



Profiles *in* Excellence

Bob James, CCM, CCE, CHE, is executive director and COO of Westchester Country Club in Rye, NY, one of the nation's oldest and largest private clubs. The club encompasses more than 500 acres and employs a staff of 600 to serve 1,400 member families.

Q: History and tradition ooze from every pore of Westchester Country Club. How do you balance your respect for the past with the needs of a contemporary membership?

A: We integrate modern technologies and new trends in sports and member services to keep current, but we're very careful they are in keeping with our architecture, traditions, and culture. Our members want the club to remain special and an escape from their day-to-day work and harried lives.

Q: With 72 guest rooms and 55 member apartments, 45 holes of golf, a beach club, and expansive meeting and special event facilities, you run a facility that is as much like a resort than a club. How do you stay in touch with members?

A: I am challenged to cover all the touch points on a regular basis. This requires deliberate planning and scheduling, and I rely heavily on my iPhone alerts. I walk the dining room at the height of service, greet members at key social and athletic events, and attend as many committee meetings as possible.

Q: You're an adjunct professor at Cornell University's School of Hotel Management, which is your alma mater. What do you stress to young people who want to enter the club management field?

A: I am very honest with them about the opportunities and challenges they'll face in the private club industry. I tell them that they can expect longer working hours than most other

areas of the hospitality field, but that they are much more likely to feel a sense of accomplishment, be better paid, and have stronger bonds with their customers and fellow staff members. Having the owners always present is challenging, but there is no better feedback loop, and you have the opportunity to work with some extraordinary leaders.

Q: Your father owned and operated a private club on Long Island, where you worked as a teenager. What did you learn from him about club management?

A: Dad taught us to roll up our sleeves and be the first ones in the trenches, to lead by example, and know as much about everyone's jobs as possible. He had formerly been in real estate sales and was naturally a good communicator. We learned from an early age how important this is. Most importantly, he was principled, and his ethics were beyond reproach. As a club manager, I appreciate that we are in the most honest of honest businesses and that every decision focuses on what is right for the membership, my staff, and the community. Rarely are they at odds with one another.

Q: What are some of Westchester Country Club's distinctive amenities?

A: We have a manicurist, barber, and a car care center. For the first 70 years of the club's existence, we had a full-service gas station and garage. Members' cars were serviced, fueled,

and stored for the winter. One year, back in the 60s, the operator of the station decided to sell the business, land and all, and then hightail it out of town. What a shock it must have been to the man who thought he purchased the station to find out it was really owned by the club, not the man from whom he thought he bought it.

Q: What's the one thing you make time for each day?

A: I start the day with a walk-through of the main public areas and end the day the same way. Before going home, I make my to-do list for the next day. It is a classic time management technique I find invaluable.



*Profiles in Excellence is presented by **Global Golf Advisors**, a CMAA Silver Alliance Partner. Global Golf Advisors is the golf and club industry's leading*

authority on course ownership and management best practices, club lifestyle enhancement, and member facilitation. For more information, visit globalgolfadvisors.com or call (888) 432-9494.