I’m tired of “THEY”!!
By Kurt D. Kuebler, CCM

“Have you ever noticed? Anyone going slower than you is an idiot, and anyone going faster than
you is a maniac.”

----- George Carlin

Doesn’t it seem that with some people, it’s always someone else? “They” cause all the problems or issues that “I” have to deal with!

From my unique perspective of talking to a large number of managers, both out of work and looking for a job, and those thinking about looking for a new position and being recruited, it often seems that the “They” reference works its way into the conversation!

If only they had listened to me, I wouldn’t be in this position with the membership!

If only they would have taken a different approach to this issue, we’d have gotten this project approved.

If they had supported me when I wanted to get rid of that ‘sacred cow’, I wouldn’t be in the position I am now.

They decided to bring that ‘sacred cow’ back after I terminated him.

If they had done what they agreed to do, this wouldn’t have happened.

They decided that the club needed to move in a different direction and didn’t think I could be part of it.

You get the idea; it’s always “They” who did it to these managers. Even when talking about situations that weren’t necessarily bad outcomes, the consistency of some managers referring to the club board or members by a manager as “They” reveals, at least in my mind, a clear lack of buy-in and commitment on the part of the person I’m listening to. It’s as though he or she was sitting on the sidelines as an unaffected observer, watching these scenes unfold around them. Sitting it a vacuum, unable to have any impact whatsoever on their surroundings.

To me, these folks are the classic ‘never going to be achievers’! They’ll forever be looking for their next job, or sitting on the sidelines watching as their club board and committees start taking action around them, most times inserting themselves into day to day operations. Of course, all this does is perpetuate the opportunity for these “They” oriented folks to switch their tunes to the “I’m micromanaged” refrain.
Now, this isn’t to say that there aren’t a large number of board members who simply can’t help but to insert themselves into the daily operational lives of managers and department heads of many clubs around the country. Many of these well-intentioned club volunteers, some working and some retired, often don’t see or understand how undermining or detrimental their efforts are on the manager and staff. Couple this with a reticent manager who often seems to ‘sit on the sidelines’ and watches without forcing a candid and reasonable discussion of the issues and you know what happens. This morphs into “micromanaging” as board members’ perspectives of the abilities of the manager and his/her key managers starts to be negatively impacted. Then, either more members jump on that bandwagon, or the board member who initiated it in the first place feels that he/she needs to take further control or direction so that the club doesn’t suffer.

Of course, the club does usually suffer. The ‘playing fields’ get shifted for the department managers and staff as they often get very mixed signals as to who they report to. Confusion and frustration starts to reign. Usually, this causes the manager to further regress. Then, constant second-guessing of everything starts to occur and the manager is looking for a job. And, then the process starts over.

If only “They” hadn’t micromanaged me, I’d still be there running the club.

From my perspective, the far better refrain should be, “If only I had taken a proactive approach to ensuring that my club board and members knew what I was doing and why. If only I had followed up on the goals and objectives I discussed with the board, I wouldn’t have created this situation for myself. If only I had gained the confidence and trust of the board and members, and if only I had provided clear and reasonable communication, I wouldn’t have allowed myself to be in this situation.”

Now, there are always exceptions, and not much in club member and staff dynamics is ‘absolute’, but more often not, it is my observation that many managers would be far better off, far more effective, and far more trusted and listened to if they would substitute the “They” mindset for the “I will take responsibility” philosophy. It’s pretty simple, but far too often forgotten, or many times a ‘reality’ that has never been part of some manager’s toolbox to begin with. If only “They” were to understand this reality, that manager’s professional life could be so much better………..