

Club Director

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PERSPECTIVES FOR LEADING PRIVATE CLUBS

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**SPECIAL
HR ISSUE**
STAFFING
SOLUTIONS

12

STAFFING SOLUTIONS

Keeping Pace in a Hot Job Market

Labor shortages are a national challenge—and private clubs are among the industries experiencing difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff. In September 2018, employers nationwide had roughly a million more unfilled job openings (7.01 million) than there were unemployed workers, according to the Labor Department. With the unemployment rate at a 49-year low (3.7%), and demand for entry-level positions high, companies are hiring workers after a single phone interview. (See “Performance Buy-In,” page 4, for additional challenges.) Additionally, employee turnover, which is most prominent among younger generations, is costing U.S. employers \$30.5 billion annually. Additional workforce changes on the horizon include technological trends that are robotizing, automating and digitizing our workplace, where some jobs may be eliminated and new ones created.

Recruiting, training, retaining and engaging employees requires new strategies and mindsets. No longer a “reactive hiring” economy, employers must focus on talent planning and skills building using new tools, new pipelines for talent and internal mobility. Training and development

solutions can help ensure staff are equipped to be adaptive as well as create clear career paths with continuous upskilling.

HR professionals are feeling the stress of talent acquisition. According to a 2018 ManpowerGroup study, 83 percent of HR professionals in the last 12 months reported having difficulty recruiting suitable candidates. To reach new talent pools and attract more people to the workforce, 36 percent report they are being more flexible about education and experience requirements for jobs; 33 percent are looking at different demographics, age ranges and geographies using social media to connect with candidates or tap boomerang retirees, returning parents and part-timers; 32 percent are improving benefits; and, 29 percent are considering salary increases.

Club Director takes a look at staffing solutions and how clubs are addressing the talent challenge.

- The Recruitment/Retention Puzzle
- Comprehensive Workforce Planning
- Innovative HR Management Systems
- Workplace Culture and Retention
- H-2B Visa Insider Tips
- Staffing Apps

THE RECRUITMENT/ RETENTION PUZZLE

By Pam Brewer

We all have heard it and said it numerous times, but now it seems club managers are living this trite saying more than ever, “Good people are hard to find!” And, good people are also hard to keep! The latest statistics on engagement are alarming. According to *Harvard Business Review*, 83 percent of our team members are not engaged, and many will leave their current employment before their two-year anniversary. For private clubs who still experience employees with 30+ and even 40-year tenures, the stats reported in the last four-to-five years present quite a culture change to our industry.

Although private clubs reflect multiple categories with unique facets, there are more shared hurdles than not. A recent membership survey conducted by the National Club Association identified recruiting and retaining staff as one of the top three club challenges (see Trending, page 36). A country club in Florida with a distinctly busy four-month season may be successful with seasonal and temporary worker visa programs while a yacht club in San Francisco is bustling year-round except for two weeks in December/January. The conundrum of recruiting remains, but in a different shape.

As a busy yacht club with a city clubhouse in San Francisco and an island satellite location in the Sacramento Delta—both require staffing year-around—the St. Francis Yacht Club has been quite creative over the years in addressing its employment needs. At one point, four San Francisco clubs, including city clubs and a country club, shared 10–15 employees. The concept took shape and worked well for a while to support what was referred to as “on call” employees; however, members of the group eventually preferred one club as home and the participants dwindled. Like many clubs in the area, we utilize temporary agencies and have been successful in consistent requests for specific staff, who are assigned regularly.

Employee Referrals, Incentives

One of the club’s most effective programs is the Starfinder Referral Program. Current employees offer referrals to their supervisor, and after onboarding and completion of 90 days of service, the employee who referred the new team member is awarded \$250. After the completion of one year, a second \$250 reward is given. Both parties must be in good standing for the rewards to be issued. The idea is that superstars refer super-

stars, and employees will refer their friends, who they typically value as a colleague.

