EFFICIENT & SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYEE LAUNCHING
By: Kate Dumas

A SUCCESSFUL CLUB BUSINESS BEGINS WITH THE right facilities, programs and equipment. Layer great employees onto that, and you'll have the right combination to retain members and continue the growth of your dues line.

Begin by analyzing the training procedures for each department and position. Together with your department managers, create a new employee checklist appropriate for the position and time frame for completion. Evaluate your managerial team's coaching skills to be certain that ongoing, constructive feedback is taking place. Unguided employees will improvise based on previous job experience that may not mirror your desires. It's more cost effective and time efficient to train people up front than to correct undesirable behaviors later.

ITEMS TO PROVIDE TO NEW EMPLOYEES:

• Employee Handbook – including (but not limited to) dress code; Internet and phone usage policy; member and employee confidentiality policy; unacceptable behaviors including tardiness, and drug and alcohol abuse policies; benefits package — medical/dental insurance benefits, vacation and sick leave, etc.

• MSDS Book – training on the use of your Material Safety Data Sheets book and its location. This is a compilation of forms addressing all hazardous materials (including cleaning supplies) in the club. Each sheet – obtained from the manufacturer – lists the ingredients and treatment for various levels of exposure.

• Emergency medical and fire procedures.

• Optional CPR and AED (automated external defibrillator) training – mandatory for the fitness and managerial teams.

• Music System Instruction – appropriate sound levels and lyrics allowed.

• Software training:

1. Confirm you are receiving regular free enhancements and updates of your program.

2. Stay informed by reading e-newsletters and other correspondence from your provider and regularly attend trade shows. Make an appointment with your rep to get an overview of new features, some of which may be offered that were not available two months ago.

3. Annually attend or send key employees to training seminars hosted by your provider. In turn, train the rest of the employees on what you've learned.

4. Keeping your software — and your knowledge of it — up to date will provide your employees with key tools needed to serve your members.

CREATE TRAINING WITH CLEAR-CUT EXPECTATIONS. SOME TRAINING SCENARIOS:

Front Desk:

• Create an opening and closing checklist — software, point of sale, security system, music, etc.

• Provide training on:

1. Phone system, voicemail and messages.

2. Member and guest policies; guest waivers and prospect tracking.

3. Cancellation and freeze policies – ask your software provider for sample forms.

4. Dealing with difficult members and complaints

5. Conducting a new member sale

6. Member check in, point of sale including gift certificate and packaged sales of personal training

7. Bookings program — creating, changing and cancelling appointments for personal training, tanning, massage, etc.

8. Club programs, class schedules and descriptions

Fitness Team:

• Initialize a "shadow" program. Rotate trainers through your fitness team to learn from one another. Standardized fitness assessments for your members should be mastered.

• Don't assume that certifications and college courses provide adequate "practicum." Have the new employee perform a mock assessment and training of key employees. Provide immediate feedback.

• Provide training on the Bookings program (in house and online) and emailing capability of your software to promote member/trainer communications. Trainers can demonstrate login and booking procedures to the member during their initial assessment.

• Spell out monthly sales goals and requirements. Review weekly.

• Provide ongoing educational opportunities. Consider paying for local events and trade shows and rotate staff throughout the year. Establish a library budget from which the team can choose periodicals and books they would like you to purchase, and encourage them to read.

Back Office Team:

• Provide daily, weekly and yearly checklists of required software duties (your provider may have these available).

• Provide complete software training including: Data entry; reports to analyze the accuracy of the billing file; Accounts Receivable including past due and collections procedures; Mail Merge and Email Merge for marketing, past due letters, statements, etc.

• Introduce your back office team to your sales rep(s) and be certain they know who to call with questions and training.

• Ensure a thorough understanding of cash reconciliation and deposit procedures.

• Demonstrate employee time clock and commission reports for payroll.

Remember, it is your employee interactions with members that will either provide a positive or negative experience. A well-trained and properly launched employee who is fully aligned with the club's procedures is more likely to create a great experience for your members. Great experiences equal great retention.

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