

KOPPLIN & KUEBLER

“The Most Trusted Names in Private Club Executive Placement”

The Country Club of the Future

By Richard Kopplin

If I could wave the magic wand and create The Country Club of the Future this is what I would like to see. It is the club I would join and would enthusiastically recruit my friends to join.

The golf course would be playable for the typical golfer (my handicap is 18 pushing 25) and could be enjoyed by all levels of players. Children and women friendly, yet capable of giving the single digit handicappers all they could hope for from the back tees.

I would design twenty four holes of golf in six hole configurations so members could play a quick six holes before or after work in little more than an hour. Members could take their children or spouses for an enjoyable family outing or they could combine three of the six hole combinations for the typical eighteen hole round of golf.

The practice facilities would include two distinct areas; one for the better players and one for beginning lessons which would not distract the low handicappers. State of the art video equipment would enhance the personal professional instruction and teaching program.

The clubhouse would be designed with the kitchen in the middle of the building. Since I am creating a new structure, I would work with the club architect to insure the topography allowed for delivery areas underneath the building with little visual impact on the club members. This central design would allow for easy service to each of the dining areas surrounding the kitchen.

I would design a fitness/wellness center that not only offered the latest equipment but also certified instructors who could teach meditation techniques, yoga, martial arts, and design individual “wellness plans” for our members. At least one of our fitness instructors would be trained in nutrition and would offer (along with the chef) classes on nutrition and healthy eating.

The “Kids Kamp” would be adjacent to the fitness center and I would incorporate activities for the member’s children on a year around basis. Summer programs would be especially popular as we provide organized programming around our “water park”, with certified life guards conducting swimming lessons and water safety classes.

The “Teen Activities” center would be in close proximity to the water park and would provide year around activities for the high school age children and grandchild of our club members. This is often the “forgotten class” in most clubs and the Country Club of the Future will engage these teens in organized activities which would include computer classes, movie and video review classes, book discussions, pre-college counseling, a

Page 2. The Country Club of the Future.

communication and etiquette classes. For our teenagers, the Club would be **the** cool place to be.

The opposite side of the clubhouse would feature a “business center” so that our members could have access to computer stations to check emails, make copies, send faxes, and even send overnight packages. The “Membership Director/Concierge” center would be in the next office and that person would be available for any special requests.

The Membership Director/Concierge could assist with making reservations for club activities, registering children for the various club programs, and source tickets for local sporting, cultural and social events happening in the community. She/He would also have the ability to make airline reservations, print tickets and book lodging at my hotel/resort of choice. This desk would be the “hub of activity” and would be visible and accessible near the front entrance of the club.

The Country Club of the Future would feature a “Tradition/History” room, which would contain the “story of the club” and provide a quiet place for meditation, reading and study classes for book clubs, art clubs, classical music clubs. This room would be ideal for small meetings and could also function as a Board of Directors meeting room.

The clubhouse would provide areas for casual dining, incorporating outdoor spaces as much as possible. The menu offerings would include typical club favorites but also pizza, sushi and some of the trendy items that can be easily added or deleted on a weekly menu. A “take out” menu would allow for orders to go. On the other end of the dining experience, a small dining room could be used for parties, and formal or elegant dining, which might be offered one night a week.

With the focus on “organic” foods, our chef would have a garden on a few acres of land that might even offer some reserved areas for members to grow their own vegetables. The chef would offer a class in “organic gardening” and this activity would be offered to the members on a first come basis.

The management and governance of The Country Club of the Future would include an accomplished, Certified Chief Executive and a Board of nine club members. Three board members would be nominated each year to serve three year terms. The nominating committee would nominate three members to fill the three open seats. There would not be an election; the days of the popularity contests should be over in the private club world.

The vice president would be selected from the sophomore class of board members and in his/her third year would transition into the club president’s position. The outgoing club president would also serve one additional year as “ex officio” on the board to provide continuity and institutional memory.

Page 3. The Country Club of the Future.

When I join my Country Club of the Future I would pay a non refundable initiation fee. A small portion of that fee would include an equity certificate, which I could forfeit on leaving the club if there is not a member available to replace me.

Too many clubs today are saddled with the “death spiral of refundability.” If I want to join my club, I want to join today and quite frankly, if my choice in ten years is to get part of my deposit back or to walk away with no ongoing dues obligation, I want the ability to walk away.

I don't really care about getting my deposit back; I would prefer the club use that money to improve the amenities while I am a member so that I can enjoy them. I don't know who sold club boards on this ill-conceived concept of refundability but it looks like the private club version of a “ponzi scheme.” The Country Club of the Future will not have that kind of onerous membership requirement.

And finally, my Country Club of the Future will allow cell phones in the club. The only requirement is that they must be on vibrate. Anyone who has a cell phone ring in my private club will be required to buy a drink for everyone in the club at the time or pay a \$100.00 fine. And yes denim is allowed, except in the formal dining room and on the golf course.

My Country Club of the Future is not “your father's Oldsmobile.” It is a fun, upbeat, user friendly facility where families gather because it is “their safe harbor”. It is their first choice when considering recreation, fitness, business and dining. This is a club I would join and recommend to friends and associates because I know they would enjoy the experience. And if all our members feel the same, we will certainly be a club that has a waiting list; a waiting list to get in, not a waiting list to get out.