Most club human resources professionals attend an annual HR Symposium hosted by Club Benchmarking, which is a great source for shared ideas. The conversations during the conference confirm that clubs offer more reward and benefit features than most industries to retain team members. Employee scholarship programs, on-the-spot gift card rewards, rich health care plans including pet insurance, 3 to 10 holidays per year and numerous leave days, financial planning assistance and 401(k) plans are available to motivate and retain teams at almost all clubs. We do a good job in this area, yet retention is still concerning.

For clubs located in Seattle, Raleigh, Austin, San Francisco and San Jose, competition with the technology industry is a challenge due to high salaries and unique perks: employee-designed vacation plans, six-month sabbaticals, free beer, assistance on “green” purchases such as electric cars with charging stations on campus.

Club managers understand the undertaking at hand—and communicating the rewarding experience of working in private club hospitality remains a priority, especially to students who participate in hospitality programs. As hard-working and effective as the student development committees are within club associations, the private club industry does not receive its fair share of those seeking a rewarding career in hospitality. This may be the largest area of opportunity; however, it takes time.

St. Francis Yacht Club GM/COO Paul Koojoolian, CCM, offered his thoughts on the challenge of recruiting and retaining staff, “There is always a concern with finding and keeping good people. Hire slowly and take your time to vet each candidate. Hire the candidate who will fit in with the team, not necessarily the one with the best experience or resume.

“Once you do find them, the way I try to keep them is to pay them well, treat them fairly and have some fun every once and awhile. If you do happen to lose a good employee, try to promote from within. This means that you should have a strong bench and be grooming people to step up when called upon. We lost two great employees in 2018 but promoted two individuals who were already working for us and have had great results.”

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COMPREHENSIVE WORKFORCE PLANNING

By Allyn Gutauskas

The inception of *Farmington 2027*, the strategic plan that is guiding Farmington Country Club in Charlottesville, Va., to its 100th anniversary, provided the perfect opportunity to organize our staffing strategies into a comprehensive workforce planning initiative, which we launched as *Farmington Workforce Planning 2027*.

This initiative was based on the realization that our ability to successfully reach our 2027 goals depends on more than construction, interior design and new menus—it depends on the people who will lead the way. It depends on a comprehensive and disciplined process of workforce planning.

The plan for implementing this initiative was to:

- Take a fresh look at our staffing needs, short-term and long-term, department by department, involving all hiring managers.
- Establish goals and a process for meeting those needs.
- Check-in regularly to review progress and adjust as needed.

We started by meeting with individual department managers, to answer a few, basic questions:

- What staffing do you need for your operation to be successful?
- Who are your ideal job candidates?
- Where are these candidates?
- How do we attract those candidates?

Answering the first question was a productive exercise in zero-based labor budgeting. Some department managers realized that the increase in club services and member usage for more months of the year meant that their operations would be better served with fewer seasonal staff and more part-time, year-round staff. Others saw the need to restructure the number, schedules and responsibilities of supervisory staff.



An important component of our workforce planning strategy is reviewing policies and procedures that hinder our ability to attract applicants.

With answers to all four questions, we were able to develop and implement a comprehensive, club-wide recruitment plan that is responsive to the needs of individual departments. The plan includes an employment section on the club's website, online job postings, radio advertising, open houses, job fairs, club visits, class presentations, seasonal worker (H-2B visa) and international training (J-1 visa) programs, internships, and a recruitment video. Because employee referrals have consistently been our best source of new staff (30 to 35% each year), our plan includes a lucrative employee recruitment bonus program.

Creating Community Partnerships

Early on, we realized that an effective workforce planning strategy would take collaboration with local agencies and community leaders. We invited more than 20 community agency representatives and leaders to the club to begin a conversation with goals of creating strategic partnerships, promoting the significance of the club in our community, and highlighting our employment opportunities. As the conversations continued, the size of this task force grew: when the group reconvened at Farmington

less than a year later, more than 50 organizations and community leaders met with us to create a plan to help Charlottesville “Get to Work.”

As a result of these meetings, we were asked to collaborate with local job training and workforce planning programs, teach job readiness workshops, host club visits, and conduct professional culinary, ServeSafe certification and TIPS certification training programs. In a three-year period, this collaboration has resulted in the direct hiring of 30 employees, most of them into positions that are typically a challenge to fill. An unexpected outcome has been agency representatives referring their own high school- and college-age children, who are working in seasonal and part-time positions.

