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# The Technological Debate Is Changing

**NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, THE DEBATE ABOUT THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN PRIVATE CLUBS IS CHANGING, AND WHAT BETTER TIME TO TALK ABOUT IT THAN OUR ANNUAL TECHNOLOGY ISSUE.**

Again this year the many technological companies who service the private club industry, tell us their stories about software, hardware and the many innovations they provide for their private club clients...all of course aimed at deepening the members experience for private club members.

But my, how the world...the private club world, is changing.

Not all that long ago, the use of cell phones, SmartPhones and other technological pieces were *verboten* in most if not all, private clubs.

Check your phone in at the front door often appeared as the 'modus operandi.' There can be no disturbing the culture and years old tradition.

And despite what some clubs are doing, the 'no technology' rule remains with some clubs.

So consider the Cleveland Union Club (*our cover story this issue*), most often tagged as Cleveland's staid, sedate city club. Change has happened for sure!

"Technology isn't an afterthought and isn't a luxury for our younger members. "It's an expectation," says Joe LaMantia, the club's technology committee chair.

LaMantia and the club general manager Claudio Caviglia addressed the matter several years ago by listening to what the club's members wanted...and yes, needed, if they were to belong to the Cleveland Union Club.

A solid plan and investment in technology places the Cleveland Union Club at the forefront as a private club 'opinion leader.' And it's made a difference.

There's been a culture shift at the Cleveland Union Club, the demand for memberships has grown and the club's facilities have grown... all because of a process that considered members' wants and needs, and that ultimately has added significantly to the club's service and member experience.

And guess what? The Cleveland Union Club launched a membership drive so successful that it almost tripled the number of new members who might normally sign up in a year. And since clubs are in the 'dues business',

listening to what members want and need, and recruiting and retaining members is what makes clubs run 'tickety-boo', just as this is unquestionably a learn-how case study for other clubs.



This issue, Lee Hoke and writing mate Jody Thomson finish their series: *Value Creation: The Result of Excellent Strategic Planning, Part II* – what private clubs can do to create value for their members.

But the bottom line for Hoke et al is this: "*The board's work is the development of the strategies to create value and it is the responsibility of the staff to faithfully implement strategies to make it happen.*"

"*In addition, viewing strategic planning as value creation helps board members focus on the big picture instead of operations. Strategic planning is "the" most important function of the board, and value creation is the work of the board for the benefit the members, the staff and the club.*"

"*Micromanaging the general manager and the staff is not.*"

Obviously for boards and general managers truer words have not been spoken.



Finally...we continue this issue with more introductions of BoardRoom's 21 Presidents of the Year including: **Richard Kaplan**, President, Aberdeen Golf & Country Club, Boynton Beach, FL; **Bill Marks**, President, Sand Point Country Club, Seattle, Washington; **Mike O'Donnell**, President, Mirabel Golf Club, Scottsdale, AZ. **BR**

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