

"I have been in the tennis business for 28 years, and I have never worked for a better GM and leader than Jill. She has this southern charm about her that puts you at ease immediately. At many country clubs, the tennis department is an afterthought to golf. Not with Jill! Tennis is VERY important at Ballantyne Country Club, under her leadership. Jill has a knack for offering advice and mentoring, but making you feel like it was your idea. She will offer a few suggestions on an issue and allow you to go with that. She really allows her management team to manage. And her hugs are famous! She is a hugger and makes you feel like we are all a family. We will be hosting our USPTA/Southern 2015 Convention here in Charlotte and have asked her to be present because she has a great connection with tennis. Her professionalism, insight, and perspective from a managerial position can be so valuable to us tennis professionals!"

**Kevin Brandalik, USPTA
Director of Tennis, Ballantyne Country Club**

for the staff but for the Board, and the Board agrees. They are willing to sacrifice one weekend a year for a Board retreat; they come to education sessions when available; and read all of the articles and information I give them. It's amazing how effective you can be as a manager when you have an effective Board and committee structure.

I highly recommend annual Board retreats away from the club, even in a different city, with a professional facilitator. My current President and in-coming President were quick to agree to attend the pre-conference workshop at conference this year. I look forward to having them both there!

My advice regarding Boards and Committees: Make sure they are educated and have a clear understanding of their role. Orientations are helpful and set the expectations from the beginning. I have always felt part of the Board and the decision making process. I also highly recommend that the Board be diverse in makeup – both male and female – and also in age. Different demographics bring different perspectives, and conversation is much more engaging and productive.

My current President, Heather Nagle, is the third President this club has had, and the first female. All of my former Presidents were terrific, but this year has been a whirlwind. Why? Because she set aggressive goals and pushed everyone

in the same direction to accomplish those goals. It is so helpful when you are managing a club to have a leader who gives the club direction. That said, she never makes a decision without discussing the pros and cons with me, which gives me buy-in, so I will do anything to make sure those goals are accomplished!

I was so honored to have been asked to offer some of my perspectives in this issue of *Club Management Perspectives*. I have been inspired over the years by the many outstanding managers who have shared their stories. I'm not sure my story or perspectives are as exciting as some of the past stories I have read, but hopefully I have shared a few thoughts that may help or inspire someone else. After all, I'm just having fun! 🎾



Jill gets a fist bump from one of the kids.

Idea Fair

Social Media for YOUR Club – Good Idea?

*by Joshua Gray, Communications Director,
The Westmoor Club, Nantucket Island, MA*

When I began my career in the club industry two years ago, I assumed that this business sector would be on the same page as the rest of corporate America when it came to social media. I was wrong.

A long-time journalist and online editor, I came to The Westmoor Club on Nantucket Island, MA, as a complete outsider to the club industry. I was fortunate, however, to join a team of club professionals, led by General Manager J. Brent Tartamella, CCM, who were already deeply involved with social media and had a strong vision, to not only maintain and develop their online presence, but were looking to be on the cutting edge of how a club interacts with its membership and the public on the web.

Elsewhere I have found that this is not the case and many clubs, the majority even, are still nervous about delving into the endless quagmire of online commentary and unfiltered communication these mediums provide.

As a private club, factoring the public into our vision for an online presence may not seem relevant; but as a business in a small, highly-seasonal community, we are committed to being a positive presence that benefits the year-round community, not just our membership. Social media has been a great tool to share the multi-dimensional aspects of our community involvement, ultimately creating substantial goodwill among the community-at-large that may have until that point viewed our club as only a commodity for the uber-wealthy. As an organization, we donate space, resources, services, guest rooms, and much more to island non-profits on an annual basis.

A positive community presence is by far the most important reason for a club

continued on pg. 12

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Idea Fair *continued ...*

to establish and maintain "public" Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts. These outlets are the most highly used platforms, with Instagram currently leading the pack in terms of growth.

My role at The Westmoor Club is a bit of a hybrid, and I am currently a year-round staff member operating under the title of Communications Director. Before I arrived at the Club, this was a seasonal role (June through September) that had seen a lot of turnover in the Club's ten-year history. Since my arrival, Brent, I and others have shaped the communications role to include a wide variety of duties, but all serving a single set of goals: Communicate to our membership in an extremely polished, concise manner, and increase member engagement across the board. This means: emails, graphic design (posters, newsletters, flyers, etc.), and member website interaction – all which contribute to making the Club a place where the members feel they are missing out if they are not involved.

Social media plays a large part in attaining this goal in that nearly everyone in this day and age has at least a Facebook account. It is a means by which you can reach everyone in your target audience at least on some level at any given time. People spend countless hours scrolling through their news feeds, looking at friends' pages and shares, and perusing the hundreds of photos that appear every few hours in their Instagram stream.

That said, there are major limitations when communicating through social media. An administrator can never be sure he/she is reaching the right audience in a targeted post; and without paying for the privilege, it can often be difficult to measure the productivity of posts. Facebook has made it very difficult for businesses to communicate to a large group of people without paying for the right to do so. Instagram, while growing exponentially, currently caters to a younger demographic, not generally a club's target audience, unless you are trying to reach the children of members. I have found personally and research has shown that Twitter tends to effectively reach a smaller percentage of people, but they tend to be higher income and better-educated.

For those concerned about unwanted commentary on social media posts, much of that worry is for naught. The Westmoor Club's public Facebook page has nearly 700 "likes." Approximately half of those are year-round members, and half represent seasonal (winter) members and the public. In my two years here, I've only had to remove two comments. On any social media page, the administrator is alerted as soon as posts are made to an account, and any troublesome content can be dealt with within minutes. For those concerned about "overdoing it," the beauty of social media is that people voluntarily sign up to receive your update. In season, we post up to three times a day on our accounts and once to three times a week the rest of the year. If they feel they are being "bombarded," they will say something or simply unfollow your feeds.

To be blunt, social media is not the most effective way to communicate to your membership. Direct email and personal interaction are. But social media is everywhere and it has become a dominant factor in navigating modern society, no matter your business sector or socio-economic status. It would be a mistake to ignore this. Social media will only increase your exposure to your target audience and provides you with a more complete communications plan to your membership. ●

Joshua Gray is happy to assist you with any specific questions you may have concerning your club and the use of social media. You may email him at communications@thewestmoorclub.com; or call him at 508.228.9494 Ext. 134.

