
PCMA *Plus*

A Letter Written Exclusively for Executives and Administrators of Private Clubs

November-December 2015

SELLING MEMBERSHIPS... At the PCMA (Professional Club Marketing Association) annual conference this fall, membership and marketing professionals attended a high-level sales training course conducted by Paul Webb, a sales training guru. Webb walked through specific sales and closing techniques to demonstrate the importance of certain words or phrases and how they can influence a potential member's decision to join (or not join) your club.

When it comes to selling a membership, Webb recommends starting with a question such as, "What is important to you in a club?" Then actively listen to the answer. Listen by nodding your head and writing down the answer. "By writing down what a potential member says, you'll be sure to remember it and the client feels their concerns are important," he explained. "You will also ensure that you are showing and describing the club features that are important to the prospect."

Next, rephrase their needs. For example, "So having regular children's activities are important to you?" This clarification gets them committed to the need or gets them to the real topic that is important to them. According to Webb, most sales professionals don't listen to what the person is actually saying. "Too many times we believe guests are interested in what we would want in a club, but they are only interested in what *they* want from a club."

Webb also gave a simple but direct closing technique. "Some people don't like to make decisions," he said. "The main reason is that they don't want to make a poor or wrong decision. Traditional sales closing methods ask people to make a decision." Instead, he suggests making the decision for the prospective member and ask the prospect to agree with the decision. For example, "Let's get together on Thursday to complete your application, okay?"

He believes this process works because using common language gets a decision made but the prospect doesn't have to be the one to make it. By agreeing with you they still feel like they are involved in the decision. This is an easy but effective sales technique that results in a two out of three closing percentage, according to Webb.

THEFT REDUCTION... A major step in reducing the chance of employee theft or embezzlement at your club is to reduce the opportunity (or temptation) to stray off the straight and narrow. When attorney Robyn Stowell, accountant Ned McCrory and food facilities consultant Mike Holtzman presented a seminar on employee theft for attendees at the World Conference on Club Management earlier this year, here were some of their recommendations:

Ditch the signature stamp for check signing. Having a signature stamp for the club treasurer or manager so he or she isn't bothered with check signing every day is an invitation for dishonesty, even if the stamp is accessible to only one or a few other employees and locked up when not in use. The stamp could still fall into the wrong hands. As inconvenient as it might be at times, require actual signatures on all checks.

Conduct inventory on your own periodically, or have other members of the management team handle it. If part of the regular inventory process, this provides a safeguard against theft without the appearance of questioning the integrity of those usually responsible for inventory.

Reduce temptation for service staff to order extra drinks or food items for themselves when large parties in the dining room or lounge place orders. Remind members from time to time that since they are responsible for their club expenses, they should pay close attention to their individual charges when they

make purchases to “assure there are no mistakes.” Explain that it is easier to correct errors at the moment than after monthly statements are received.

Require every key employee to take his or her vacation every year, particularly those with purchasing and paying responsibilities. Fraud schemes can come to the surface when perpetrators are not controlling the purchasing and/or paying process. When an employee wants to pass up his or her vacation, it should raise a red flag in the eyes of management.

While typically an employee may come to work wanting to do the right thing, for some people circumstances may be too tempting. An employee may feel pressure in his or her personal life (divorce, gambling debts, illness), rationalize that theft is justified (“I am entitled to this because I am underpaid, mistreated, under-appreciated, etc.”), or be unable to pass up the opportunity because financial controls are weak or nonexistent.

IN THE NAME OF SERVICE... One of the main reasons members join a private club is for high-level service. Using the names of members can enhance club service dramatically but it can be difficult for staff members (especially with turnover and seasonal employees) to remember and pronounce them correctly.

Vincent Ivan Phipps, communication coach and founder of Communication VIP, states that by using someone’s name you are 33 percent more likely to increase that person’s customer service experience. “We enjoy hearing our names. It makes us feel appreciated and respected,” he said.

As the holiday season approaches at your club, you may want to communicate the importance of using members’ names to your staff. Phipps has a few recommendations to help employees remember member names and pronunciations.

Spelling. Ask for the spelling of the name. Hearing it spelled out will help you remember.

Confirm. For unique names, instead of alienating a member if the name is difficult, say the name and then ask “I have heard that name pronounced dif-

ferent ways. Is the way I said it correct?” Saying the name provides increased muscle memory to the brain and can increase retention.

Write. After the conversation, write down the member’s name when he or she is no longer in sight. The writing correlates a connection to that person and the name.

Use. Use the name in the conversation once it has been shared. “It is nice to meet you, Dr. Stanley. What can I do to make your visit today better, Dr. Stanley?”

“When people hear their names said in a friendly and welcoming tone, they feel nurtured.” Phipps stated. “Nurtured members and guests are the most valuable marketing tool for your club. Our names give us identity, roots, cultural significance and a sense of individuality. Using member names enhances their experiences and affects their moods positively.”

HOT FLAVORS... What’s trending for foodies? According to Greg Kaminski, executive research chef of Synergy Flavors, hotter foods are gaining in popularity. The new combination is sweet and spicy. Smoked flavors are very popular and spices such as cardamom, nutmeg and cloves are trending. Rhubarb is an ingredient Kaminski has seen on menus more regularly, and not just in desserts.

