

KOPPLIN & KUEBLER

"The Most Trusted Names in Private Club Executive Placement"

Club President....."Do I REALLY have to do another performance review of the GM/COO? I just did it a year ago!!"

Kurt Kuebler, CCM

Partner

KOPPLIN & KUEBLER

Sorry, Mr. President, YES, you do have to go through that process again....and, quite frankly, I'd suggest that you start doing it each quarter and make it a standard operating practice for every President to follow!

As my partner and I visit clubs around the country and get to observe first hand why some clubs continue to function effectively during these challenging times, while others down the street seem to be even more dysfunctional than ever, a common trait to the former category is that they recognize the importance of these focused and candid evaluations! *And, actually conduct them!*

So, what do they do in these evaluations? Aren't we just talking about the financials? We already do that every month? Shouldn't the GM/COO already know what's important?

While it may not be everyone's 'favorite' task, it CAN and should actually turn into one of the most effective and energized efforts you can undertake during your term as President.

The problem most clubs/people have with the performance review process is that they are too focused on just the financials and then wait too long to have specific discussions to set clear goals and objectives in areas that will help the club move forward. Or, the points of evaluation, which have often been adapted from a standard performance review form used for every employee, or from another business, are far too general or far too subjective.

From our observation point, those clubs that function effectively more often than not, have created and memorialized a process that celebrates an effective, interactive and reasonable strategy, and issues well beyond the financial performance of the club are considered. The very best ones we're aware of focus on the 'Mission' of the club and a reasonable number of clearly defined objectives that support that mission. And, they are specific enough to everyone to know if they are achieved or not (measurable), and put time sensitivity (by when) to their being accomplished. Those clubs with effective programs tend to do them quarterly, don't bite off more than is practical within that time frame, and then sit down every three months to review results.

Too often, an annual performance review, even when objectives are clear and reasonable, leaves either too much 'open' to be done at the end of the year, or sets the expectation that all of it should be done very soon, or simply doesn't put reasonable time frames on this often much larger set of objectives. More importantly, the issues affecting clubs change throughout the year (think last year's economic meltdown in October/November), and annual goals simply don't forecast where concentration by the GM/COO should be at present. Breaking it down to quarterly analysis and review allows these clubs to far more clearly 'target' issues that need attention NOW.

Some use the S.M.A.R.T. goals process very effectively on this quarterly basis---Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reasonable and Time sensitive----as a standard applied to the three to five issues for that time frame.

Another area of challenge and difficulty for many club presidents is that an annual review of the GM/COO is often done on a fiscal year basis, which often doesn't coincide with the term of the President and Board of Directors. Breaking the process into quarterly segments allows for a very clear and TIMELY evaluation, and allows for easy and current information/evaluation to be passed from one president to the next.

So, this sounds good and logical, but how do we ensure that it actually happens?

The one way to really ensure that the effort to sit down and discuss all of this occurs is to write it in as a responsibility in the GM/COO's contract, agreement letter, or as one of his/her quarterly objectives. If he/she is required to do by agreement, it gets scheduled as appropriate! We've seen several GM/COOs have it specifically outlined how and when they are to notify their Board President and/or Executive Committee by a date certain to set the review meeting. Then, he/she has the responsibility to work with that person/group to see that it gets done, and is memorialized in the file.

Frankly, this is how most effective GM/COOs are now working with their respective key management staff, rather than waiting for an annual review.

Setting the culture in the club to support this type of reasonable, regularly occurring and measurable discussion and evaluation of outcome expectations is often what sets high performing clubs apart from dysfunctional ones. Club Presidents who take it seriously and realize how effective it can be will soon find how energizing and important the whole process is to the success of the club.

Kurt D. Kuebler, CCM is a partner with Richard M. Kopplin in the executive search firm of Kopplin & Kuebler, specializing in the placement of General Managers/Chief Operating Officers, Directors of Golf and Golf Course Superintendents. They may be reached at 480-443-9102, at kurt@kopplinandkuebler.com, or through the website at www.kopplinandkuebler.com.