

# Clubhouse refurbishment – steps to success

Clubs that fully understand their mission also realise that their facilities are crucial to success and customer satisfaction.

A consistent attribute or best practice adhered to by leading leisure facilities and clubs across the world, is a commitment to an annual strategic planning exercise which addresses both long and short term challenges on a recurring basis.

An integral component within this regular overview is the development of a Club facility master plan.

Many of the issues which contribute to a declining membership, reducing member usage and reduction in catering sales, can usually be tracked back to an inefficient, outdated clubhouse that is no longer attractive to its current or potential membership.

As a general rule of thumb, there are 8 essential steps to successful club facility master planning.

## 1 Consultant

Appoint a club planning consultant to be your independent guide and coordinator through this important long term exercise. This will ensure you receive up to date, industry specific advice and knowledge.

## 2 Survey

Conduct, through your chosen club consultant, a customer survey to gain an objective view of facility satisfaction. A series of initial focus groups comprising of representative members should be carried out to enable a full questionnaire to be developed and administered to the entire membership. The most effective club surveys are performed by external club consultants, who understand facilities and can summarise the findings in an objective and constructive manner.

## 3 Planning Group

Establish a small, manageable planning group. This group should not be a group of members who are architects, designers or contractors but instead, a group who represent a true cross section of the members who utilise club facilities. The club general manager and a board director should also be essential to this group.

## 4 Space Planning

Utilising the results of the member survey, the planning group, coordinated by the Club consultant, should develop a specific architectural space plan and optimal customer traffic flow for clubhouse improvements. This is essentially a room by room critique showing square meterage of desired spaces, remembering always that the plan should be able to identify future facilities or growth potential, in addition to the highest priority improvements needed in the short term. This exercise can be either conducted by the club consultant or clubhouse architect, depending upon skill set and preference.

## 5 Master Planning

The next step is master planning which will create concept floor plans and site layouts. This master plan should ultimately save substantial monies by enabling forward planning in a sound architectural manner in order to avoid quick, poorly conceived decisions that will waste club resources and time in the future.

At this stage it is imperative, as an extension to step 4, to conduct a detailed analysis of the existing clubhouse, with respect to the condition of structural, mechanical, electrical, safety and

environmental systems. The prime reason for refurbishment projects exceeding set budgets is a lack of detailed knowledge of existing conditions and linked building code requirements.

## 6 Presentation Plans and Financing

A presentation package incorporating concept floor plans, site layout and architect impressions, together with cost analysis are now pieced together. The services of a cost estimator should be utilised. Further verification by a local construction contractor who has experience with comparable club/hospitality projects is highly recommended.

The greatest challenge of any refurbishment project is always attaining the financing approval from the board/membership. There are a myriad options which can be explored, but these will not be covered in this particular article as it would form a topic in its own right.

However it is important to note that a revised operating budget, showing potential revenue increases due to the proposed improvements and reflecting the impact of closure periods upon existing facilities should be drafted and included with the capital expenditure costs of the project.

## 7 Communication

The presentation package should be initially previewed by all present board directors and club committees. This will serve the purpose of generating initial feedback and ultimately gaining ownership and support from key stakeholders in the organisation. A well delivered and visually informative presentation to the membership, followed up by a project brochure mail out of the suggested improvements and master plan is the minimum requirement for general member education and awareness.

## 8 Final Design and Construction

Once board approval to proceed is secured, selection of the final architect, interior designer, statutory consultants and of course contractor, can proceed.

Whoever are the preferred choices, it is highly recommended that the club board/owner engages a competent project manager during the construction phase, to ensure that club interests are met on a daily basis.

The club general manager should not be directed to or attempt to fill this full-time role in addition to managing the club during this potentially disruptive time for the membership.

Following these simple planned steps will enable the board, membership and staff to cope comfortably with challenges that generally result from refurbishment essential to the future success of the club.

**Paul Grainger**

0413 356 207



**LEISURE STRATEGIES**

[www.leisurestrategies.com.au](http://www.leisurestrategies.com.au)

Consultancy Services to the Leisure, Fitness, Sports organisation and Golf Club industries