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RIGHT ON

“**E**fficiency is doing things right; effectiveness is doing the right things,”

according to Peter Drucker, the Austrian-born management consultant, educator and author who many consider the father of modern management thought leadership.

I'm constantly drawn to Drucker's teachings because of their simplicity. Drucker said the essential work of leaders – regardless of the business or industry in which they worked – could be pared to the way they

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managed three key areas: resources, information and anxiety.

We see management's challenges for those of us in the golf business in each of those areas, which are ingrained in four of Drucker's most honored teachings.

SERVING THE CUSTOMER IS THE PRIORITY OF EVERY BUSINESS. The starting point for every business opportunity and obligation is the customer – and, at private clubs, the member. Do you know what you customers and members want? As the golf season launches in the northern tier, club managers and leaders must reconnect with their customers and members and seek answers to three questions:

- What services will add to their enjoyment?

- What reasons can we provide to encourage them to bring friends to the club?

- What are their “hot buttons,” the things they want and need most from their club experience?

PLANNED ABANDONMENT. Drucker urged managers to develop the wisdom and courage to look candidly at their organizations to decide which parts should be abandoned. Many clubs rely too heavily on past practices that should be jettisoned to make way for a new operating model. The recessionary cycle revealed some of the most flawed perceptions:

- Membership communications and marketing were unnecessary for private clubs. In fact, in the midst of the Information Age, clubs and golf courses must maintain regular and meaningful communication to remain relevant.

- Refundable memberships were the wave of the future. Assuming that there will be more people seeking to buy memberships than there are people who wish to leave the club proved an error in judgment.

- Superior course conditioning is an option. Golfers proved just the opposite: care and upkeep are critical to the market attractiveness of every golf facility. Deferring maintenance – such as seasonal aeration and turf repair – has an adverse multiplying effect.

- Assumptions accurately inform next year's budget. Last year's budget is a starting point, but zero-based budgeting is essential to operational efficiency and innovation. Overreliance on assumptions ensures a repeat of past mistakes.

ATTITUDE IS KING. The people who are customer-facing make all the difference. Hire the best people available and hire for attitude. You can teach

tactics and procedures, but a positive attitude, which makes customers and members glad they came to the course, comes naturally – or not. Empower employees who serve customers and members to make decisions that create raving fans of the club. Celebrate their innovative ideas and solutions that earn recognition and appreciation from customers and members. Drucker taught that a primary duty of the manager is to prepare workers to perform well and to give them the freedom to do so. Ask yourself, how do you increase the value of your team?

KNOW YOUR MARKET AND OUR CUSTOMER. Many of the problems plaguing the golf business – especially those involving development and membership – stem from inadequate planning and ill-informed market knowledge. Many courses and clubs lack real market data. They do not know where to find more customers or members, and they lack an understanding of how to communicate successfully with prospects. Lacking enough market information, too many clubs introduce new promotions and pricing plans that miss the market. There is no substitute for a patient and deliberate approach to collecting market information.

To take advantage of Drucker's teaching, we must remember the critical importance of the three core ingredients of business management success: that resources require constant vigilance, support and nurturing; that information must be coordinated, repetitive and simple to apply, and that anxiety can be managed up or down, depending on circumstances.

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