

A Look into the Future and *We Like What We See - Part II*

Member service is a private club's number one reason for existence. Previously, we explored the ever evolving private club member and the leadership roles of baby boomers on our club boards. Members are moving at the Internet speed, and they expect private clubs to reflect their needs for a dynamic club facility, which can reflect their casual family oriented lifestyle.

However, private clubs are not known for embracing change, but as members are inundated with a multitude of choices for their precious free time and discretionary income, private clubs will need to keep up the pace or quickly fall behind. Our private club facilities must provide the framework, which will meet these future members' service needs.

Indoor golf anybody?

More private clubs will create virtual indoor golf centers to promote year around usage and keep golfers in shape. Look beyond the current arcade technology to individual golf training rooms. They will be set up with the ability to dial in your choice of golf course, including the smells, sounds, and wind in your face feel of the real thing. Golf pros will also use these training centers for real time lessons and swing analysis. This is another amenity, which will allow for year-round usage of the clubhouse.

Indoor practice ranges and putting greens will be designed adjacent to the golf shops with easy member access to the locker rooms. Of course, nothing can replace the "real thing" until our definition of the "real thing" is changed. For many people, virtual golf will become every bit as popular as playing on grass. Remember there was a time not long ago that country clubs did not have tennis or pool facilities – now they are the norm.

Fitness, spas, and is there life after Pilates?

Our firm talks with thousands of private club members every year through focus groups and membership surveys. More than any other request – outside of casual dining and bar lounges – fitness facilities have shot to the top of the list of member requests in the last 15 years.

The National Club Association's 2004 Study on Future Trends and Issues: A Private Club Perspective notes that "... thirty-seven percent of managers and directors report having fitness centers in their clubs today; [and] that number is expected to nearly double by 2010."

Our doctors are telling us to eat healthy and exercise. Club members are taking their advice and expect their clubs to follow suite by providing adequate facilities. Members prefer to work out close to home and among their friends – in other words, at their club. Along with the requests for fitness facilities, club members are requesting the addition of classroom facilities for aerobics, yoga, Pilates and any variety of group exercise options.

Rounding out the club of the future's wellness area will be spa services. Smaller clubs may offer only massage rooms while clubs with larger membership bases will provide full service facilities including body treatments, facials, salons, and pedicures. Smart clubs should start planning for the addition of fitness facilities in their palette of services today.



Ryan Yakel
Executive VP, CCI

Back of the house technologies

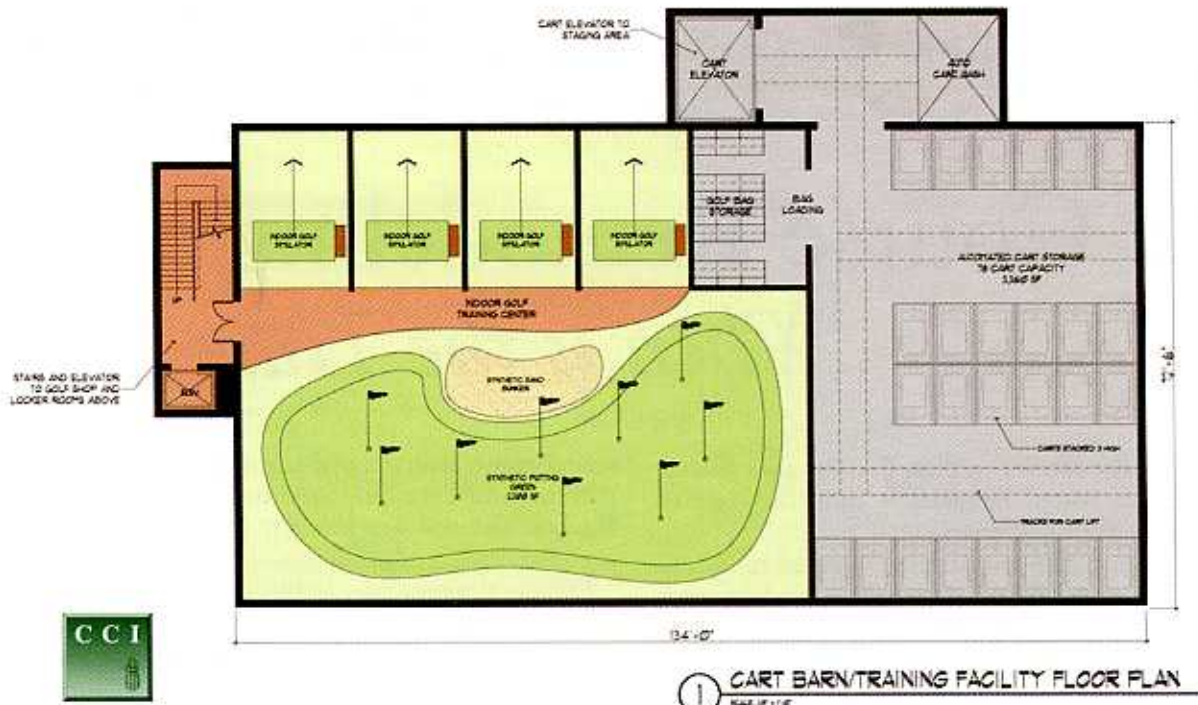
Historically, not known for a being a bastion of technological advances, the back of the house in the clubhouse of the future will make great strides to assist club staff in their day to day duties. Cart storage will become multi-level with one robotic arm selecting the carts from the "shelf," another robotic arm loading the bags, and a lift to bring carts to the staging area – all without the need for human contact. Conversely, robotic arms will unload carts, run them through a cleaner, and place the carts back on the multi-story rack system to recharge for future use (unless they are solar paneled).

The "indestructible" clubhouse of the future

As building material and system technologies improve, clubhouse structures will be constructed of more maintenance free materials. This means fewer repairs, lower remodeling costs, and reduced labor costs. Materials will become stronger while weighing less. Imagine a banquet chair that takes year upon year of abuse without as much as a scratch, or painting your clubhouse every 20 or 30 years.

Today we build with metal studs in lieu of wood, cultured synthetic stone in lieu of natural stone, aluminum clad windows in lieu of painted wood, and natural stone veneers in lieu of granite or stone countertops. Building materials and systems are improving every year to make our facilities more impervious to the toll of time.

No number of gadgets, amenities, technologies, or



space age materials can replace the human factor and the human interaction provided by our private club lifestyle. As board members and managers, learn to look beyond the present and ask the members for their view of the club of the future – then be proactive and embrace the future.

Ryan Yakel is the executive vice president of CCI, a national club planning firm responsible for the master planning, architecture, and interior design of over 400 clubs throughout the United States. Ryan may be reached at (972) 253-3583 or via e-mail: marketing@cciclubdesign.com.

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the past,' or 'I have been told that I am doing a good job, why should I do anything differently,' usually finds himself in trouble," he cautions.

Zakany doesn't support change just for the sake of change and encourages employers to provide the reasons behind the changes to the superintendent. He says that golf facilities may make changes for financial, club direction, political, environmental or other reasons. "The superintendent needs to know why the change is happening," he says. "Bottom line, an employer is going to be willing to work with someone who is open-minded to change." BR

Change Happens was written by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA). For more information regarding golf course management, contact the GCSAA at 1-800-472-7878 or at www.gcsaa.org.

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