

Member Buy-In

Effective Communication is Essential for a Master Plan and Construction

ONE OF MANY THINGS I have learned during the master planning process and construction is that effective and timely communication to the membership is vital. Many of my peers have embarked on a facility master plan and we know it can be a challenging process for our board, our members and our team. The most important elements to creating buy-in and gaining consensus from our membership is communicating and educating them with the details of the project and keeping them informed of the progress as the construction is underway.

At Southern Hills Country Club (SHCC), the 2017–2019 facility improvement plan effectiveness hinged on educating the membership on: 1) the scope of the plan, 2) the funding of the plan, 3) why the improvements are important, and 4) how they will enhance the member experience.

Town hall meetings have proven to be a successful communication tool. McMahon Group assisted us in the development of our facility master plan. In a joint effort, Frank Vain with McMahon Group and our club president conducted five presentations to the membership about our facility improvement plan. In regard to the golf course restoration project, Golf Course Architect Gil Hanse conducted four presentations explaining the hole-by-hole changes and his philosophy on tree removal. Video recordings of both presentations were posted on our private club website, along with elevations and renderings of the full master plan.

After the presentations, member focus groups and a membership survey gathered input and feedback and provided

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valuable insight on the likelihood that the membership would approve the plan. The membership comment section of the survey supplied valuable information and identified common themes. In preparation for the vote, we shared the survey results with the membership, along with the changes to the plan that were a result of the member survey.

Once work begins, the concepts presented to the membership sometimes change based upon the work that follows. In our case, we had planned for a bag storage building to be built into a hillside, half of which would be underground. During the design process, we discovered that we could bury the entire 15,000-square-foot building under a golf parking lot, effectively creating a one-story parking garage to house 126 carts and 1,600 golf bags. This created an open vista of the golf course we have not appreciated since the building was built in 1967. We sent members detailed print and electronic brochures that illustrated the finalized design of all the buildings and improvements.

Communications Planning

Developing a detailed communication plan prior to, and during construction, is an essential tool to ensure your membership and your employees are well informed. The importance of a communication plan sometimes is overlooked or underestimated during the creation and implementation of a master plan. While those involved in the planning effort may be well aware of what is going on, those outside the executive team are often uninformed and uninvolved. Effective communication ensures that all club members are aware of the plan, its importance, and how they might be impacted. There are many opportunities to provide updates, important notices, and progress reports via email and push notifications. Use the club website to post live video feeds, drone camera footage that gives members a birds' eye view of all the projects, and time lapse photos. We also offer members "hard hat" tours and monthly construction updates "happy hours" that have been beneficial.

More than three decades of experience has taught me that effective communication and transparency are the keys to any successful renovation plan. Keeping your members aware and informed during all phases of the improvement process will create buy-in, excitement and ensure a successful project. 



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