By Peter Blais

Team building is the key to success in the club or any other business, according to former Dallas Cowboy quarterback Roger Staubach.

"To be competitive you must have management and employees working together," said the keynote speaker during the opening business session at March's Club Managers Association of America Annual Conference in Dallas.

Without that attitude, a business will not be successful, regardless of its resources and talent, he said.

The two-time Super Bowl-winning quarterback said he learned the importance of team building during the 1971 football season. Despite having the most talent of any Cowboy team he played on, the 1971 squad stumbled to a 4-3 start and was in danger of not making the playoffs, Staubach said.

"I was normal-sized, Mark. Ditka was the first to arrive during a team meeting following the seventh game. In no uncertain terms, Ditka told his fellow players they had all been playing as individuals, not as a team. That would stop immediately, he warned, or they would have to deal with him.

Ditka's teammates respected and feared their tight end. One by one they stood and repeated his words. A team was forged during that meeting, Staubach said. The Cowboys went on to win 10 straight games, including Dallas' first Super Bowl.

"This 'what's in it for me' attitude simply doesn't work in service industries," said the president of Staubach Co., a 130-employee commercial real estate firm.

"You need to encourage team builders. They are the top people in your organization. They are always ready to take advantage of any opportunity," Jeff Hostetler (the back-up quarterback who led the New York Giants to this year's Super Bowl) is a good example.

How can you recognize the team builders in your organization? Staubach said they are often not the most talented employees, rather those who get the most out of their ability.

Former Cowboy wide receiver Drew Pearson was a team builder, Staubach said. Passed over as too small and too slow by teams in the National Football League draft, Pearson signed as a free agent with the Cowboys. He went on to a spectacular career and was on the receiving end of the famous Hail Mary Pass against Minnesota that helped the Cowboys into the 1975 playoffs.

"He utilized his talents to the fullest of his capabilities," Staubach said. "And he persevered. You can't ever quit. Team players perform when times are tough. Adversity often reveals genius. Prosperity conceals it."

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Seniors charge discrimination

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• Telling a candidate he or she is over-qualified for a job. "Either you are qualified to do the job or not qualified. Over-qualified is a way of telling a person they have too many years of employment under their belt. Put it in writing and you've lost money big-time," Gamse said.

• Recruiting for workers exclusively on college campuses or any other place where older workers are unlikely to be.

• Instances in which younger workers are given a certain training while older ones are not "You have to do the exact same things — or more for older workers as their younger counterparts," Gamse said. "If not, that's discrimination."

When hiring, an employer must not ask the date of birth on the employment application, nor the date of high school or college graduation.

"If you recruit older persons for part-time or seasonal work... be absolutely certain they have equal right to apply for promotion. If they do not have that right, that's illegal," Gamse said.

He also said, although courts do not require it, "find out — before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is at your door — whether you have age discriminatory practices at your workplace. Take a look at who applies for your jobs, who gets hired, trained, terminated. If it's not proportional, you need to begin asking questions about the persons who are making these decisions because you are responsible for those decisions."

Gamse also suggested that courses reducing your workforce should not use a "retirement incentive" programs. "Early-retirement offers are not illegal, but I think they bit in the future. We as a nation don't like any group to be singled out for any particular attribute, particularly age," he said.

Federal law defines an "older worker" as a person 40 or older, and this is the main reason for the less-stringent state regulation.

"The American workplace is becoming more heterogeneous in respect to gender, race and ethnic origin. Yet it is becoming homogeneous in respect to age. That means you potentially have fewer and fewer younger employees... but you have fewer and fewer older workers because they are retiring or being forced out of the workplace. So you have a growth in the number of middle managers who may be losing you once they reach what ever plateau they have in their own mind," Gamse said.

He said that in 1990 46 percent of eligible older workers in the labor force were opting for early retirement. That figure dropped to 16 percent of eligible men in 1987 "despite the fact they are healthier and better educated."

Gamse said although many older workers dream of retirement and don't want to work full-time, "in many cases they are retiring because they have been treated unfairly, and more and more they are screaming 'foul!'"

But the fact that 1,000 more people join the 65 and older age group each day could be good news for managers.

"Older people tend to have certain attributes that are very attractive to employers. They have invested loyalty, and believe in giving a fair day's work in return for a fair day's pay, and in being on time and on the job," Gamse said.

"But there's a problem here, because if you don't return that level of loyalty and commitment to these people there is a federal law... that supports their right to hold you personally accountable, and your board and your golf course accountable for mistreatment."

ROCKVILLE, Md. — CRI, Inc., a real-estate investment firm, has organized a new full-service golf affiliate — CRI Golf, Inc.

CRI Golf will buy, develop and manage public or private courses that are either existing or under construction, with investment ranging from $5 million to $50 million.

CRI Chairman William B. Dockser said, "The business of golf has grown to play a central role in the investment services we are being asked to provide to clients around the world. Through CRI Golf, we will be able to more fully serve investors seeking to acquire golf properties."

Executive Vice President Richard L. Kadish said CRI Golf will seek to acquire courses and golf clubs in markets throughout the United States.

The company is buying golf complexes in Orlando and San Diego and is considering projects in Phoenix, Las Vegas, Tampa, San Francisco, Chicago, Atlanta, and metropolitan Washington, D.C.

CRI golf could acquire properties in all-cash transactions or in trade transactions or engage in sale/leasebacks. It will also oversee development and operate a facility with its own management team.

CRI's S-billion domestic real-estate portfolio includes the LaQuinta Hotel Golf & Tennis Resort in Palm Springs, Calif. In 1986, CRI began a hotel management and asset management company to better serve clients investing in hotels. The affiliate — Capitol Hotel Group — today manages four hotels and provides investors with asset management and advisory services for 24 hotel and resort properties in 11 states.

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