

# Leading by Example



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**THIRTY YEARS AGO, OUR COVER STORY OF PROMINENT WOMEN IN THE CLUB INDUSTRY WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE, FOR MANY REASONS, BUT PROBABLY THE MOST EVIDENT IS THE FACT THERE WERE ONLY A HANDFUL OF WOMEN IN THE INDUSTRY, AND EVEN FEWER IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE.**

The world still viewed women as homemakers, nurses and teachers. For years, many clubs didn't allow women to visit without their husbands, some didn't allow women to join at all, and perish the thought actually run one. But the role that women have played in the economy and the industry, as members, employees and vendors has changed over the last 30 years. Having once provided what was viewed as supplementary income, today, women earn 45 percent of all household income, and as you can see from our cover, there are most certainly women in leadership roles in the club industry.

According to a study by the Center for Women's Business Research, women-run businesses contribute substantially, almost \$3 trillion annually, to the nation's economy. These women are leaders and visionaries and they are the 'new member' at the club. Their needs and wants are different and the club industry as a whole is changing to accommodate this new demographic. A natural progression of women at the club is women running and supporting the club.

The transition over the years hasn't been without obstacles. Some view change as a necessary evil. Others might prefer to keep chugging along

the same old path. But change will and does happen. Being the first is never easy. These women come from all parts of the industry; management, vendors, association leaders, trailblazers, membership directors... they've all proven they have what it takes. They're smart, sharp, professional, detail oriented and good at multitasking.

As the demographics in the club industry change and become more family oriented, women managers bring a different perspective to the table and female vendors, service providers and association leaders can provide alternative options and insights. The greatest challenge within this industry, for both women and men, is the commitment level and time requirements. The club is busiest during weekends, holidays and evenings, typically when everyone else spends time with their families, and as you will read in John Fornaro's Publisher's Perspective, the role of a general manager's spouse certainly has its pros and cons.

There are opportunities for women-run businesses with the club industry and there are management positions out there for women, but getting your foot in the door for that first interview can be difficult. You will have to work harder to prove yourself to a board or committee that you are the best candidate, regardless of gender.

The future for women in the club industry is bright. Almost all the hospitality schools now have higher averages of women attending than men and that's a huge change from 20 years ago. More and more women are in a stepping-stone position that leads to

the top. "It's changing rapidly," says Bill Wagner, general manager at Hawks Ridge GC. "Not because of any political correctness, but because they have the personality and ability to work in the club industry. They are making it because they are working hard."

The issues today are more about retention, recruitment, club usage and plowing through this economical downturn. There are still some tough times ahead and those leaders, male or female, with the best preparation and track record will succeed.

Boards and committees are looking for visionaries that can unite the members and staff, bring them together on common goals, and offer workable solutions. Male-dominance isn't the obstacle it was 30 years ago, but men still do represent a large segment of the club market that women, as leaders, need to recognize and understand.

I'd like to personally thank the women featured in our cover story for your time and contributions. You're a valued part of this industry and an inspiration to the young women just getting started in this challenging business. **BR**

*Got a comment? Drop us a note:  
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