An important component of our workforce planning strategy is reviewing policies and procedures that hinder our ability to attract applicants. One example is the updating of our standards for staff professional appearance related to tattoos. Our old standard was no visible tattoos, but because of that policy we were having a hard time filling steward and cook positions. At the same time, we realized that many of our members have visible tattoos. Our standards were no longer relevant to either our job candidates or our member expectations. A task force of department managers collaborated to create club-wide standards that stress “professionally reasonable” rather than outright prohibition, allowing for department flexibility and management judgement in deciding what is appropriate for professional staff appearance.

Tracking applicant data allows us to evaluate the effectiveness of our recruitment efforts, so that we can continue to make improvements and develop meaningful recruitment budgets. We track the number of position vacancies, types of recruitment advertising and activities, number of applications and resumes we receive, number of hires, and source of hires. By communicating this information on a regular basis to our hiring managers, we can stay informed of their current and anticipated staffing needs, inform them of the status of the recruitment and hiring activity, and encourage their involvement in the process. To improve the collection and presentation of this information, we are developing a dashboard report to distribute to hiring managers on a regular basis.

Have we found the solution to meeting all of our staffing needs? No. It is still a challenge to fill our culinary and housekeeping teams and we will continue to be concerned about finding enough staff to meet the growing service needs of the Farmington 2027 strategic plan. Farmington’s workforce planning initiative is making its way into the club’s operating culture as a process for identifying and responding to our short-term and long-term staffing needs. An advantage of this process is that it is not limited to employee recruitment and selection—it also provides a framework for compensation, staff engagement, training and development, and performance management. Most importantly, it is a process that supports our working together to continue to be a flexible and responsive workforce.

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Does Your Club Need HR?

By Allyn Gutauskas

The recommended HR staffing ratio ranges from 1.0 to 1.5 HR staff for every 100 employees. To decide whether or not your club should have a human resources professional, you may want to look beyond staffing ratios and consider the value of investing in a strategic club partner who will take a leadership role in such areas as:

- **Strategic Staffing:** Analyzing staffing needs and partnering with hiring managers to meet the goal of having the right staff in the right place at the right time.
- **Compensation and Benefits:** Developing benefits strategies in terms of employee recruitment, engagement and retention that align with club goals.
- **Training and Development:** Creating a culture of learning by developing, implementing and evaluating a club-wide training plan that leads to successful employee performance and increased member satisfaction.
- **Performance Management:** Assuming a leadership role in developing, implementing and monitoring a systematic, club-wide process in which performance is aligned with club vision and goals.
- **Communication:** Effectively communicating to build consensus, gain participation, increase employee engagement, and ensure compliance.
- **Compliance:** Supporting managers to help them recognize the benefits and importance of legal compliance to successful club operations, enhancing workplace culture, and reducing liability for legal actions.

A fully utilized and knowledgeable human resources professional can provide great value to your club in addition to performing typical transactional tasks such as recruiting and hiring, benefits administration, payroll processing, updating the employee handbook, and ensuring compliance.



AN INTEGRATED HR MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

By Anne Catherine Nielsen, SPHR, SHRM-SCP

In today's highly volatile employment market with a national unemployment rate of 3.7 percent in October 2018, there are significant benefits to modernizing the club's human resources and payroll processes using a contemporary human capital management (HCM) system. Chief among them is the ability to promote positions online and screen and respond to applicants in real time. This has become a necessity in this tight labor market in order to remain competitive and attract and retain great talent.

At Westchester Country Club in Rye, N.Y., we embarked on this modernization journey in 2010. We realized that many of our manual processes—from hiring to management of records and payroll—could be streamlined and automated to shorten cycle times, eliminate paperwork, enhance the employee experience and provide greater legal compliance. Our business model is highly cyclical and transactional with a core employee base of 350 employees, to which we add 300 employees seasonally. This quick ramp up of seasonal employees takes place over a few weeks every spring. Conversely, we have a similar wave of intense work to offboard these seasonal employees in September-October. This high velocity and repetition of key HR processes over a very short duration created the perfect conditions to leverage technology to help us automate, streamline and accelerate the onboard and offboard processes.

