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It's Still a Mixed Bag

THE STATE OF THE INDUSTRY OCCUPIES OUR THOUGHTS THESE DAYS...MUCH LIKE IT HAS FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS OR SO. AND LIKE IT OR NOT, IT'S AS OUR EXPERTS SUGGEST IN OUR COVER STORY THIS ISSUE...IT'S A MIXED BAG AS CLUB BOARDS AND GENERAL MANAGERS TRY AND FIGURE OUT WHAT WORKS BEST IN THIS 'NEW NORMAL.'

Certainly clubs continue to cope with the social and economic factors that have impacted the industry, but at the same time it's as BoardRoom's publisher John Fornaro says, "...there's a cancer that's been in the private club industry for too long now, which we haven't addressed."

Frank Vain, president of the St. Louis-based, McMahon Group, offers a similar opinion. "We stand by our position that the Great Recession did not cause the woes clubs have faced the past few years, it only accelerated the changes that were already taking place," Vain explained. "Private clubs have faced an issue of relevance for over 20 years and this was laid bare when the economy collapsed."

The result, suggests Fornaro, is some 'telling trends'...like fewer clubs, fewer golfers playing the game, fewer young people joining clubs, rising club dues, older members packing in their memberships earlier than might have been normal in past years, and, for whatever reason, a rising number of lawsuits.

So introspection continues as clubs see and learn what will work in their particular environment, but while some major challenges persist, there are reasons for optimism.

"The economic indicators are the strongest since March 2007," says the CMAA's CEO Jim Singerling, "and it's creating great opportunity within our industry," but it's "imperative that we continue to innovate and operate with a long-term stability in mind," while also seeking out areas of growth. For example, As Singerling points out in our cover story, the US multicultural population creates a combined GDP of \$3.5 trillion, offering a huge economic opportunity.

Still it's all about what clubs can offers their members...there needs to be value for people to join, and value when members use their clubs, and value to keep them as members.

"That's what clubs are talking about," says Fornaro, "creating 'value' and an outstanding member experience. And that's what we need to do.



Sometimes a 'little' boo-boo might get past our proofreaders, but it's not often it gets past our readers. In the July/August PGA offering, a headline '*Golf and Fitness...an Integral Part of the Game*' introduced Wayne Kauffman's story.

In our September/October issue, the same headline (*the wrong headline*) introduced a completely different submission from Bill Keys. The headline ought to have read: '*Know Your Member...Using Customer Relations Management.*'

Reaction to our PGA contact Kathy Wilkes was swift. "People had no idea Bill knew anything about the fitness. But it sure has been validation of BoardRoom's readership," she said of the number of people who contacted her about the error. And that leaves us searching for the gremlin that caused the missed keystroke, and our apologies to Wayne, Bill and of course, Kathy for the mistake.



This BoardRoom features 2011's final four top presidents: *Paul G. Stevens*, President, Belfair, Bluffton, South Carolina; *Al Thorell*, President, Philadelphia Cricket Club, Philadelphia, PA; *John Tomsky*, President, Rockrimmon Country Club, Stamford, CT and *Gilles Vezina*, President, RA Centre (Recreation Association of the Public Service of Canada) Ottawa, Ont. Canada.

This, of course, sets the stage for the selection and announcement of BoardRoom's *Top 2012 Private Club Presidents* around the world in our January/February 2013 BoardRoom magazine. We'll have detailed information about our Distinguished Club Presidents and others selected for their outstanding efforts with their private clubs. **BR**

Got a comment? Drop us a note:
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