



JOHN G. FORNARO  
PUBLISHER, BOARDROOM  
PRESIDENT & CEO, APCD

# Leadership and Vision

## What's It Mean to Private Clubs?

**AS WITH ALL SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSES, INCLUDING PRIVATE CLUBS, SUCCESS STARTS WITH AN OPERATING PREMISE...WHAT THE BUSINESS IS ALL ABOUT! WHY DOES THE CLUB EXIST, WHAT DO THE MEMBERS AND THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WANT THEIR CLUB TO BE?**

Many clubs are posing these questions for themselves today because *there's a need to be something other than the 'status quo.'*

What takes a club to the next level? No question leadership and vision of the club's leaders are the motivating forces.

What is leadership and vision...or just leadership? Can we have leadership without vision, or a vision without leadership? Are they synonymous, independent of each other or what?

John F. Kennedy famously dreamed of putting a man on the moon. Eleanor Roosevelt envisioned a world of equal opportunity for women and minorities. Wendy Kopp was still a college student when she dreamed of making American schools better by creating a cadre of young, enthusiastic teachers. Compelling visions can truly change the world. But staying invested in them can be extremely difficult when hard times arrive.

*~ John Ryan, Center for Creative Leadership*

In the mind of John Ryan, "leadership success always starts with vision." Ryan, president of the Center for Creative Leadership, a global provider of leadership education and research says:

"John F. Kennedy famously dreamed of putting a man on the moon. Eleanor Roosevelt envisioned a world of equal opportunity for women and minorities. Wendy Kopp was still a college student when she dreamed of making American schools better by creating a cadre of young, enthusiastic teachers. Compelling visions can truly change

the world. But staying invested in them can be extremely difficult when hard times arrive.

"In the severe downturn the global economy is caught in right now, just the daily work of keeping your organization going can become all-consuming," Ryan suggests. And that's not something new to anyone involved in the private club industry.

"Resources are tighter, changes in strategy are required and painful decisions, often involving layoffs, need to be made. But as uncertain and cloudy as the time is now, the recession will certainly end. And when it does will you be poised to take advantage of new opportunities? Do you have a vision that will inspire your colleagues and customers (members)?" Ryan queried.

Tim Connor, a global sales, management and leadership speaker, trainer and sometimes contributor to BoardRoom, suggests, "There are over 350 definitions of leadership...I want to make it clear that leadership is not a position but a mindset. The receptionist can have a leadership mindset about their roles and responsibilities or they can just wait to be told what to do, when and how.

"The president can have a leadership mindset or stay in a reactionary mode waiting for things to change or get better.

SEE PUBLISHER'S PERSPECTIVE - PAGE 102

"Leadership is about leading, not waiting. Yes, leadership can have management responsibilities, but real leadership is about a personal vision to excel regardless of roles or responsibilities."

Vision of course, being able to 'look down the road', to envisage what might be, perhaps even to create something better or different.

Poignant comments and questions, so how does all this relate to the private club industry? From a more formal point of view here's the stance of the Club Managers Association of America, and much of it depends on the club's governing structure; the tenure of the management team or number of years the various department heads have been in the position; and the type of club and services the club provides for its members.

"CMAA produced a paradigm more than 15 years ago that walked the progression of a manager at a club through a process of 10 or 15 years at the same property," says the CMAA's CEO Jim Singerling.

"The leader should be someone who is the face of the club and who continually drives the ship in the right direction. The leader must be one-step ahead and ensures that everyone works for the same goals to guarantee the success of the club. The leader supports and encourages working together as a team, stands committed, understands responsibilities and is held accountable."

In Dick Kopplin's opinion, "Leadership is to have influence on someone. In the private club environment leadership requires that the general manager continues to demonstrate influence not only with the management team but also with the board, committees and club members.

"Vision is a separate trait, which is part of leadership and typically evolves from the strategic focus of a general manager as they address the particular needs of the club," said Kopplin of Kopplin & Kuebler, the private club consulting firm.

And no question, leaders are the face of the club and the club's team, with the ability to influence any mandate of the club, for the betterment of its members.

The leader should be someone who is the face of the club and who continually drives the ship in the right direction. The leader must be one-step ahead and ensures that everyone works for the same goals to guarantee the success of the club. The leader supports and encourages working together as a team, stands committed, understands responsibilities and is held accountable.