Last year, while attending a human resources conference, I realized that the technology landscape had rapidly changed and that new players had joined the market. Concurrently, our previous vendor was going through a large merger and we

had the opportunity to either upgrade to their new platform or move to a new vendor. This prompted us to pause to and review several HCM technology solutions in 2017.

Finding the Right System

Our mission was clear. We were looking for a fully integrated HR solution that would make the applicant and employee experience simple and engaging while ensuring optimized and seamless human resources and payroll functionality. First, we identified the key requirements and vision for what the HR/payroll experience should be. We tackled this exercise as a team: our human resources, payroll and finance staff met to discuss and compile the list of “needs to have” versus “nice to have” requirements. This led to a number of vendor meetings and system demos.

In the discovery process, we realized that many vendors offer solutions that encompass various functionality—from applicant tracking, time and attendance, scheduling and HR management to payroll, performance management and learning management. Some systems can be standalone while others may require buying the fully integrated solution. For clubs that may not be able to afford the full suite, there are a number of vendors that will offer paired down solutions adapted to various budget levels.

We ultimately decided to partner with SyncHR, a newer vendor. Unlike the more generic software, SyncHR's solution is designed for high-velocity companies with fast-changing and dynamic workforces from 500 to 5,000 employees—a good fit for us, given the cyclical

nature of our business. We also liked that their solution was designed and built utilizing the latest technologies, including a unique time tracking capability. It allowed us to transact within the system across time—past, present or future. For example, this allowed us to enter new hires into the SyncHR system before they started and set a future start date.

In addition, SyncHR gave us agile organizational charts that would update automatically. The platform's employee and manager portals were also user-friendly and accessible 24/7 by computer or smartphone. These elements were critical to ensure a positive adoption rate by department leaders, hiring managers and employees alike.

Managing the Hiring Process

The applicant tracking feature was one of the determining factors in our selection process. We wanted the ability to post jobs easily with a few clicks and maintain a simple application form that we could customize based on position or latest legal requirements. User-friendliness was critical as we needed to get our hiring managers trained and engaged rapidly. We found SyncHR's technology easy to customize to our own hiring process and flow, with steps unique to us. It also provides us with tagging capabilities to manage, organize and filter requisitions and applicants. This facilitates the review and screening of qualified candidates. We are also able to customize and automate offer letters and document attachments with e-signature and standardize our messages to applicants based on where they are in the hiring process. Many of these features have saved both our HR and operational teams' tremendous time.

Another key function is the ability to easily advertise our positions to a number of online sites free while ensuring all applications would stay within our portal, for easy management and compliance purposes. We now receive numerous applicants from Indeed, LinkedIn, Glassdoor, ZipRecruiter and Monster to name a few at no cost to us. We have successfully been able to attract a better and larger pool of candidates this year versus past years.

The functionality seamlessly ties into I-9 management and E-Verify, an added feature. It also ensures a simple and efficient onboarding process, as the applicant's information once hired, carries over to our human resources system effortlessly.

One of the pleasant surprises has been that some of the repetitive data entry work that was previously done by Human Resources is done by the newly hired applicant before their start date. Prior to attending onsite orientation, every new hire receives auto-generated emails to complete their pre-hire I-9 form and onboarding steps. This allows them to validate their personal information, set up direct deposit, add emergency contacts and review and sign off electronically on key company documents from the convenience of



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their home. It has reduced our hiring and onboarding cycle time, the potential for data entry errors and allowed for a very transparent and customer centric onboarding experience.

Investing in HR

Any club looking to optimize its HCM processes has tremendous resources to choose from as the technology vendor space is vast and ever-changing. Deciding where to spend your HR dollars is a critical decision for any club. The key is doing a deep assessment of your critical needs and documenting them. That way you can easily compare them against the vendors you consider, helping you identify gaps and making the best decision possible. Conducting a thorough request for proposal with due diligence prior to committing to a partner is also of critical importance. What a vendor claims they can do and what they actually do can sometimes be different. So, make sure each vendor shows you their system doing what you need done.

