



2025 Club Leaders' Perspectives Report

Navigating Member Value, Effective Governance, and Generational Differences Effectively

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Insights from Club Leaders: Navigating Member Value, Effective Governance, and Generational Differences Successfully

Leaders in the private club industry face numerous complex challenges while also needing to seize opportunities to enhance the member experience, strengthen governance, and bridge generational divides.

Drawing on insights from the *2025 Club Leaders' Perspectives* research, conducted in collaboration with the Club Management Association of America (CMAA), this report explores how forward-thinking clubs are addressing these strategic priorities to meet current and future challenges.

In this report, GGA Partners provides insights into why leaders today are confident in the value they deliver, and how many struggle to measure and effectively communicate that value. Results show that while governance practices are evolving, gaps remain in strategic oversight and risk management. Finally, although generational differences exist in member expectations, clubs can continue to foster connections through inclusive communication and social programming.

Together, these themes illustrate a broader narrative: that clubs which invest in clarity, cohesion, and adaptability will be best positioned to thrive. The articles that follow offer data-informed perspectives and practical strategies to help club leaders act with intention and lead with impact.



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2025 Club Leaders' Perspectives

Building Bridges: Strategies for Connecting Members Across Generations

Private clubs face growing generational divides due to differing priorities. Older members often focus more on value for dues, while younger members seek modern amenities and new experiences. Clubs can create connections through social events and effective communication to bridge these gaps.

By Ben Hopkinson, Michael Gregory, and Eric Brey, Ph.D.

Key Insights

- Leaders indicate that concerns over the value received from dues were of focus for older members, while younger members focused on club usage.
- When comparing generational differences, overall satisfaction was considered most similar between generations, while social interests were the most different.
- Regular social events, that bring members together, and effective communication are seen as the most successful ways to overcome generational differences.

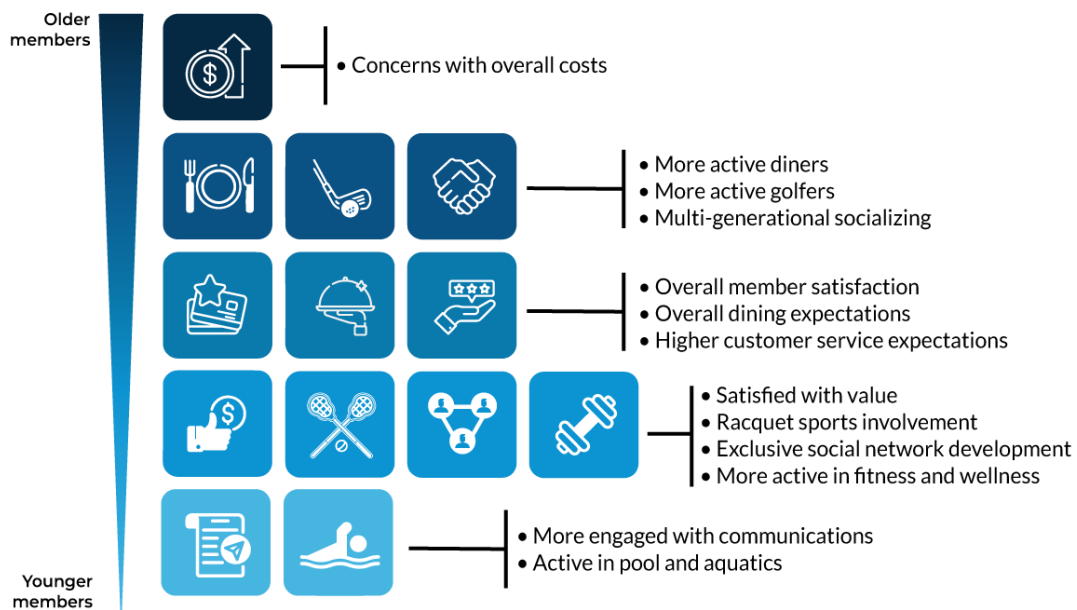
Generational Challenges

The widening gap between generational expectations is a challenging landscape for private clubs. Each age group has its own priorities, presenting obstacles for a cohesive club experience. Economic factors play a significant role, as membership demand and fees often attract a wealthier or younger generation to many clubs. This shift results in diverse perspectives on what private clubs should offer, sparking a clash between cherished traditions and modern desires. The Club Leaders' Perspectives (CLP) research, conducted in collaboration with the Club Management Association of America (CMAA), delves into these issues and explores how leaders address them.

Understanding Club Expectations

Club leaders were asked to evaluate various statements regarding club experiences to determine whether they resonated more with younger members, were similar across generations, or resonated more with older members. As shown in Figure 1, significant differences exist between generations as perceived by club leaders. For older members, they were viewed as more active golfers and diners, with concerns about overall costs being notably more prevalent. Fifty-eight (58%) of respondents indicated this was a more significant concern for older members, compared to just 17% for younger members. While concerns about overall membership costs are an issue for private clubs at all ages¹, they are particularly pressing for older members. Results also indicate that younger members are more satisfied with the value they receive and are more engaged with non-golf and dining amenities and activities offered by clubs.

Figure 1. Generational Differences in the Club Experience



Note: Respondents were asked to identify whether club attributes are aligned with younger, older, or similar across generations. The further away an attribute appears from the middle, the more it skews towards a specific generation, with minimal perceived differences presented in the third row.

Differences and Similarities. This pressure from both segments underscores the need for innovative strategies to develop a more adaptable value proposition that can meet the needs of both segments. Clubs can start by identifying common ground among members to provide universal value. Respondents indicate that members of all ages share a common interest in socializing across generations (73% of respondents indicated a balance between generations) and share similar customer service expectations (56%).