*~ Tim Bakels, GM/COO, Colleton River Plantation Club*

"This involves a few years at the beginning where the individual becomes familiar with the capabilities of all the staff members. The next few years, the manager take a role in the process of protecting the fiscal/financial as well as the human assets of the club, while assessing the long-term and short-term staff and identifying who should be part of the leadership thought process at the club.

"Lastly, the manager becomes the keeper of the dream, so to speak, the individual that protects the club from itself...from making changes that have been attempted and unsuccessful in the past," Singerling added.

"Leadership and vision have many roles in a private club beginning with the staff to the membership, the board, the committees and the management staff. All of the staff must be led in order to ensure success," explains Tim Bakels, GM/COO, Colleton River Plantation Club in Bluffton, SC.

"The ability to effectively work with, direct and listen to staff is critical to the success of a leader at a private facility or any type of golf operation," commented Ted Bishop, 38th president of the PGA of America. "Leadership comes in many forms, but a good leader is always a good listener and is able to formulate a plan that encompasses a variety of views, while bringing all parties together with a consistent message.

"Whether the leader has been on the job for one year or 20 years, they must understand how to manage the different personalities on their staff – much like a winning coach manages their players – so that they all have a clear direction that the facility is taking. This should apply to efforts to attract new members, as well as managing the quality of experience for existing members.

"This must include open lines of communication between the leader and the members of the club. Ask

members what they want and what can be improved, and bring that information to the board. By being more visible and interactive, leaders will elevate themselves among staff and members, becoming more valuable in the process,” Bishop added.

“There are many types of leaders in the private club,” Bakels suggested. “The first being your management team because without them the general manager’s job would be very difficult. These managers oversee their staff and their daily operations. They are the club’s leaders who assist the general manager in carrying out their objectives and the club’s vision.

“Qualities which exemplify the perfect leader are the ones who thinks outside the box; is dedicated to the club but has the ability to balance time away from the club; understands that staff is as important as they are, that they are not perfect and will make mistakes.

“This leader is open to new ideas, is fair, has the vision, authority and ability to stand up for what is right when need be, and is honest, forthright, ensuring structure and guidance and lastly, they must be proactive not reactive.”

And leadership certainly isn’t limited to general managers or department heads.

“Leaders often emerge in a private club as the person who has an interest in the well being of the entire club community and wants to share their efforts to accomplish a worthwhile goal,” Kopplin added.

“While some may have a personal or narrow interest, most club volunteers truly want to do what is in the best interests of the club. They might be serving on a committee, and could also be on the board or they might be the club president. Certainly the general manager needs to exercise their formal authority to influence the direction of the club.”

Unquestionably, trust is a major part of the equation.

“Leadership is multifaceted but in my view always begins with building trust at every level in the club,” Kopplin offered.

“The best leaders are the most effective in gaining trust quickly and on a sustained basis. Without trust it is very difficult to establish credibility and very few people will follow a leader who is not authentic.

“And good leadership traits are timeless and lasting. Integrity, passion, follow-through, empathy, appreciation of others, and good communication skills never go out of style,” Kopplin added.

“A leader must gain the confidence of the entire operation, including the members, the staff and the governing board. Without their total confidence, success will rarely be achieved,” explained Singerling.

“A club’s general manager who truly has the confidence of the board and the club’s committees then must work daily to

SEE RPUBLISHER’S PERSPECTIVE - PAGE 104

**CLUB RESOURCES**

SINCE 1991



**STRATEGIC PLANNING**

**BOARD RETREAT FACILITATION**

**CONTRACT MEMBERSHIP SALES**

**MEMBER SURVEYS**

**SERVICE AND FACILITIES AUDITS**

**MANAGEMENT RECRUITMENT**

PROUDLY ANNOUNCES JIM MULDOWNEY  
AS OUR NEW PARTNER/DIRECTOR

CONTACT: BOB BODMAN,  
PRESIDENT/DIRECTOR  
800-267-6758  
Bob@ClubResources.com  
Visit Us at: www.ClubResources.com

# CINDERS SLIMFOLD

The gas grill you can fold and take anywhere!





AFFILIATE







**CINDERS SLIMFOLD LLC**  
1990 Main Street, Suite 750  
Sarasota, FL 34236  
Fax: 941-309-5147  
Tollfree: 1-877-426-2900  
[www.slimfoldgrills.com](http://www.slimfoldgrills.com)

retain that confidence and fulfill the goals and the visions of the various club constituencies.

"Instead of being reactive, the general manager must be proactive, must take chances and must make some of the members uncomfortable. That is not always easy, and not a comfort zone for some individuals.

