

TANDEM CLUB PARTNERS

PERSPECTIVE

Over-the-Top Overcommunication

Years ago at my club we held the dreaded “Open Member Meeting” to discuss why senior membership fees were increasing. The mood was tense and hearing aids were turned to high. After a clear and concise visual presentation, led by a committee of hard-of-hearing members, the audience (average age of 87) was given the opportunity to ask questions. A gentleman stood up and asked a well thought-out question, short and to the point. The committee, positioned at a head table at the front of the room, looked around at each other, seemingly confused, each waiting for the other to respond. The Club President, beaming with confidence and poised to address the issue head-on, stood up and said something for two minutes that had nothing to do with the gentleman’s question. Bewildered and self-conscious of his own hearing challenges, he looked around at his friends, politely thanked the President for his answer and sat down. Meeting adjourned.

While this story is entertaining, it also draws a parallel with how we communicate in clubs. The constant stream of messages contribute to human error and leave it to the audience to decipher what is true and what is not. The solution? More communication, right? Wrong. Lest we forget the smoke-filled, mahogany-clad locker room where the “good ole boys’ club” held court and made decisions, often at the detriment of those left on the outside. The overcorrection that has occurred to battle this has resulted in a dramatic increase in communication efforts, modernized in an age of rapidly evolving technology and social media, making constant, inescapable messaging the norm. While this increase in outreach has had its obvious benefits, it does run the risk of confusion and information fatigue.

The marketing “rule of seven” states that a message must be delivered to someone seven times in order for it to take root, but I would argue that marketing and communication are two very different things. The rule of seven in marketing is communicating a brief phrase multiple times; “Just Do It”, “Because You’re Worth It”, and “The Quicker Picker Upper”, just to name a few. Communication, however, is the art of delivering a more complex message of who, what, when, where, why and how. Delivering messages of this nature requires context and nuance and should be done in a consistent and reliable method.

I would challenge clubs to take a step back and, rather than fall prey to an audience wanting to be spoon-fed information without putting in any effort to seek out said information, streamline the communication to a select few avenues. Make it clear that these #X methods are the communication vehicles and they will be done at these #X intervals. Draw the proverbial line in the sand. Yes, we serve our membership and our clients, but cow towing to those who put little effort into seeking out the information will serve only to create more confusion. Rather than lose control of the message, establish a simple, one-page communication plan. Decide how you will communicate and commit to that standard process. Just don’t do it seven times, seven days a week using seven different people.