Finally, your club's readiness for change and willingness to adapt to new processes as well as the timing of the implementation are important factors to consider to be successful. In our experience, our transition and modernization journey with SyncHR has fostered great team and individual engagement and limited our potential for liability, while keeping our hiring process transparent and compliant. We have also found that investing in an agile applicant tracking system, as a strategic initiative, has given us a competitive advantage and reach beyond our local market by seamlessly opening us to a greater pool of candidates.

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WORKPLACE CULTURE AND RETENTION

By William T. Duthe

Unless you've built a club from the ground up, every one of us has inherited a workforce, and for that matter, a club's workplace culture. Some of us have walked into organizations where the service culture functions as the cornerstone of the operation and others have joined an organization that needed a makeover. But let's be honest, the culture of our respective clubs needs to evolve with the labor force and increased member expectations.

A little more than five years ago I inherited a dedicated and hardworking team at Columbia Country Club in Chevy Chase, Md.—one that the membership embraced and celebrated. The distinguishing characteristic was their length of service. While our workplace culture was and still is our greatest strength, a key and contributing factor to our operational challenges was an overemphasis on tenure, and not enough emphasis on productivity. Our second challenge was an aging employee base in a competitive job market.

Knowing that change was and always is inevitable, we stopped talking about it. Why? Because it scares and disrupts. We instead focused on evolving and we still are. Yes, it is a play on words, but our team responded and so has our membership. Throughout our evolution we've been able to not only maintain a dedicated and hardworking team, we've been able to add to it. This year Columbia Country Club celebrated 112 employees who have five or more years of dedicated service. Their combined experience totals 1,904 years. We've been able to accomplish this with a concerted effort and focus on the following ingredients: evolution, communication, standardization, hospitality, tradition, enthusiasm and member engagement.

The Role of Tradition and Culture

Like many other traits, tradition can be seen and heard throughout the club. Generally speaking,

the focus is largely on the membership, as many of our members are living time capsules and major contributors to the club's history. The other part of the equation is the role that employees play. We are the conduit to not only maintaining traditions, but communicating and starting new ones. Our members have embraced the role that employees play and have allowed our team to maintain and start new traditions that support our service culture. Some examples are staff parties, celebrations recognizing years of service and professional achievements, off campus employee trips, Monday golf, member and employee golf outings, naming hallmark events after long-time employees, personalized birthday cards and our employee "wall of fame" just to name a few.

It's no coincidence that our expressions of culture take on numerous forms and is often a combination of multiple ingredients. More than 90 percent of our employee traditions involve some sort of member component. Our success and ability to not only maintain but also create new traditions is a shared passion of enthusiasm for Columbia Country Club. As Brian Chesky, the co-founder and CEO of Airbnb has stated, "culture is simply a shared way of doing something with a passion." There will never be a one-size-fits-all workplace culture. A club's culture should be rooted in the ingredients that are important and vital to your club's success.

I've always believed that culture isn't taught, it's caught. If a leader can show employees what he or she loves, the employees will catch it. It starts at the top and it starts with enthusiasm.

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H-2B VISA INSIDER TIPS

By Keith A. Pabian

H-2B visas can be a great staffing solution for clubs needing help to staff during their busy times of year using temporary foreign workers. Below are some best practices to make your H-2B visa petitions an even greater success!

Avoid the numerical cap by utilizing in-country transfer petitions

The government limits the number of H-2B visas it issues to 66,000 annually. While winter-season clubs are largely immune from this problem due to lesser demand during that season, summer-season clubs with start dates from April through June are at risk of the government running out of visas.

Clubs can avoid the unknown of the numerical limit entirely by utilizing in-country transfer petitions whereby summer-season clubs recruit H-2B visa workers from organizations that have winter-seasons. These organizations are usually found in Florida, Arizona and ski country. H-2B workers transferring from one organization to another are exempt from the numerical cap. However, an H-2B visa worker can only stay in the U.S. for three years continuously, so make sure that the worker has enough time left to transfer to your club.