"Accepting the role of leadership when you cannot look at yourself in the mirror and convince yourself that you are a good leader is a mistake. If you truly believe in your goal and your vision, it becomes much easier to be embraced by the other decision makers."

And what about emotion? What role does it play in leadership...in visioning...in managing?

"It depends on the emotion. Certainly effective general managers demonstrate empathy and are not afraid to share their honest emotions but good leaders also know how not to overreact to a situation – good or bad. They practice the art of responding as opposed to reacting," Kopplin outlined.

"As long as emotion is defined separately from passion, emotion must play a role in the leadership of a club," Singerling commented. "It comes with a determination to believe and to exude the passion that it takes to become successful. When it comes to decision-making, emotion generally needs to be taken out of the equation.

"I think understanding when emotion is acceptable and productive and when it should take a back seat is a key part of the thought process of a successful leader. That being said, I do not believe passion ever needs to leave the thought process of a true leader. It is just sometimes muted a bit."

And what does one of the most passionate people in the private club business – Gregg Patterson, general manager of the Beach Club of Santa Monica – think about emotion?

"Leaders have a vision of the good, they know the team they need to make "good" happen and have a detailed plan for getting their club from "here" to "there." But knowing "here", "there", "who" and "how" aren't enough. To make things happen, leaders need passion and emotion to energize the club's journey from "here" to "there," Patterson exclaims.

"I call this the *"Emotional Imperative"* of leadership, and those who've got it have lightning bolts flying off their fingertips, energizing everyone they meet, making things happen.

"Those who follow look to *Leaders for The Buzz* to inspire their efforts, to focus their attention and to sustain their commitment until the leader's vision has become reality.

## PASSION

"Passion lubricates the message. People listen to and are persuaded by those who are emotionally connected to



a *Vision Of The Good*. Passion is a magnetic quality, attracting others, keeping them attached. Getting emotional, having *passion*, is critical to doing 'leader' well," Patterson enthused.

"Club leaders get emotional about the journey when they have a passion for the club business; have a passion for the size and type of club they're at (yacht club, beach club, city club, or country club); and have a passion for the members and staff of the club they manage.

"Leaders can't fake their passion for club – people can 'smell' those who truly have it and those who don't. Club leaders get emotional when they know their stuff.

"Emotions show that people care," Patterson suggested. "Boards and managers need to care deeply about their clubs and emotions are naturally expressed when people care. Decisions will always have an emotional component. The key is 'constrained expression,' that is, emotions should be used to provide emphasis and nuance in the support of logic. Such emotion should be encouraged. Emotion that overwhelms logic should be avoided. Balance is needed."

Passion sells...and sustains!

### PUBLISHER'S FINAL THOUGHTS

We need to defeat the status quo and it can be done through wise leadership and vision; passion and emotion!

"The benefit of having a well-structured strategy is that it makes the economy an external threat which you have to monitor, but it isn't the sole factor in the club's success or failure," says my colleague Frank Gore.

"One of the great things about successful clubs is tradition, and one of the worst things about a private club is tradition. The club needs a vision of where it wants to be in the future. The vision should not change from year to year, board to board or chair to chair."

Implementing a strategic plan that includes a clear vision of what your members want your club to be in the future is an absolute necessity. Your club's future isn't a situation of happenstance. It's a result of leadership and vision!

And the final words come from Bill Thomas, executive director of the Association of Private Clubs and Directors:

"Managers do things right, leaders do the right things!" And that comes from leadership and vision.

At least that's the way I see it! **BR**

John G. Fornaro, publisher

If you have comments on this article or suggestions for other topics, please contact John Fornaro at (949) 376-8889 or via email: [johnf@apcd.com](mailto:johnf@apcd.com)

## DO YOU NEED A GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENT?

Our professional connections with over 70 years experience can recruit a superintendent with the education and skills to maintain your course in ideal condition.

CONTACT US



699 Westchester, Saginaw, MI 48603

or Call: (989) 797-0677

[www.egsinc.net](http://www.egsinc.net)



The First and the Only Association created and designed specifically for the education and advancement of Club Catering Professionals

### ACCP ENABLES YOU TO:

- Increase your Club's catering revenues while providing the ultimate in Member service
- Grow professionally as a Catering Director through club-specific education
- Network among like-minded individuals with common goals in the club industry

Educating the Club Industry...  
One Catering Director at a Time

Contact:  
Lynne LaFond DeLuca at  
[Lynne@TheACCP.com](mailto:Lynne@TheACCP.com)

[www.TheACCP.com](http://www.TheACCP.com)

