

KOPPLIN & KUEBLER

"The Most Trusted Names in Private Club Executive Placement"

LOVE 'EM OR LOSE 'EM

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I can give you the names of the next five members who will be going on the resign list at your club within 95% accuracy. How can I do this? Very easy. All I have to do is look at your spending report for the last quarter of your fiscal year and I can identify the people at the bottom of the list who have not spent any money at the club. They will be sending their resignation letter in within the next few weeks and more probably within the next few days.

My recommendation to club General Manager/CE's and Club Board members, as I travel around the country is to quit focusing on potential new members. Instead, laser in on the current members in your club who are not participating, for whatever reason. The cost of replacing a current member is exponentially greater than the resources needed to keep existing members active in the club. In my opinion the only two reasons a member should ever resign from your club is if they move out of town or they have expired. The other excuses don't count, and I have heard them all.

"The Smiths are resigning because of financial issues." Baloney! There are ways to continue a membership in a suspense category until the Smiths are able to resume their full membership.

"The Johnsons no longer play golf and travel more now that they reached retirement years." Sorry, doesn't work with me. Where are they taking their children and grandchildren to play golf and eat? What is the club doing to show them some value for their entertainment dollars?

"The Robinsons don't have time anymore with their busy schedules to use the club." Excuse me; what has the General Manager/CE and his/her staff been doing to demonstrate why the club is the most logical "safe harbor" choice for the recreational dollars of busy families???

The successful private clubs today and those who will prosper in the future understand they need to "love 'em or lose 'em" Everyone on the club's senior management staff has read *Hug Your Customers* by Jack Mitchell and embraces the philosophy that every member walking through the door is "golden" and needs to have continuous verbal "hugs".

All club employees must be familiar with a noted national survey, which clearly defined the top three reasons customers return to their favorite restaurants. The number one reason was "a warm welcome." Can we do this in the private club business? I think so! The number two reason was a fond farewell. Can we do this in the private club business? Hello!!! We can do it all day. And what about the third reason customers return? It was a tie between clean restrooms and good food. Now certainly we can accomplish those two in our private clubs.

Would you like me to be specific? When is the last time your food and beverage manager actually enthusiastically greeted you at the door and actually knew the names of your lunch guests and walked out of the club when you finished your meal, thanking you for spending time at the club and asking when we might see you again?

When is the last time your head golf professional or one his assistants, actually walked around from behind the counter and greeted you and your guests and walked you out to the practice area or putting green and welcomed you after your round or said hello to you while you had a drink in the 19th hole?

When is the last time your executive chef actually walked out of the kitchen, approached your table and asked you how you enjoyed the food?

And when is the last time your club General Manager/CE made an effort to recognize you when you had some guests or family members at the club, especially during celebratory times, like birthdays or anniversaries?

Sounds like club management 101 but maybe it's time we did stop and look at the basics of our business and why members decided to join in the first place. I would submit that if we look at the fundamental reasons club members joined our clubs and continue to support our clubs we would also find the reasons why members are leaving our clubs.

I am perplexed at why so many club General Manager/CE's and their club board members are so focused on the need for new members and willing to invest so much time on membership recruitment but when I ask them to describe their exit interview process for resigning members they look at me like I have three heads. Wouldn't it be good to understand why members are leaving the club and even more importantly wouldn't you like to know how pro active your management team has been to keep those members in the fold?

I am convinced that the reason so many clubs are having their best year ever in 2009 is because their General Manager/CE , their management team and their Board successfully engaged their members with a variety of activities that reinforced the member's perception that their club was a great value. The General Manager/CE and Board clearly understood that if they didn't "love 'em" they could very easily "lose 'em."