

Is Change Really Necessary?

Just Ask your Sacred Cows ...

OF COURSE CHANGE IS NECESSARY, BUT IT HAS TO BE MANAGED EFFECTIVELY. IT IS SAID THAT "CHANGE" SMACKS IN THE FACE OF "TRADITION."

Traditions come from our members' values and beliefs. Over the years beliefs and conditions change; hence modified traditions.

Where does "change" come from? Change is all around us; change is inevitable. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus wrote: "Nothing endures but change." Even the mountains and the seas are in a constant state of change. Our modern world is in perpetual change with all the new electronic gadgetry that pops up every day. If long established clubs had never changed, we would still see ceiling fans in the club instead of central air conditioners! Different times call for different measures. The clearest challenge to the general manager is when the club has failed to keep pace with changing times and opportunities.

So, how do we effectively manage change? First, change must be seen as necessary. With our changing demographics, leaving are the days of the "nice" member who will trade off a long-term hospitable employee for mediocre service. *Being hospitable and being able to deliver first class service cannot be substituted for one*

another.

We are recognizing, for a large part, we are in the "destination dining" market competing for the same dollars with the high-end restaurants and resorts where fantastic delivery of service is an absolute expectation. Destination decisions are based on quality of the overall experience, and sometimes the experience is *better outside of the club*; hence the member chooses another place for their special celebration!

We work hard to create all areas of the club as the "destination." It is often a challenge to get some of our long-term employees on the required "change" page. The term 'sacred cow' is a term widely used in clubs, and often this category of employee holds the general manager as hostage to the "old ways."

The general manager knows that change is required, but does not know how to navigate in the 'sacred cow' arena, and the sacred cows know this very well! The club members want to see the same employees in place **AND** they want to have cutting-edge delivery of service in all areas of the club. In many cases the general manager's position is in jeopardy while trying to address such situations.

Good team members are often lost to other facilities. We train them,



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and then they go elsewhere for more money. Might they stay for less money if they really valued and enjoyed the experience? Do new team members make efforts to be distinct in their service, and then be told by some of the long-standing employees that "this is not how we do things here!!!" Or, do we expect our long-standing employees to train the new team members? This causes us to *continue to do the same thing over and over and expect a different result...* Einstein's definition of insanity!

So, why not get the 'sacred cows' in alignment with the change that is required for the vitality of the club? Is this possible? Not only is it possible, but it is also a *fiduciary responsibility* of the leadership of the club. We have seen amazing turnaround in very long established clubs that are steeped in tradition as well as being rich in 'sacred cows'! The transformation is amazing. It begins with this one chart on page 111:

The premise is this: *we are not hired to work as individuals for the club*, but to be part of the team working toward its betterment and

for forward club movement. When everyone realizes that our personal agendas must be shelved for the higher cause of moving the club forward, and for doing what we are being paid to do, then we can operate as a team supporting forward movement of the club.

This makes it much easier for the general managers to do their job and makes for a happier, more stable membership. ***If we are stuck where we are, we are actually falling behind.***

Sacred cows = Employees; Everyone Else = Team. There is a real distinction here. ***Sacred cows are not on the team***, but are employees who are probably barely meeting their contractual obligation to the club! These are the people who are rich in hospitality to some members, but are ***lacking in cutting-edge service or attitude*** required to meet the needs of the clubs' members as a whole.

How about general managers who just don't want to change? "Our members want it this way!" Then, a new board comes in that says, "We want change, you have not provided it, AND we are replacing you". Stated reason? "The club is going in a different direction."

Seventeen-year veteran, David Mole, CCM, GM/COO of the Valley Hunt Club in Pasadena California says: "I embrace change in all aspects of our operation – food, beverage, governance, training programs, and technology. It makes the club more interesting, and stimulates the staff and keeps the club viable in this changing environment."

He adds that this club is "currently discussing value-added programs and events to stimulate usage of the club in this difficult economy." The club founded in 1888 is

responsible for the world-famous Rose Parade. Mole has very successfully and effectively managed the traditions and change at the same time. Attending at The Valley Hunt Club is an exciting experience. Service is impeccable, and exciting new events are the norm!

The balance comes in *keeping tradition and incorporating changes*, while leading our long-term employees to become a *true team* that delivers cutting-edge service to our members in the present. ***The decisions made in the present moment are what shape our future and create the strong foundation that keeps our club vital and viable.***

It is the strong positive energy of the club that keeps our members interested and excited, and opens the possibility of new members lining up to join our club.

Remember, change is inevitable and our present creates our future... ***How are you going to change today? BR***

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