

KOPPLIN & KUEBLER

“The Most Trusted Names in Private Club Executive Placement”

“Begin With the End in Mind” to have 90 minute Board Meetings

By Richard Kopplin

Perhaps the most vexing issue any private club board and club general manager can face each month is how to truncate the seemingly endless monthly board meeting. I would submit that in finding a solution to this problem we might need to turn to a renowned author.

My favorite habit in Dr. Stephen Covey’s best selling book The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People is “Begin with the end in mind.” I believe that private club board members who subscribe to that concept will enjoy the benefits of productive and efficient board meetings. Success in truncating the sometimes endless discussions that most club boards suffer through each month requires preparation in three distinct areas.

First, each board member must contribute to the process by insuring that they are prepared to give a report for the committee they chair. Most club standing committees will meet each month and it is incumbent upon the chairperson and the general manager to see that an agenda is published and followed at the committee meeting.

Discussion items, which will require a recommendation for action by the entire board, should be prepared in the form of “action plans”. These “action plans” will provide the rationale of the committee in making this suggested course of action and will also include the estimated costs, if any, which would result from the action plan.

Minutes of the committee meeting will document the thorough discussion and comments of the committee members and these minutes should be attached to the committee chairperson’s report to the board. Keep in mind that the real work of the club should be done at the committee level and not at the board level. Action plan items should receive a thorough hearing by the appropriate committee members before being referred to the board of directors for a final decision.

Second, the club president must be assertive enough to keep the board members focused on the agenda. The purpose of the board meeting is to review the work of the club committees and to act on the “action plans” presented by each chairperson. The president must insure that the discussion does not re-hash, nor replace the work of the committee members, but responds in a respectful fashion to the recommendations of each committee.

Many clubs have developed an executive committee, usually consisting of the club officers and perhaps one other board member, which meets a couple days prior to the board meeting to discuss agenda items. This executive committee will also review the minutes of all committee meetings held during the month and discuss any “action plan” items, issuing from the committees that will be presented to the entire board.

If the club does not have an executive committee this important review function of the committee work falls primarily upon the club president. He/she must insist that each

Page 2. “Begin With the End in Mind” to Have 90 Minute Board Meetings

committee chairperson provide minutes and written “action plans” in advance of the full board meeting. Only committee chairpersons who have complied will be recognized for their reports at the board meeting.

Third, the club general manager should be the catalyst to insure that all of the committees are meeting on a regular basis, with appropriate agendas and properly recorded minutes.

The general manager will assist each committee chairperson in scheduling their meetings, developing the agendas, notifying the members of meeting dates and times, and taking the minutes of the meeting. Following the meeting he/she will provide a copy of the minutes for the chairperson to approve.

The committee meetings may result in some “action plan” items that will be recommended to the executive board and full board. It is important for the general manager and committee chairperson to encourage full discussion of these items by the committee members so that the board will respect their recommendation and not “re-discuss” all of the details at the board meeting.

The minutes and “action plans” of the committees truly form the basis for future club board decisions. A successful club general manager, a perspicacious club president and committed board members will understand that to “begin with the end in mind”, which is the ninety minute board meeting you must actively engage each committee to do the work of the club. If you start with that premise you will enjoy the resulting ninety-minute board meeting.