PERSONNEL CORNER

Operators need to learn to have fun

By VINCE ALFONSO

S
ome of us owners and managers are a bunch of stuffed shirts. Too often, we just sit on our logs like Winnie the Pooh and bounce the pointer finger of our writing hand off our temple, while we say out loud, 'Think, think, think.'

Well! We are the owners and managers, aren't we? Therefore, we must keep up the appropriate image, shouldn't we? No ... remain contemplative and exude self-control at all times in order to gain and maintain the respect of our staff.

Mixing public, private players a profitable cocktail

By J. BARRY MOTHES

CHELTENHAM, Pa. — Can longtime members of a private club suddenly mix happily on the course and in the clubhouse grill with the public? Will it create a profitable, thriving club?

Absolutely, according to Matrix Hospitality Vice President Martin Dickey.

In fact, the reworking of formerly exclusive, private golf clubs to allow daily-fee golf and pub dining, social events and entertainment is exactly what Matrix is doing at Ashbourne Country Club, a 1920s-era private club in the Philadelphia suburbs that faced mounting debt and declining membership.

Under an innovative leasing arrangement, Matrix will maintain certain rights and privileges for existing members while improving the club's financial picture by opening it to the public.

Dickey said clubs like revamped Ashbourne, where existing private members and the public are integrated in a blended golf and social experience, could be one of the more successful new niches in golf.

"We think there's lots of potential for growth there," said Dickey, who joined Matrix in 1993 as general manager at Forsgate Country Club in Jamesburg, N.J., a private 36-hole country club with 800 members that was Matrix's first golf property.

Dickey currently has direct reporting responsibilities on operations at Matrix's three golf properties.

Matrix is undertaking substantial capital improvements at Ashbourne, including a completely renovated clubhouse and ballroom and renovated locker rooms and card rooms.

Members at the new Ashbourne will still have private locker rooms, dining areas and other social components that will be off limits to the public-access customer.

But there will also be renovated areas open to members and the public, including plans for nightly entertainment four times a week.
After that, candy prices go approximately upwards depending on the degree of improvement they experience.

And then, there’s the Annual Columbus Day Horse Barn Sale. Few people know the true origin of Columbus Day sales. Of course, we do. When Columbus told his mom and dad he was sailing to the New World, Columbus’ mother said, “Whena you gonna get ya stuffa froma the barn?” When he explained the size of the Nina, the Pinta and the Santa Maria would not allow him to take all of his stuff with him to the new world, his mother said, “Theya you better come anda sell it, because your father and I, weonna gonna keep ita forever!”

Thus was born the first Columbus Day Horse Barn Sale. Naturally, we celebrate by decorating our shop with hay bales, bridles and saddles and other horse barn items to add an air of authenticity to our sale. Now dig this! Saturday, Jan. 4, Mr. Stuffed Shirt Owner, (yours truly), got talked into playing two holes with his 15-year old shop helper, Simon. Yes, even I thought I was too busy to play, but alas, I gave in.

Guess what? First hole, par 3,135 yards, eight iron, one swing— IN THE HOLE ON THE FLY! It was my FIRST EVER hole-in-one! Simon will never forget it, and I certainly will never forget it. Simon said to me the next day, “You know, Vince, if it wasn’t for me, you would not have made your hole-in-one.” “You know what, Simon? You’re right. Thanks.”

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