen. When 80% of the details happen routinely, everyone can focus on the 20% that will wow your members.
- Institute a robust process of continual improvement to analyze and enhance service and service delivery, detail by detail, department by department. As we say in [Continual Process Improvement](#), "Given the many details associated with managing a quality club operation it is imperative that

management commit to and promote a process of continual improvement in all areas of the operation. This requires a positive emphasis on problem discovery, a discipline of constant review, and an understanding that in quality service operations, the devil is in the details. As more and more areas of the operation become systematized and routine, management at all levels, with the commitment and assistance of their empowered employees, must continually ‘peel the onion’ to deeper and deeper layers of detail. Further, no detail must be seen as too trivial to warrant management’s attention and the establishment of standards and procedures to ensure it is attended to by the staff.”

While many owners and managers will say their business success is dependent on location, location, location, in the demanding world of the private clubs, it’s how we handle the details that determine our level of service and success.

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