Clubs can also explore pay-per-use opportunities that may attract younger members willing to spend more while remaining mindful of those with different levels of economic tolerance. However, special emphasis must be placed on providing opportunities for cross-generational interaction, as

¹ *Club Members' Perspectives: Insights into the Changing Needs and Wants of Private Club Members* (West Palm Beach, FL: GGA Partners), 2024.

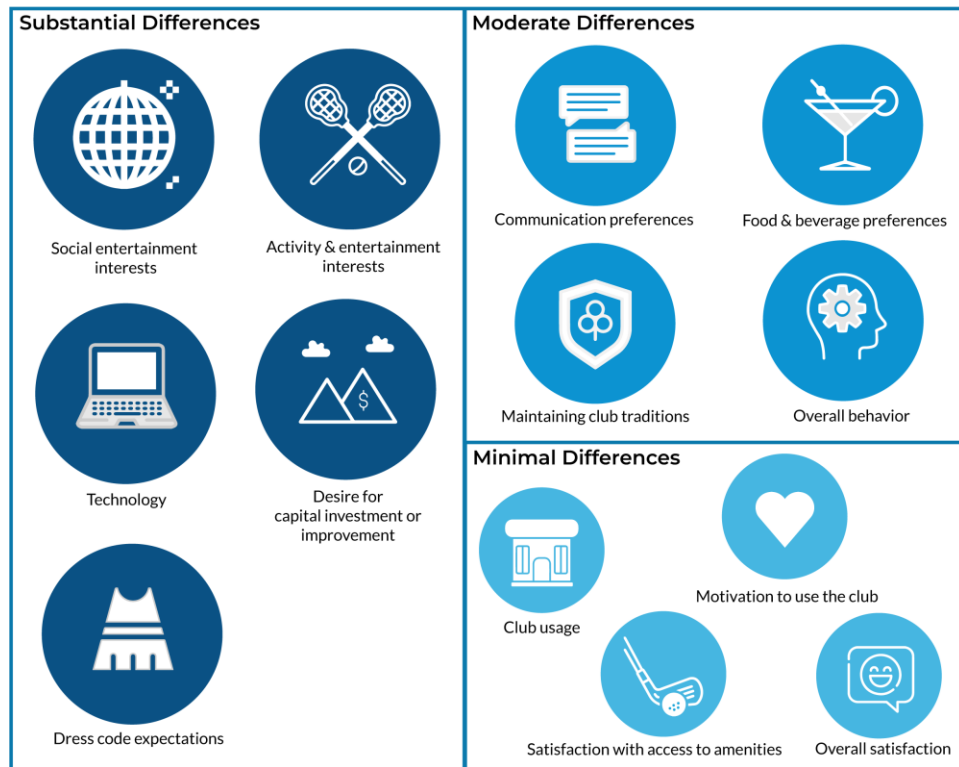
younger members tend to form exclusive social networks that could limit intergenerational interaction.

Divergent Differences

Respondents were asked to determine the divergence between younger and older members to understand the range of differences. The results indicate that expectations can be divided into substantial, moderate, and minimal differences as detailed in Figure 2.

Substantial Differences. These areas indicate a substantial difference between generations. Considered gap-creators, these notable differences highlight the need for clubs to develop diverse strategies that cater to the interests of both groups. For instance, efforts to accommodate younger members include providing dynamic social events, adopting modern technology tools, and investing in new and modern amenities. In contrast, older members tend to favor traditional gatherings and communication methods while focusing on maintaining existing facilities.

Figure 2. Differences Between Generations



Note: Respondents were asked to rate the divergence between younger and older members on a scale of 1 – 5, with 1 indicating minimal differences and 5 indicating substantial differences. Groupings were determined by placing similarly rated club experiences together based on the relative level of divergence between groups.

Moderate Differences. These areas indicate a moderate difference between generations as clubs may find targeted overlap regarding communication, food and beverage preferences, club traditions, and overall behavior. Identifying common ground (and differences) through member

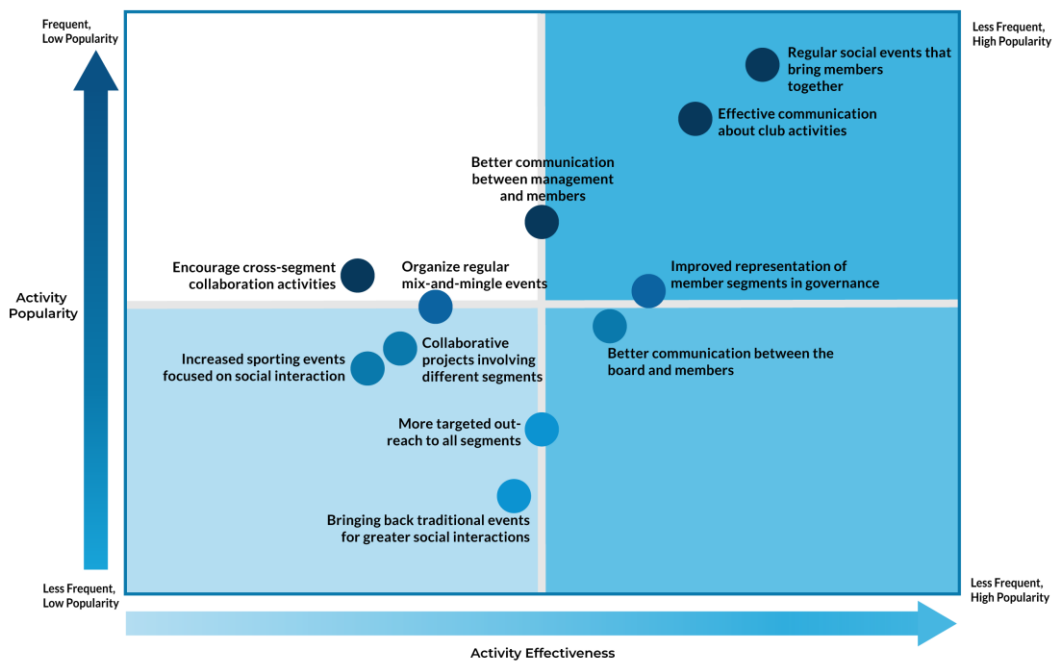
surveys among these areas helps identify strategies and actions that effectively balance generational needs and preferences while enabling the club to tailor appropriate tactics.