Only use a lawyer for your H-2B visa petitions

It is crucial that your club utilize a lawyer for your H-2B visa petition process because if legal requirements are missed, clubs can be fined for noncompliance. Also, due to the government initiatives aimed at H-2B visa petitions compliance, clubs have been denied and delayed petitions as well as punished for violations in H-2B visa petitions.

Protect against the uncertainty of J-1 visas with H-2B visas

Major J-1 visa reform is likely coming, so be careful about relying solely on J-1 visas to staff seasonally. This temporary exchange visitor visa cannot be used for ordinary employment—it must have bona fide training and experience components. Positions like housekeepers and dishwashers should be filled by H-2B visas rather than J-1 visas.



H-2B visas, when done strategically, are a wonderful staffing option for private clubs across the country to fully staff for their busy seasons.

H-2B visa benefits

While H-2B visa regulations do not force clubs to offer housing or daily transportation to and from work, this is something that you will be asked during your H-2B visa recruiting. Make sure that you can answer questions about where people will live and how they will get to work. Purchasing bus tickets or bikes for your workers or offering them rides from other staff members can lead to happy H-2B workers that want to return to your club year after year. Also, when it comes to H-2B visa reimbursement for travel costs, be consistent and think ahead. More and more clubs are instituting travel reimbursement policies to be transparent about what they will reimburse and for consistency from year-to-year.

H-2B visas, when done strategically, are a wonderful staffing option for private clubs across the country to fully staff for their busy seasons.

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STAFFING APPS

Flexible hiring, the gig economy, on-demand workers are all terms that reflect the fact that freelance workers now make up 35 percent of the U.S. workforce. How can clubs tap this new economy of workers—often working for multiple employers—who manage their own schedules? Well, there's an app for that.

In fact, there are several apps that help hospitality venues in particular to find skilled staff on short notice or for special one-off events and functions. New York-based Jitjatjo (jitjatjo.com) helps provide front and back of house hospitality workers like servers or a bartender when a rush of members appears—or if several regular employees take ill. According to co-founders Ron McCulloch and Tim Chatfield, the Jitjatjo app and its algorithm books the most qualified workers available within minutes. The matching process selects the best individuals for the job based on their proximity, work history and other data. A key feature includes a rating system for the workers and the clients—meaning if a client rates a worker poorly, they will never be matched again, and visa versa. In addition, the app uses a three-tier pricing platform to pay workers based on “solid” “outstanding” and “epic” workers. Jitjatjo charges a 15 percent service fee, 7 percent transaction fee and 18 percent payroll tax—and workers are paid through the app and charged to the clients after each job. Jitjatjo operates in New York City and Chicago.

Most hospitality apps for temporary workers provide the structure for paying the workers and withholding taxes and charge a fee to clients in addition to the workers' earnings. Screening of workers is another area where apps provide expertise.

Hospitality app Jobletics (jobletics.com) is based in Boston. Jobletics workers (called Jobletes), are not only properly vetted for skills but also assessed according to cognitive and

Most hospitality apps for temporary workers provide the structure for paying the workers and withholding taxes and charge a fee to clients in addition to the workers' earnings.

behavioral criteria. CEO Rahul Sharma knows that quality is of paramount importance to the employers and said their proprietary vetting procedures source the best and brightest people. He notes that 90 percent of applicants are rejected through Jobletics' screening process.

San Francisco-based Wonolo (wonolo.com) is another gig app that provides a three-step application process to ensure workers have the proper traits. After taking a test within the app, applicants undergo a background check and an interview. Co-founder and CEO AJ Brustein says the company is looking for attitude over aptitude, but also offers opportunities for worker training so they can advance their skills in areas such as safe food handling.

Wonolo (short for Work. Now. Local) is in eight markets: Northern California, Southern California, Metro New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Dallas and Columbus, Ohio and Tampa Bay, Fla.

As the gig economy grows and workers look for more flexibility in work schedules, clubs, too can look to the flexibility of hiring temporary workers at their fingertips to fill gaps and staff up for busy periods. **CD**