

## Developing a Resort Membership Program

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Our Enhancing Resort Profitability with Club Membership Program article posted on February 7 discussed how a resort with excess amenity capacity can enhance profitability of the resort with a club membership program. Here we'll discuss factors to consider when developing a resort membership program.

**The resort must give area residents membership benefits that they would not otherwise get as a member of the general public, such as:**

- Access to facilities not available to the general public;
- Priority over the general public in reserving golf, spa and other facilities;
- Discounts on food and beverage, merchandise and facilities usage fees;
- Member only tournaments, parties, events and activities, including kids program activities;
- Member only website and newsletter; and
- Member advisory board and committees.

The extent of member only facilities and resort guest/member only facilities should depend on the extent to which the resort needs the general public to fill excess capacity. The trend in resort programs is to have a limited amount of member only facilities, such as a members only lounge and locker rooms. A beach club and swimming pool area are often resort guest/member only, because they are not conducive to general public usage. The resort club could exclude the general public from certain facilities during peak times and allow them to use such facilities when trying to fill excess capacity.

A resort may want to exclude club members from certain facilities if management believes that club member usage may adversely impact the resort guest experience. Because club members may feel unwanted if they are excluded from facilities, a preferable way to address crowding concerns would be to give members discounts for usage during slow times to discourage member usage during busy times or prohibit members from bringing guests to such facilities during peak usage periods.

Structuring a successful resort membership program without adversely affecting the resort guest experience requires a resort manager to wear both a club marketing hat and operations hat and balance possible competing interests.

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