Minimal Differences. These areas indicate greater alignment among age groups and can be considered relationship building. Club usage, motivation to use the club, and access to amenities are opportunities to bring members together. Younger and older members generally agree on service standards, demonstrate comparable levels of engagement, and share similar motivations for participating in club activities. Despite specific generational differences, overall satisfaction remains relatively consistent, indicating that clubs are generally doing well to strike the correct balance in the overall member experience.

Bringing Members Together

Club leaders consider regular social events and effective communication essential for uniting generations. Of the 11 opportunities evaluated to enhance engagement shown in Figure 3, these two were identified as the most used and effective. Participation in social events is important, as it fosters member engagement, club relevance, and community-building. However, simply hosting events is not enough; clubs can strategically plan and promote their social activities with specific outcomes to encourage a balance of participation from each generation. In terms of communication effectiveness, a greater emphasis may be needed to educate and onboard the older generation, helping them to use and engage more effectively with modern club communications.

Figure 3. Frequency and Success of Generational Engagement Activities



Note: Respondents were asked to select and rank the options that they considered most effective at bringing members together. Choices were placed into the figure based on their level of effectiveness and overall popularity at clubs.

In addition to prioritizing regular social gatherings and effective communication to unite members, improving the representation of member types/segments in club governance was also noted as an effective tactic. Specific engagement efforts, such as mix-and-mingle events and encouraging cross-segment collaboration, can further enhance community building.

Improving the representation of member segments in club governance is seen as successful at bringing members together for many clubs.

Club Leaders Opportunity

Clubs have a unique opportunity to bridge generational divides through organized socialization. With 75% of club leaders agreeing that younger and older members desire to socialize across generations, the willingness to connect exists—it simply requires proactive facilitation. Clubs can also focus on targeted opportunities, including:

1. **Developing flexible membership options:** To meet the needs of multiple generations, clubs can introduce greater flexibility in membership costs through innovative models. Strategies include offering pay-per-use social events, creating senior transition categories with adjusted dues, and expanding ancillary revenue streams that allow members to pay only for what they use.
2. **Strategic development of a social calendar:** Develop and implement a thoughtfully designed social calendar to foster balanced participation in activities, supporting various generations and individual groups while bridging the generational divide.
3. **Facilitating modern communication adoption:** Identify the gaps and challenges in communication adoption for older members, and consider allocating resources for better orientation and education to boost member engagement and adoption.

Successful clubs maintain a clear vision and mission that is understood and embraced by staff, current members, and prospective members alike. However, when attitudes and perceptions are divided, it becomes harder for leaders to move the club forward strategically. By actively fostering generational connections, club leaders can strengthen the sense of community and build a more unified culture that supports long-term success.

Visit www.ggapartners.com/insights to discover more about how effective strategy can bring generations together, explore insights from the Club Leaders' Perspectives research, and learn how GGA Partners can support your club's long-term success.





2025 Club Leaders' Perspectives

Strengthening Club Governance: Key Insights & Opportunities for Improvement

Private clubs are making progress in adopting governance best practices, but significant opportunities for improvement remain. Club leaders can focus on strategic oversight, risk management, and improving member communications to increase governance effectiveness.

By Neil Brown, Michael Gregory, and Eric Brey, Ph.D.

Key Insights

- Strategic planning is inconsistently applied, yet crucial to board effectiveness, as clubs with a plan exhibit stronger governance practices.
- Board-to-member communications continue to be challenging, but emphasizing education, transparency, and direct communication is associated with increased effectiveness.
- Risk management practices in clubs are currently underdeveloped, leaving them vulnerable to unexpected changes or external disruptions.

Improving Club Governance

With many clubs continuing to adopt best practices, private club governance is seeing an overall enhancement in club leadership and operational effectiveness. However, opportunities for improvement remain within the key areas of board responsibility. Specifically, clubs can improve governance by increasing the use of strategic planning to enable a shift from procedural oversight to a more proactive, strategy-driven approach. Increasing the focus on risk management is another opportunity for clubs of all sizes. Finally, as one of the most common challenges in private clubs²,

² *Club Members' Perspectives: Insights into the Changing Needs and Wants of Private Club Members* (West Palm Beach, FL: GGA Partners), 2024.

