TECHNOLOGY

GET YOUR STAFF TO EMBRACE AND MAXIMIZE AVAILABLE TECHNOLOGY

By: Susanne Nauseda

We use technology every day to accomplish many things, including running health and fitness clubs. The club-management, payroll or other computer software you are using was probably a carefully thought out investment when purchased. You probably chose your system with the expectation that it would help run your business smoothly and efficiently; creating productive employees and an efficient club. Unfortunately, that expectation doesn't always pan out, and many clubs only use a fraction of their software's capabilities. Here are some suggestions on how you and your staff can take advantage of all that your software has to offer:

DO SOME RESEARCH ("YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW")

Innovation often creates changes, providing users with more features and benefits. Talk to your technology provider to find out all of the features available and how they benefit your business. Keep in mind that some functionality is unnecessary and can cause confusion. Learn how to use those features that will fill current gaps in your processes. Once you have all of that down, then you may want to pick up some of the "bells and whistles."

SET THE EXPECTATION — REQUIRE USING THE SYSTEM AS PART OF THE JOB

You might be excited about your system, but your staff may not be, which means they aren't as invested in its use as you are. Sometimes you can be successful by involving your staff with the planning or implementation. Employees might bring to light some innovative ideas that you may not have thought of.

Make sure your staff understands what's expected of them. Incorporate tasks that require them to use the technology as part

of their regular jobs so they must use the tools in the system to be successful. Be sure it's in their job description — monitoring and measuring their contributions should be part of the employee review process. You can also create incentives that will encourage employees to rise to the occasion and go beyond their comfort levels in learning and increasing their use of the systems.

MAKE TRAINING A PRIORITY

Determine training needs based on your research, arrange training groups according to job function and set convenient times to include all employees. Set a regular, frequent schedule of training courses and offer refreshers. Have a planned outline of topics to guide your training sessions.

You can ask for help from your providers; they are the experts that can guide you with the technology. Often software suppliers will either create a training curriculum and/or conduct the training for you.

There are many training methods: webinars, in person, remote access, on-line classes. Be sure to consider all the options and determine what will be best for you and your staff. Everyone learns differently, so what you think is easy might be more difficult for others. Also, keep in mind that not all training is free, but it may be well worth the cost if you reach your goals and get a lot more from your software.

Lastly, you might be learning along with your staff, but ultimately you need to lead by example. Request some training on your own. As an owner, manager or leader, you are going to have different goals, requirements and controls than other employees. Becoming familiar with these will also help you determine what you should be monitoring and controlling.

ONGOING FEEDBACK/SPOT CHECKS

Provide a way for staff to give feedback. Keeping an open dialogue with your staff to communicate frustrations, needs and successes will give you valuable input as your business changes or new ideas are presented. Sharing best practices will allow the entire staff to take advantage of the learning of others.

Deal with any frustrations quickly. Stay in touch with your software expert/provider to bounce problems off of them - they may have a solution they've taught to other customers, so take advantage of their institutional knowledge. Preventing staff frustration will help keep employees motivated.

"Garbage in; garbage out" is a familiar technology adage. Spot checking the quality of what your employees put into your system ensures the quality of what you get back out of it: the critical data and tools you need.

Technology will always continue to change. You need to be prepared to adapt to it, embrace it and keep up with it. A thoughtful approach to technology will create excitement — instead of apprehension — which can only enhance and help grow your business. **- CS**

SUSANNE NAUSEDA IS A CLIENT RELATIONS REPRESENTATIVE AT TWIN OAKS SOFTWARE. SHE CAN BE CONTACTED AT 866.278.6750, OR BY EMAIL AT SNAUSEDA@TOSD.COM, OR VISIT WWW.TOSD.COM.