

Managers, Presidents Examine The Club of Today

Private club general managers and their elected club officers spend a lot of time trying to nail the proverbial Jello to the wall: What is a private club? What should it be? What are the roles of the manager, the board president, the members? ...

Members of the Florida Chapter CMAA participated in an extensive examination of these issues during a two-day "Executive Leadership Weekend" continuing education program. The program was presented by Tarun Kapoor, CHA, CHE, managing director of Kapoor & Kapoor Hospitality Consultants, assisted by Gary Hamil-

CMAA members and a sizeable contingent of club presidents.

The power politics component of the education examined a variety of issues, from empowering employees and creating a culture that delivers members' expectations of their club to dealing with "sacred cows" on staff and cultural/age diversity among today's members.

The manager as mentor, "personal trainer," and coach needs to demonstrate faith in his/her employees' ability to problem solve and desire to provide winning solutions, the two presenters said. "You've got to let me use my head are you're never going to win my

in the '70s he was handed a huge binder that outlined in micro-managing detail how every conceivable situation should be handled.

"What worked in the '70s does not work today. Standard operating procedure manuals today should be stamped: 'Work in Progress.'"

Consistency needs to be reconciled with flexibility. "One of the biggest assets of clubs are their customs, which are also their biggest Achilles heel," Kapoor said.

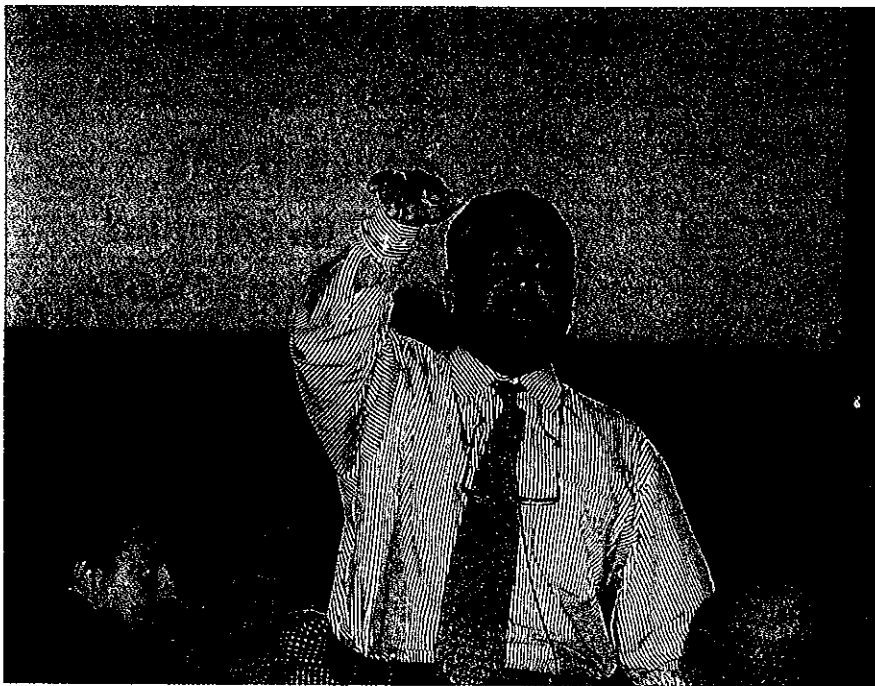
"The world in 2003 is talking about CRM (customer relationship management). I have a different definition — CUSTOMIZED relationship management. You are catering to America's affluence. You must know what my eight-year-old wants." Kapoor related how a waiter, picking up on Kapoor's concern over his son's menu choice, suggested fruit rather than fries as a side dish with a burger.

Sacred cows — the employee who is a favorite of members but the bane of management — should be addressed strategically, Kapoor said. "Sacred cows are about personal power," he noted. A waitress who teases members and stretches the limits of propriety — an example given by one attendee at the session — may actually be an asset to the club. But if a bartender is a favorite because of his heavy pour, the manager might want to clue in the directors as to the additional liquor costs incurred so an informed decision can be made. And the employee who uses personal power to torpedo the manager at every turn needs to go, the presenters said.