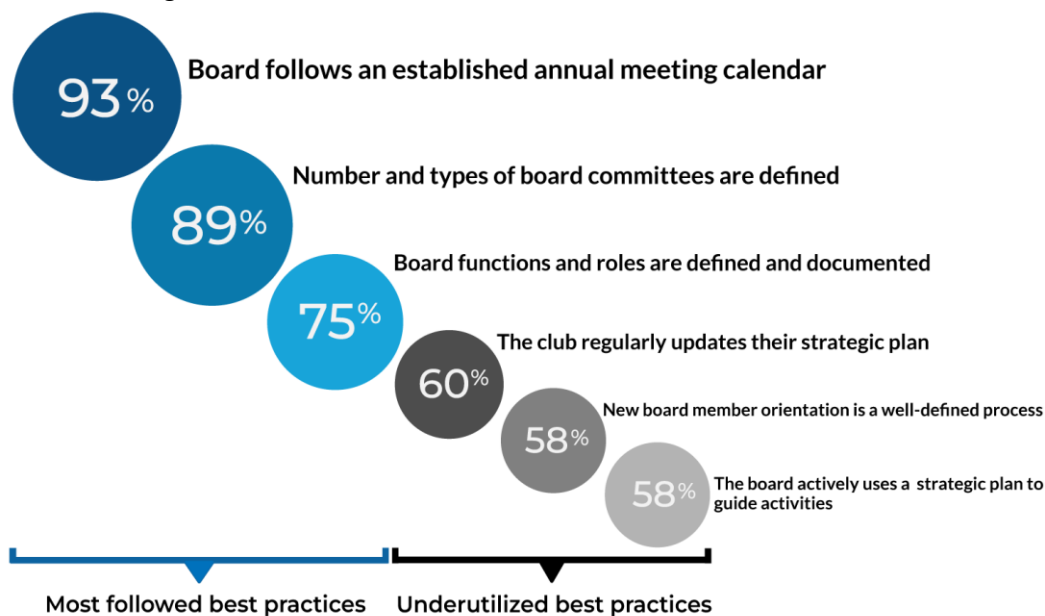
board-to-member communication is an area where dedicated efforts can be made to ensure effective and transparent engagement.

What actions can clubs take to increase governance effectiveness in these three areas? Results from the Club Leaders' Perspectives (CLP) research, conducted in collaboration with the Club Management Association of America (CMAA), examine these to provide insights and actionable steps that all clubs can implement.

Board Oversight Opportunities

For clubs to thrive, managers focus on daily operations while board members prioritize long-term strategic considerations and enhancing board effectiveness. Our research, which assessed the implementation of 18 governance best practices at private clubs, reveals that the respondents' most commonly followed best practices are aligned with establishing core governance parameters, such as having the number and type of board committees defined (89%) and clearly defining and documenting roles for board functions and board members (75%) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Board Oversight Best Practice Activities



Note: Respondents were asked to select which board oversight best practices are used at their club. The % represents the number of respondents who indicated usage of each corresponding best practice.

Enhancement Opportunities. While policies lay the groundwork for success, having an active strategic plan is vital for assessing progress toward the club's vision and objectives. Results indicate that one-third of respondents do not have a strategic plan, and 40% of total respondents do not routinely update theirs. For clubs that are missing these key elements, focusing on initiatives to implement the strategic plan can improve board effectiveness.

These findings, and the fact that 42% of respondents do not refer to a strategic plan when making decisions, highlight the opportunities for improvement at many clubs. Additionally, having a board

orientation program to help new board members integrate and contribute to strategic discussions is one of the least followed best practices (58%). Strengthening these areas enables clubs to transition from procedural oversight to a more proactive and strategy-driven approach.

Risk Management Opportunities

Strategic planning is associated with more effective board oversight, with an 18% increase in documented delegation of authority to the GM/COO and an 18% boost in risk management planning when a plan is in place, as results in Figure 2 demonstrate. Effective risk management can significantly impact board oversight, especially with current uncertainties and potential economic changes. It's a guiding principle that can easily be overlooked until it's too late, especially when operating without a plan. Questions such as "What potentially threatens the achievement of our strategic priorities?" and "What risks are we facing as an organization?" are starting points for risk management planning.

Figure 2. Influence of Strategic Plan on Risk Management Best Practice

Top Oversight Best Practices Followed	% Usage (No Plan)	% Usage (Plan)	Strategic Plan Impact ¹
Club's legal compliance reported to the board?	80%	94%	+14%
Documented delegation of authority for the GM/COO?	75%	93%	+18%
Least Followed Oversight Best Practices			
Club has a risk management plan/framework in place?	48%	66%	+18%
Succession plan in place for senior management (i.e., GM/COO)?	31%	48%	+17%

¹ Respondents were asked to select which governance oversight activities are currently used at their club. The differences in risk management best practices adoption were determined by comparing usage among clubs with a strategic plan versus those without.

Enhancing Risk Management. Despite clubs without a strategic plan successfully reporting compliance with laws and regulations to the board (80%) and clearly defining the authority of the GM/COO (75%), meaningful opportunities exist to enhance risk management practices. A concern emerging from our research is that only 48% of respondents reported having a risk management plan, and just 31% have a succession plan for senior management. These plans help guard against risks threatening the achievement of priorities, such as the GM/COO's abrupt departure.