REWARDING EMPLOYEES... Many employers assume that money is the only way to reward employees and keep them happy. The reality is that money isn’t actually everything to employees. According to an article by Kevin Daum on www.inc.com, current research indicates that money alone is not enough to make team members bring their “A” game and keep them working happily and consistently.

Here are critical motivators Daum recommended to help energize your team:

Help them learn. Smart and ambitious people need mental stimulation. They want to be challenged and exposed to new ideas. Give employees access to mentors, training and resources for career enhancement and development. *(continued on page 4)*

Idea Bank

Engaging Golfers. If your club is looking for a way to encourage new golfers to take up the game, consider forming a Reluctant Golfers Group. The group is specifically for people who want to learn to play golf but are intimidated or afraid of all the rules.

Teaming Up! Host a father/son cooking class and invite the guys into the kitchen to learn a few great recipes from scratch with the chef. Create a competition-style culinary event that is a fun bonding experience for dads and sons.

Leaders in Training. Sawgrass Country Club in Ponde Vedra Beach, FL, established a Leaders in Training Program where club teens did community service projects together. Many high schools require a certain number of community service hours, so the club arranges for a project every Thursday where teens (or adults) can participate. They wear matching Sawgrass CC t-shirts and ride together from the club.

Grocery Tours. With the New Year comes a healthier mindset for many members. Schedule a grocery tour for members with a local registered dietitian. Provide meal ideas and recommendations for healthy, quick, realistic and affordable family meals.

Gift Ideas. This year encourage members to buy Christmas gifts at the club. In the club newsletter, include a section for each age group with a few items from your golf/tennis/fitness shop that would make great gifts.

VIP Section. Consider sectioning off an area of your next member event for VIP's only. Members who sponsored a certain number of new members or attended a specific number of member events are considered VIP's. Rope off the area and include lounge chairs, specialty drinks and other perks to make it feel special (think Admiral's Club at an airport). It will have all your members asking, "What do I have to do to get in to that section next time?"

Glow Run. This fall consider holding a family Glow Run like Farmington Country Club in Charlottesville, VA. Runners gather around dusk and load up on glow-in-the-dark accessories (bracelets, necklaces, headbands, etc.). The group departs the club around 6:30 p.m. and runs/walks along the golf course cart paths. Everyone meets up at the club for dinner afterwards.

The Puttskee. A new golf product is on the market but you don't need a golf course to use it. The Puttskee is a combination of putt-putt golf and skeeball. It's a portable board and roll up green and players can putt the ball into multiple holes, which have varying point values. Create a friendly competition at your club for all ages.

Elf Parties. This holiday season consider holding Elf Parties for the kiddos each week of December. Gingerbread house decorating, making toys in Santa's workshop, building 2016 family calendars and tree ornament decorating are all fun ideas for the elves to get geared up for Santa's big reveal!

Lights and Lobbies. Take advantage of the beautiful Christmas lights in the neighborhoods surrounding your club. Plan a walk with members through local areas with great holiday decorations and lights on display. Encourage dinner at the club before or after the walk.

Ugly Sweaters. Engage members in their 20's and 30's by hosting an ugly sweater party and competition. Give away prizes for the ugliest sweaters—and don't forget to spike the eggnog!

Send us your ideas and we'll feature them in the Idea Bank in an upcoming issue!

Email successful ideas, events, policies or programs implemented at your club to
pca@privateclubadvisor.com
or call 972-756-9037.

Say thank you. Achievers want to feel appreciated and they want to know you notice and value their efforts. Recognition through awards or acknowledgment in front of others helps them understand they are important members of the team.

Empower them. Achievers want responsibility but it can often be difficult for leaders to step back and delegate tasks. Empower your best employees and create ways for people to test their skills safely, with limited opportunity for failure.

Help them enjoy themselves. People want to have fun! Make work a place they love to be. Find ways to celebrate success, create engaging tasks that they can work on together and promote teamwork.

Help them grow. Give employees ways to grow personally and professionally. Personal and professional training programs are consistently rated as the most valuable reward high achievers gain from their employers. Taking an active interest in someone's personal growth includes budgeting and allocating resources to make sure each employee grows to his or her full career potential.

TRAINING YOUR BOARD... As your club plans the annual board orientation or board retreat, you may want to keep one important note in mind. Just as new club employees must be trained and educated in order to do their jobs effectively and efficiently, so must board and committee members.

Lead board members on a tour of the club, report departmental goals and recent achievements and include the entire management team in the orientation or retreat. The more thorough the training, the more the board members will recognize the group of professional staff running the club.

HEALING EYE SORES... Maintenance buildings, golf course restrooms, electrical boxes and other necessary items on the grounds can often interrupt the beautiful landscape and be known as eye sores. What if there was a way you could make these obstructions seem to disappear from view?

Warrenbrook Golf Course, Warren, NJ, hired a well-known artist in the area to paint the course restrooms with exterior-grade latex paint to create a camouflage effect. The concrete building now blends in to the course and surrounding trees. Management has had rave reviews about the improvements to the facility.

Have an Extraordinary Holiday Season!



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Some of the information in “Hot Flavors” came from an article by Elaine Watson at www.foodnavigator-usa.com

Information in “Rewarding Employees” came from an article by Kevin Daum at www.inc.com

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