

The Necessity and Purpose of Technology Committees

By Bill Boothe

As computer technology continues its assimilation into every operation of private clubs, the idea of forming a Technology Committee is gaining in popularity with club managers and Boards. Rather than addressing technology issues through just one or two employees (the club's controller and/or systems professional), or through an ad hoc member committee (when a pressing need arises), clubs are beginning to add permanent committees to keep technology on the front burner. With advancements in computer technology accelerating, and dependence on computers increasing, it stands to reason that clubs would step up their efforts to stay on top of these developments.

Committee Composition

Unlike most club committees, which are comprised of club members, the Technology Committee

software (accounting, POS, reservations) within the various club departments.

Club Members — Important additions to the Committee, these members should be computer-literate, but not necessarily computer professionals. Individuals with good business savvy that understand the use of information technology in a business environment may be more productive members of the Committee than highly technical individuals.

The Role of the Committee

A Technology Committee may assume a number of responsibilities in an effort to assist club management with the ongoing task of anticipating technology changes and implementing new solutions.

Overall, the role of the Committee would be to help establish the club's short and long-term information technology strategies. To

with the information provided by the system, and periodic comparisons of the club's current software capabilities to those offered by competitive systems.

Evaluate Equipment Performance — Committee activities would include the periodic evaluation of the network server's processing capacity and reliability, the speed and reliability of the club's network cabling systems, and the capabilities of user workstations, printers, and peripherals relative to the latest systems available.

Evaluate Vendor Performance — Both software and equipment vendors would be included. The Committee would focus its review on the quality and timeliness of user support, the frequency and value of software enhancements, the stability of the vendor companies and overall user satisfaction with the vendors.

Evaluate Systems Security — All areas of security would be reviewed by the Committee including server redundancy, access security/pass-wording of sensitive information, data file backup and off-site storage, intrusion tracking and reporting, and physical security of the club's valuable systems and data.

Evaluate User Proficiency — The club's personnel should be proficient users of the technology in their various departments. The Committee would review the ongoing training provided to employees (to keep user skills sharp), the ability of employees to use advanced features of the software (not just the basic day-to-day functions), and the cross training of users to assure continuity of operations when key employees leave the club. The Committee would also evaluate the role and performance of the club's internal systems staff (if such staff is in place).

Prioritize Technology Issues — The Committee would be responsible for maintaining a high-level list of technology issues and requirements, and assist with the on-

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should include members of the club's staff, and in some cases, outside vendor representatives:

Club Management — The club's general manager and/or assistant manager, controller, and computer systems manager would be key members of the committee.

Product Champions — Designated employees from each club department would also serve on the Committee. Product champions are employees with primary responsibility for core application

that end, effective Committees make it a practice to do the following on a regular basis:

Evaluate Software Performance — The Committee would review the ability of core software to reliably handle the club's fundamental computer requirements, as well as provide timely and accurate management information. This ongoing evaluation could include interviews or surveys of club personnel to determine user satisfaction, surveys of member satisfaction

Management—

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going prioritization of those issues. Issues would include software, equipment and cabling, security, vendor performance, and user proficiency.

Maintain Technology Budget

— Based upon all of the elements listed above, the Committee would prepare a 3-5 year technology budget, and revise that budget on an annual basis. The budget would anticipate the prioritized items in all areas of the club's technology.

Meeting Frequency

The frequency of Committee meetings should be dependent upon the technology challenges faced by the club. If core systems are being replaced, the committee would meet monthly — or more often if needed — until the new systems are up and running. In less stressful times, Committee meetings may be scheduled quarterly.

Benefits

A Technology Committee can offer your club a number of impor-

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tant benefits. The Committee assists management with the short and long term planning for the club's technology challenges, maintains a budget that matches the club's needs, and promotes consensus among staff and mem-

bers on technology priorities. It evaluates the club's software, equipment, security, user proficiency and vendor performance - and works to achieve continuous improvement in all areas. Most importantly, the Committee keeps technology issues in the forefront, and legitimizes computer technology (and expenditures) with your membership by assigning technology issues permanent committee status. ❏

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