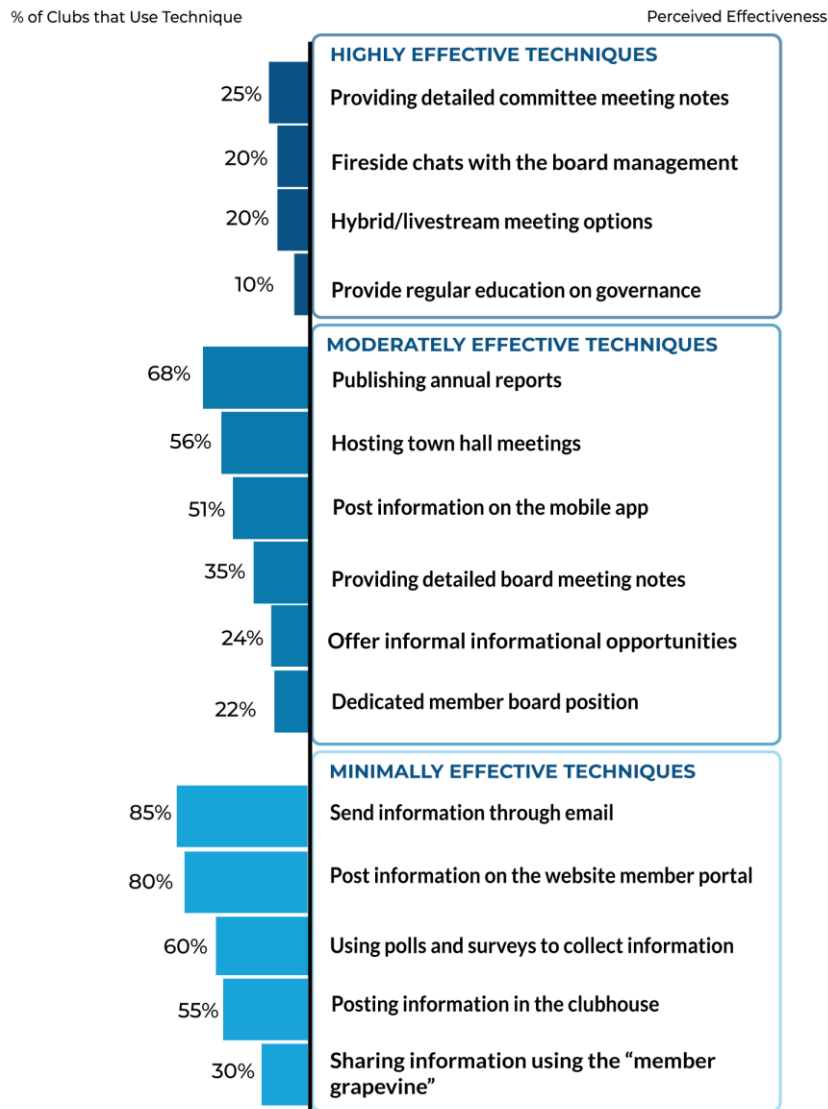
Surprisingly, many clubs still lack a board policy manual (35%), an essential component of good governance and effective risk management. Strengthening these areas prepares clubs for navigating uncertainties while maintaining strategic direction and operational continuity.

Enhancing Member Communication

According to our research, data indicates that outward board communication is a significant governance challenge. Only 46% of clubs rate current communication as adequate, while 18% report it as ineffective.

But how can clubs address these concerns to foster clarity, engagement, and alignment between the board and the members they serve? Figure 3 offers insights into the methods that clubs most commonly employ and the communication techniques that can be effectively replicated across the industry.

Figure 3. Aligning Techniques with Successful Communication



Note: Respondents were asked to select tactics they use to share information with their members. These results were then compared to overall board communication effectiveness to identify the effectiveness tiers.

Results indicate that clubs prioritizing education and transparency by offering regular governance education sessions and publishing clear, detailed updates on board and committee activities are experiencing higher levels of communication effectiveness. Enhancing direct member engagement by assigning a board liaison, hosting informal networking events, and facilitating town hall meetings fosters meaningful dialogue and helps build open lines of communication.

Technology Usage. Effectively leveraging new and emerging digital tools has been shown to enhance communication, especially with younger members, given their desire for more technology usage³. Supplementing traditional email with hybrid meetings, website updates, and mobile app notifications helps create accessible information for members. Reducing dependence on passive and informal channels, such as clubhouse message boards and member-to-member discussions, enhances the effectiveness of messaging as these methods are perceived as less effective.

Club Leaders Opportunity

To strengthen governance and enhance board effectiveness, clubs should focus on the strategic planning process, then set in motion the essential steps required to implement effective plans and manage the risks that may threaten the achievement of the club's strategic priorities or stand in the way of the desired member experience. Clubs can also focus on the following opportunities:

1. **Emphasize Strategic Outcomes for Board Meetings:** Shift board discussions toward strategic priorities by ensuring that reports align with the club's strategic plan. Management can incorporate key performance indicators (KPIs) and strategic milestones into board reporting to monitor progress toward long-term goals.
2. **Implement a Risk Management Framework:** Creating a structured risk management framework moves beyond risk compliance to identifying, assessing, and mitigating potential risks.
3. **Develop and Implement a Board Policy Manual:** This living document enhances governance consistency by clearly outlining policies related to decision-making, leadership responsibilities, and crisis management, thereby strengthening oversight and mitigating risks.
4. **Enhance New Board Member Orientation:** Strengthen governance by creating a comprehensive board orientation program that introduces governance and reviews essential documents to support new board members in contributing effectively.

By focusing on these key areas, clubs can significantly enhance their governance and board effectiveness. Implementing these recommendations will ensure a more strategic, risk-aware, and well-prepared leadership team.

Visit www.ggapartners.com/insights to discover more about how governance can support more effective strategy, explore insights from the Club Leaders' Perspectives research, and learn how GGA Partners can support your club's long-term success.

³ Club Members' Perspectives: Insights into the Changing Needs and Wants of Private Club Members (West Palm Beach, FL: GGA Partners), 2024.





