

Elements of an Operations Plan

One of the most frequently asked questions about club operation plans is what goes into them. While every club is different depending upon the amenities and programming offered, there are a great number of similarities from club to club.

Basically, there should be written standards, policies, and procedures (SPPs) for all the actions and requirements associated with the activities of each functional area of the club – that is each department such as golf operations, golf course maintenance, food and beverage, activities, aquatics, tennis, membership, accounting, personnel, facilities management (including housekeeping and laundry operations), safety and security, administration, and training. In this capacity, SPPs serve as the basic building blocks of the larger departmental and club operations plan.

Given that the end-all and be-all for clubs is the satisfaction of its members, each department would start with a description of all member-impacting policies and any significant interactions with members and guests and how these interactions should be accomplished. Beyond this are all the features of daily operations, such as opening and closing procedures; cleaning requirements, responsibilities, and procedures; equipment operation and care; task-specific requirements; reports and metrics; as well as weekly, monthly, and seasonal requirements, etc.

Some areas of departmental standards, policies, and procedures would flow from club-wide SPPs, usually for the purpose of clarifying or adding additional departmental information or guidance. Other major areas of departmental SPPs might include department organization; employee onboarding, training, and work rules; layout and location of departmental storage areas; departmental safety and security; and any other topics that provide local guidance and instruction for employees. The only requirement here is that these local SPPs be coordinated and synchronized with the higher level SPPs of the club. See the [Elements of a Club Operations Plan](#) infographic for more information.

A good way to ensure this synchronization is to ensure that department heads review all club-wide SPPs prior to drafting their departmental SPPs. This process will reveal conflicting information. In some cases the club-wide guidance should prevail; in others, the departmental SPPs may point the way to improved club-wide SPPs.

While this back and forth review of departmental SPPs takes time and effort, the end result of the process should be detailed departmental SPPs that are fully coordinated from department to department. At the end of the day, such integrated operations and the training received by all employees regardless of operational area will provide a more seamless experience for members no matter what area of the club they are patronizing.

The following chart lists typical club function areas and those individuals responsible for preparing the associated standard, policies, and procedures. The General Manager would then review all SPPs to ensure they meet his or her requirements, particularly when involving member interactions, suggest changes or enhancements, and broker conflicting or incompatible SPPs among the different departments.

Functional Area	Responsibility
Accounting	Controller
Human Resources	HR Manager

Functional Area	Responsibility
Golf Operations	Head Golf Professional
Golf Course Maintenance	Golf Course Superintendent
F&B - Kitchen	Executive Chef
F&B – Front of House	Food and Beverage Manager
F&B - Catering	Catering Director
Tennis	Head Tennis Professional
Activities	Activities Director
Aquatics	Aquatics Manager
Membership/Marketing	Membership Director
Facilities Maintenance/Housekeeping	Facilities Manager
Safety	Facilities Manager
Security	Facilities Manager
Training	Training Manager or Designee
Administration	Office Manager or Admin Assistant

Each SPP should be described in detail with stated policy, a discussion of requirements, specific procedures or timelines, and a listing of necessary responsibilities. For a discussion on developing SPPs, refer to [Creating Standards, Policies and Procedures](#) on the HRI website.

The starting point for each department’s SPPs is to draw up an outline of topics. This outline will become a living overview of the department’s SPPs. Invariably, the initial outline will be expanded as time goes on. The usual sign that an SPP needs to be added is that some operational issue arises for which there is no written standard, policy, and procedures in place. This topic should then be added to the outline and the new SPP drafted, reviewed, and finalized. Click [here](#) for a sample outline of Golf Course Maintenance SPPs

Prior to the digital age, the process of keeping an operations plan current and useful was a challenging job for all concerned. But the technological progress of recent years allows all responsible individuals to keep their plan elements up-to-date and all stakeholders informed of changes by using a Linked Policies Database. See [Setting Up a Linked Policies and Information Database at Your Hospitality Operation](#) for more information.

While creating an operations plan seems like and IS a lot of work, it is ultimately an effort of immense value to the organization, efficiency, quality, member service, and bottom line of your operation. The investment made today on this essential task will pay dividends for the life of your club.

Jim Muehlhausen, the author of the [51 Fatal Business Errors](#), says that

“most owners [or operators] don’t have the tenacity to write an operations plan, but an operations plan is a living breathing document that is never done. Therefore, starting and not finishing is no big deal precisely because you are never finished.”

He goes on to say, “I challenge you to spend a significant amount of time over the next year working on your operations plan. In one year, if you feel your time was not EXTREMELY well-spent, email me and I will extend \$10,000 of products and/or services to you.” While his challenge is based on certain specific conditions which are spelled out on Muehlhausen’s website, it certainly stresses the value he places on creating an operations plan.

Finally, to add my own emphasis on the importance of an operations plan, I’ll gladly give a no-cost telephonic consultation to any general manager who is interested in developing an operations plan for his or her club. Simply contact me at info@hospitalityresourcesinternational.com and we can set up a time at your convenience to talk.

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