

THE BOARDROOM

CELEBRATING 28 YEARS OF EDUCATING THE PRIVATE CLUB INDUSTRY

ISSUE 315 | VOLUME XXVIII SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER



Distinguished Clubs
from BOARDROOM magazine

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
Forbes TRAVEL GUIDE

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION FOR THE
ASSOCIATION OF PRIVATE CLUB DIRECTORS



TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE!

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR PRIVATE CLUBS TODAY?

Insights from industry experts: 1) Club Core 2) Club Data Services 3) Clubessential
4) Cobalt Software 5) Jonas Club Software 6) MembersFirst 7) Northstar Technologies
8) Survey & Ballot Systems 9) Whoosh

10 | PUBLISHER'S PERSPECTIVE
THE PRIVATE CLUB INDUSTRY—A CHANGING BUSINESS

62 | THE FACTS OF WINE
A FRAMEWORK FOR MEANINGFUL CLUB WINE PROGRAMMING

72 | NEW SECTION! ACTIVE URBAN LIFESTYLES
THE UNIVERSITY CLUB IN NEW YORK

80-84 | DISTINGUISHED CLUBS
DISTINGUISHED GOLF DESTINATIONS

2024 TECHNOLOGY FEATURE: PAGE 34-59



From Feedback to Feedforward

HOW SKILLED CLUB MANAGERS DO IT!

Perhaps one useful analogy to explain the magic of club member input is a dinner table with dozens of plates of delicious mezze and tapas rather than just a single recipe. How do you turn the member experience into a cultural dynamic that will nourish the entire feedback loop within your club?

It's no secret. Member Experience (MX) feedback should be a means to propel future action rather than an end unto itself. Otherwise, feedback can force both the giver and the recipient of input into dead-ends, losing insightful magic in the process. When seamlessly given and properly received, feedback serves to harness the power of learning, growth, and innovation.

Successful MX operations, and the managers that run them, soar with the constructive and fluid alignment of three agents:

1. **The insightful giver of feedback** (e.g. club member)
2. **The wizardly umpire and interpreter of feedback** (e.g. club management)
3. **The ambitious recipient of feedback** (e.g. FOH team)

Think of this as a harmonious triad. If each agent upholds their role and responsibility in the equation, feedback will decrease member churn, encourage staff engagement, and inspire continuous growth.

1) THE INSIGHTFUL GIVER

The best MX feedback is specific and factual. There's a fine line between delivering vs. consuming a service. A transformation occurs in that short distance from provision to receipt. When a club member gives feedback about your service, their input reflects their own system of standards and expectations, not yours. One member's input does not provide comprehensive insights about your entire service or front-of-house team. Instead, feedback reflects one individual's experience and perception of the specific services they received at that time, rather than the full scope of services provided to all members at the same time.

Perceptions vary widely from one member to another within the same outlet, and a one-system-fits-all rule doesn't necessarily apply. But each member who provides feedback should be given the benefit of the doubt that they are coming from a good place of constructive criticism or commentary. Of course, not all input is equal, ranging from superior—in the form of concrete suggestions—to inferior—in the form of rage or general complaints. Useful MX feedback highlights the strengths of services and not only the weaknesses. While it isn't the giver's role to necessarily teach and motivate the service provider, the quality of input and the power to interpret it will influence future outcomes. This is where magical filtering and facilitating by service and general managers can come into play.

2) THE WIZARDLY UMPIRE

Meet the science of understanding feedback and the art of harnessing the power of the team. Service and general managers must serve as social translators of feedback. They edit out heat, focus on the light emanating from input, and classify the intent of the feedback giver. In addition to showing the necessary courtesies to club members, managers must extend true emotional intelligence toward their staff. Feedback cannot be used as judgmental ammunition unless critical red lines are crossed by a teammate. Managers must serve as non-threatening magicians skilled in the science of understanding feedback and the art of harnessing the power of the team to respond and improve. A successful manager inspires feelings of trust, confidence, and emotional safety within the team. The team's learning rests primarily on their grasp of what they're doing well instead of solely focusing on what they're doing poorly.

3) THE AMBITIOUS RECIPIENT

Enter the neuroscience of fight-or-flight. The person delivering the service does well in their day-to-day life at work if they have the strength to accept personal vulnerability, responsibility, and accountability. Such openness exhibits the freedom to effectuate change rather than perceive feedback as blame. Ultimately individuals must cultivate enough emotional intelligence to learn and move on from the initial sting of feedback. The smart recipient of feedback converts the manager's interpretation of the member's input into opportunities. In this way past feedback is used to guide one's conduct in the present tense and to achieve future productivity and success. Perhaps the neuroscience of feedback is the underlying notion of *fight-or-flight* experienced by all in the face of adversity. The challenge is to defuse emotional triggers and process feedback instead of simply escaping and running away.

A good starting point is demonstrating an open-mindedness that permeates across the club, thus normalizing the feedback process by instilling resilience, willingness to learn, and the desire to effectuate growth. The end-result rests on the choreography between the magical powers of the wizardly umpire (general management) and the feedback recipient's level of ambition (the team). Meanwhile the original feedback giver—your club member—awaits better experiences driven by the results. It's a fun dance. Keep rocking! **BR**

Imad Atalla is Chief Data Officer at Northstar Technologies and founder of Happometer, Northstar's leading platform for Member Experience and Team Engagement at private clubs. His multi-faceted responsibilities and interests include developing the next generation of integrated tools as well as transforming data into strategic and predictive resources for club executives.