2025 Club Leaders' Perspectives

Maximizing Club Value: Measuring, Communicating, and Aligning Strategic Priorities

Club leaders and their teams create value for their members but often face challenges in measuring and effectively communicating it. Clubs can help members recognize the benefits they receive by prioritizing effective communication and aligning outcomes to strategic priorities.

By Liz McDowell, CPA, CA, CCM, Michael Gregory, and Eric Brey, Ph.D.

Key Insights

- Club leaders are more confident in creating member value than in measuring and communicating it, missing key opportunities to share their impact across stakeholder groups.
- A key opportunity to improve value-based insights is to measure club progress against strategic priorities and objectives.
- Clubs can improve their value perception by prioritizing member communication, aligning KPIs to strategic priorities, and establishing a structured reporting plan.

Improving Value Perceptions

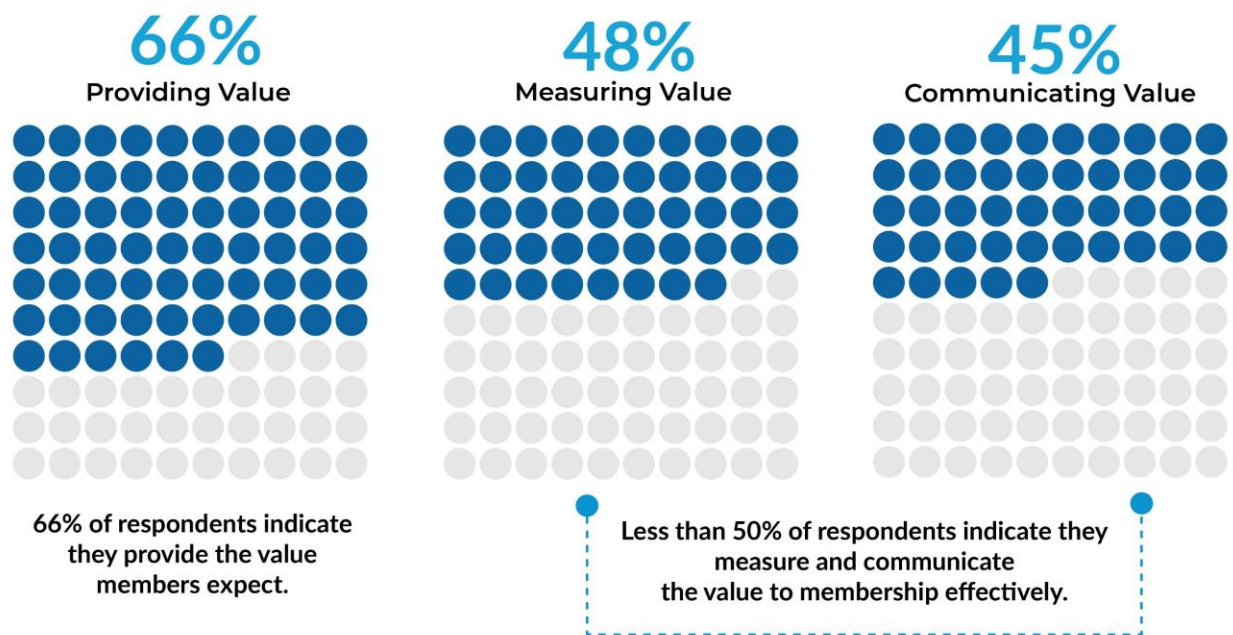
Club leaders face an important challenge: although 66% are confident in creating value for their members, only 35% feel effective at communicating that value. This notable communication gap can result in missed opportunities for engagement and member satisfaction. But how can leaders address this issue?

Results from the Club Leaders' Perspectives (CLP) research, conducted in collaboration with the Club Management Association of America (CMAA), examine these challenges. This article offers strategies and insights to help club leaders quantify and articulate the value created in the club, improving members' understanding of and appreciation for the benefits they receive.

Providing Member Value

Private clubs often allocate significant resources—time, money, and attention—to creating member value; however, extending this effort to include a deliberate plan for measuring and communicating that value is often missed. Results presented in Figure 1 from the 2025 CLP research indicate that while two-thirds believe their club provides the value members expect, only 48% and 45% believe they do a good job of measuring and communicating that value to members, respectively.

Figure 1. Creating, Measuring, and Communicating Value



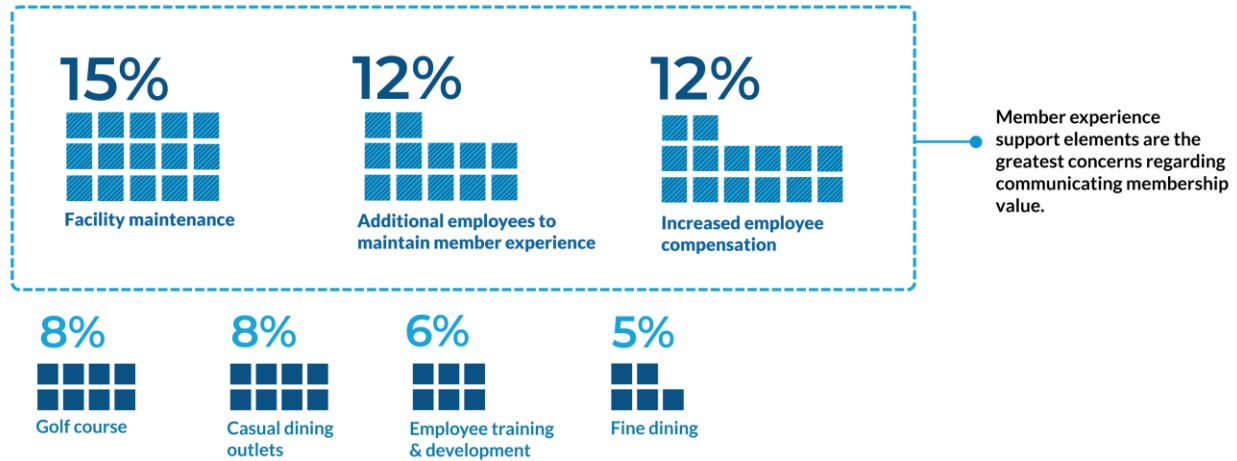
Note: Respondents were asked to rate their effectiveness in providing, measuring, and communicating membership value on a scale of 1 (very ineffective) to 5 (very effective). The percentage of those who selected either 4 or 5 is reported above.

