

Wanted: Golf Fanatic with a Fabulous Phone Voice

BY HEIDI VOSS

As a club-marketing consultant, part of my job is to assist clubs in finding membership directors. One might think this would be easy, but it's very difficult.

Most people who apply for the job believe they'll be perfect for it because they love to play 36 holes of golf daily. But in reality, you could take a survey of directors and they would tell you that they get to play golf about once a month, and that they play less now than before they assumed their roles.

So the big question is: "What do they do all day?" I was asked this once by a member of the club's wait staff. He had seen me chatting happily on the phone,

touring around on the course and dining with folks while enjoying tableside Caesar salads and cherries jubilee.

His exact words were, "How do I apply for your job?"

I'm pleased my job appears so glamorous, but in reality a director spends many hours on the phone and in



meetings with potential members answering their numerous questions, as well as overcoming their buying objections. This is especially true with all of the recent competition between clubs in the marketplace.

How do I find the right person for this job? I look for a gregarious person who thrives in the company of others and isn't afraid to jump in and cater to a member's every need. This person

can also drive an SUV across an area that appears to be strip-mined while describing the new par three that will play over the water feature that currently doesn't exist.

Contrary to popular belief, you don't need to be female to be a great membership director. You must, however, be willing to work eight days a week and be at the beck and call of your members and club manager.

When I feel I have the right candidate, I administer a personality profile test, conducted by Profiles International, for comparison with others in the industry that have done outstanding jobs. If the test, with questions like, "Would you rather fly the helicopter or ride in the helicopter?" doesn't make them crazy, I am usually rewarded with a terrific gauge of how successful this person is going to be in the club membership position.

Once on board, the director is encouraged to spend the day with each department head to learn about their roles on the team. From an agronomic perspective, the prospective members today know much more about grass types, irrigation, bunker styles, green speed and all of those things that make them a prime candidate for serving as the green

chairman. Just kidding! Seriously, though, nothing impresses a prospective member more than the membership director who knows each golf hole's length and the smart landing areas.

I still run into clubs that want to run the membership program by committee. This invariably leads to asking busy members to allocate time to try to track down even busier prospects. This is the immediate key to failure. We don't ask members to mow the grass and cook their meals, so why should we expect them to spearhead the largest revenue generator at the club?

A hot, ongoing debate I have at my house with my superintendent husband is, "Who is the most valuable employee at the club, the membership director or the superintendent?" Without green grass there would be no sales and without sales there would be no green grass.

Therein lies the conundrum.

Voss is president of Bauer Voss Consulting, a club marketing consulting company. Voss specializes in new development, club conversions from public to private and member buyouts. For more information, contact www.bauervossconsulting.com.

Three Requisites for the Job

1 GREGARIOUS WITH A CAPITAL "G" — This person thrives in the company of others and isn't afraid to jump in and cater to a member's every need.

2 ONE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE FEMALE — But you do have to work eight days a week and be at the beck and call of your members and manager.

3 AGRONOMICALLY INCLINED — The person knows grass types, irrigation, bunker styles, etc.