All employees, sacred cows or rank and file, need to have a clear picture of what the club is and where it is going. "If your club does not have clearly defined core values, a mission statement, a vision of what it needs to become in the next five years, your club is going to be left out."

Kapoor and Hamilton told the club managers that satisfaction and

Continued on page 24



Hospitality consultant Tarun Kapoor challenged Florida club managers to embrace a stronger leadership position.

ton, JD, an associate with the firm. Kapoor has been a perennial presenter at CMAA national and regional educational programs for many years.

The first day of the Saturday/Sunday program, presented at The Breakers in Palm Beach, addressed the topic of "Power Politics in Clubs," and was presented to only the managers. The second half of the program, "Strategic Leadership — Trends, Opinions, and Possibilities," was presented to both

heart," Kapoor stated. "Let the locker room manager chose the strategy for the locker room."

Treating employees as thinking, creative contributors produces loyalty. Kapoor emphasized that this loyalty is to the manager, not the club: "People are loyal to individuals rather than to the institution," he said.

Kapoor and Hamilton suggested that club policies should be both member- and staff-friendly. Kapoor recalled how as a manager for Hyatt

Management—

Continued from page 22

performance expectations for staff, for members, and for operations of the club need to be defined and measured on a regular basis.

In the second day's session on strategic leadership, the club managers were encouraged to invite their board presidents to participate. The session was full, with a large number of board presidents in attendance.

The session was enlivened by viewpoints of the managers and presidents. The presidents in attendance presented views that ranged from financial micromanagement of the GM to one president who said that his club's general manager "is responsible for that budget because he has had as much input into it as is necessary."

William Wagner, CCM, general manager of Riviera Country Club in Coral Gables, said that the budgeting experience at his club was similar.

"This year we passed a budget that had an eight percent increase in dues, increased service charge, increased capital costs, and the board did not blink because they knew that it was based on what the members want," he said.

That kind of partnership between GM and elected volunteers was stressed repeatedly by Kapoor and Hamilton. "It is the synergy between management and owners that makes change possible," Hamilton told the presidents and general managers in attendance.

Kapoor noted that managers need to understand the reasons

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LETTERS

Dear Editor:

Congratulations — finally, someone has written the obvious. Any club manager worth his salt would consider it his job to maintain traditions and identity and serve as the steward of his club's assets. We were hired to be the leader and to do just that. All this excitement stating that this is something new is hard to understand.

Been there, done that.

**George Burton, CCM
Past President CMAA**

that members join clubs, and the different point of view that members will have from paid management. "I join the club to spend my discretionary time and money," he said. "I should have rights that come with paying to do that. I don't think it's all bad if the members are bitching and moaning. The question is: what are you are going to do with those complaints... if they are complaints, with that noise... if it is noise?"

"Volunteers do not and maybe should not have the commitment and obligation (as do managers). There is a problem when a board member has power to spend the club's resources — when the board member is both an owner of the club and a customer of the club. I think that club managers have a very tough job, in that they are managing stakeholders."

He discussed the new paradigm of club management that is being developed by CMAA, under which the club manager is responsible, beyond everyday operations,

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to define and uphold the culture and tradition of the club and to protect and invest the club's assets, whether those are people, land, or dollars.

Developing a proper model for the club is a question of, "choosing responsibility over entitlement," Kapoor said. "Can we create an en-

vironment to make members want to volunteer? The culture of your club is already there — define it. Or bring in an outsider and let them define it. Then ask yourself the million-dollar question: Is this where we want to be?"

Speaking to the presidents in the room, Kapoor said, "If the club is a place where you're supposed to play, then it needs to be part of the culture. Have the guts and gumption to post your mission: If you don't post your mission, the manager doesn't have to deliver it."

"Any time you make a decision in a club that doesn't have the mission, vision, and values defined, you will de-facto get fractionalization. Culture is an outcome of how your club has operated in (its history). The process of how decisions are made becomes the culture of your club.

"Continuity and consistency are the necessary requisites for a club. But continuity and consistency don't exist if you don't have a plan." **MI**