But why emphasize the delivery and measurement of member value? When neglected, clubs miss an opportunity to showcase how high-profile capital projects and operational tactics can generate value and support the execution of strategic priorities. They also contribute to the club's success by establishing clear metrics for communicating successes and challenges. Ultimately, providing value-focused information to members helps ensure transparency regarding efforts to enhance member understanding and engagement.

Lack of Member Understanding. Club leaders face the challenge of delivering quality experiences while also ensuring members understand the value they are receiving. Respondents were asked to rank 23 attributes regarding members not understanding the value they receive, to know where leaders find challenges. Figure 2 shows that leaders perceive the leading disconnect is in areas fundamental for providing experiences and not actual experiences. These areas include ongoing facility maintenance and upkeep, increased employee compensation, and the growing number of employees necessary to maintain service levels. Concerns also exist in key experiential elements

of many clubs – dining and golf – suggesting that members’ views do not necessarily consider the efforts and resources needed to provide these experiences.

Figure 2. Concerns Over Member Value Perceptions

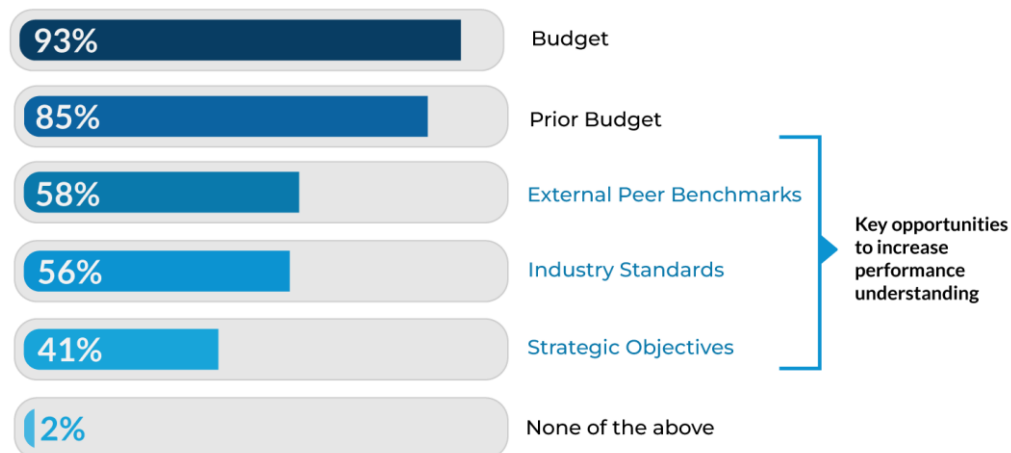


Note: Respondents were asked to select and rank the top five features, services, or operational factors they believe contribute most to members not fully understanding the value of their membership. Using our proprietary Strategic Priority Metric, we identified the top concerns based on a 100-point scale, where higher scores indicate greater concern. The remaining 17 items accounted for 33% of the total importance.

Aligning Strategy with Measurement

Delivering, measuring, and communicating value is inherently tied to a club's overall strategy. Therefore, decisions regarding desired service levels, amenities, and facility conditions should closely align with the club's strategic priorities and objectives. However, as shown in Figure 3, there is room for improvement in the methods used for monitoring success. Results show that while most clubs compare their results to budget (93%) and prior periods (85%), far fewer consider other points of comparison that may add meaningful context to performance such as industry standards (56%), external peer benchmarks (58%), and strategic objectives (41%).

Figure 3. Methods Used to Measure Club Progress



Note: Respondents were asked to select how the club compares metrics when evaluating results. Leaders selected as many options as applicable, so the sum of the above options does not equal 100%.

Impacts of a Strategic Plan. Considering the range of methods used to track progress, mainly when clubs miss an opportunity to track progress toward strategic goals, it is important to understand how this affects the ability to demonstrate the value provided to members. Figure 4 illustrates this effect by showing the change in tracking financial and non-financial value creation metrics based on whether a club actively uses its strategic plan to measure success.

Figure 4. Influence of Strategic Plan on Value Metrics

Member Communication Considerations	% Measure (No Plan)	% Measure (Active Plan)	Strategic Plan Impact ¹
<i>Financial Metrics</i>			
Profitability Metrics	46%	63%	+17%
Cost Metrics	48%	64%	+16%
Customer-centric Metrics	20%	44%	+24%
<i>Non-Financial Metrics</i>			
Service-specific Metrics	32%	61%	+29%
Efficiency Metrics	20%	41%	+21%

¹ Respondents were asked to select which metrics are currently measured at their club. The differences in the use of value-creating financial and non-financial measurements were determined by comparing the regular use of these metrics between clubs that actively align results with a strategic plan and those that don't.

Results show clubs that actively compare results to their strategic plan have significantly more insight into the value they provide members. The collection and calculation of both financial (an average increase of 19%) and non-financial data (average increase of 25%) were more frequent in clubs with a strategic plan. These results demonstrate that having a strategic plan where outcomes are measured can help ensure a club has actionable insights into the value created for its members.

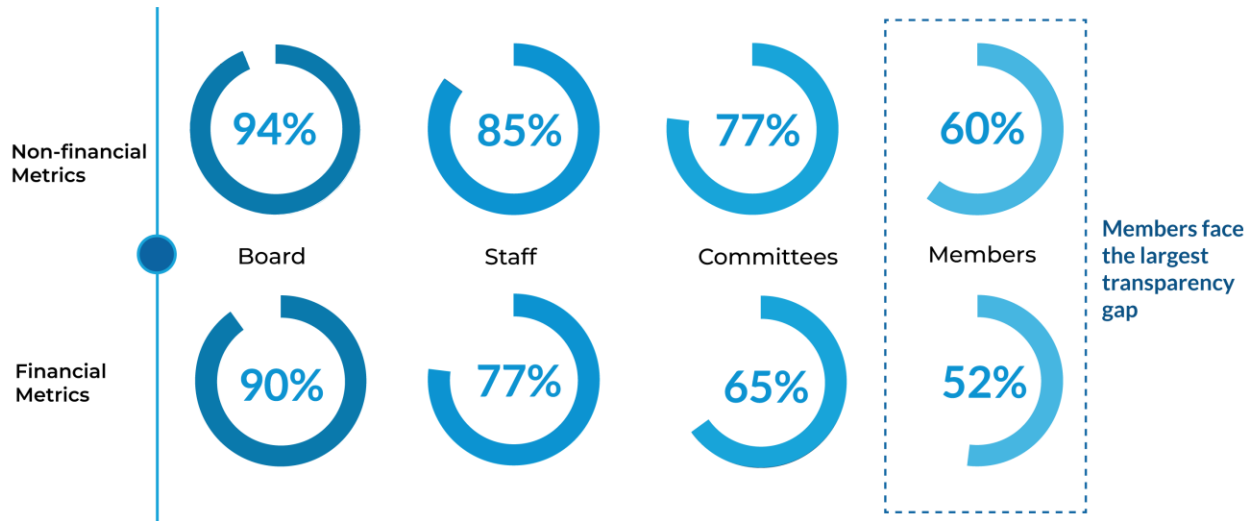
Having an active strategic plan means more than simply working towards a future vision for the club; it also helps clarify specific strategic goals and objectives necessary to create desired member value.

Effective Club Communication

Research indicates that club leaders observe significant variance in data reporting to key stakeholder groups. Figure 5 shows this unevenness, with boards receiving comprehensive reporting while members receive significantly less information. This gap in transparency is evident

as only 60% of clubs provide members with non-financial updates, and just 52% provide financial insights.

Figure 5. Metric Reporting to Key Stakeholder Groups



Note: Respondents were asked to report which audiences they report both financial and nonfinancial metrics to. Leaders selected as many options as applicable, so the sum of the above options does not equal 100%.

Tailoring Communication. Clubs can tailor communication to different stakeholder groups to facilitate a more informed membership. Boards are already well-informed with financial and non-financial metrics, as they should be. Members may benefit from more operational and experiential data, such as improvements in staffing, member satisfaction, and utilization statistics. Effectively reporting these metrics by highlighting tangible components of the experience that most impact member value creation can preemptively address member concerns and bridge perception gaps with information.

“While responses show that clubs compare results to the budget and prior periods, one of the greatest missed opportunities is to compare outcomes to strategic objectives, industry standards, and relevant peer benchmarks.”

- Liz McDowell, Director

Club Leaders Opportunity

Leaders can customize their messaging strategy for various stakeholder groups to improve how a club communicates its value to members. This ensures that members are well-informed about operational and experiential enhancements. Clubs can also focus on the following:

1. **Prioritize Member Communication on Value:** Leaders can enhance engagement and satisfaction by aligning communication strategies with member priorities and elevating transparency. Prioritizing effective communication as a core strategic tenet will build trust and reinforce the value of membership.

2. **Develop and Connect KPIs to Strategic Priorities:** Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) directly linked to the club's strategic priorities. This ensures that value creation is measured and monitored in the most relevant and critical areas.
3. **Create a Collection and Reporting Plan:** Implement structured methods for collecting data (e.g., surveys, internal financial/non-financial metrics, external benchmarks) and reporting results to members. Define clear standards and targets for success and integrate these efforts into a tailored reporting plan for key stakeholders.
4. **Adopt a Quality-Over-Quantity Approach:** Select benchmarks that provide meaningful context by comparing performance to more outcome-relevant and historical data. Utilize varying benchmarks for factors such as amenity composition, revenue levels, and membership size to ensure the comparisons are as relevant as possible.

Clarifying the connection between operational decisions, such as staffing levels and operational investments, and strategic decisions, including competitive market position and pricing strategy, can justify the strategic investment of club resources. This clarity helps members understand and appreciate these investments, even when they are not immediately evident.

Visit www.ggapartners.com/insights to discover more about how active communication can support more effective strategy, explore insights from the Club Leaders' Perspectives research, and learn how GGA Partners can support your club's long-term success.



Acknowledgments

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all participating clubs and our research partner, Club Management Association of America (CMAA), for their invaluable support and commitment to our ongoing research into leadership perspectives. Your support has been instrumental in helping us gain a deeper understanding of the current and ongoing perspectives of industry leaders. The insights and outcomes of this study would not have been possible without your partnership, and we remain forever appreciative of your contributions to its success.

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