

Mobile Apps Modernize Member Engagement

Contributed by RATHAN KUMAR, *MobiCom*

THE MOST RECURRING DISCUSSION TOPIC across all levels across the Private Club industry today remains the concern over the declining or lack of involvement of members in the club. General Manager after General Manager lament over the miserly engagement rates and inability to communicate with the significantly younger and upwardly mobile club member.

The Millennials and Generation Z are the accurate demographic that clubs now need to connect and cater to in ways they prefer and expect. And this is significantly different than the baby boomers that clubs have been catering to for decades. In fact, the Millennial and Generation Z are not exactly the same either. Just as the millennials were different from the generation of baby boomers that came before them in their desire for immediate gratification, Generation Z now march to a different beat as well.

Gen Z grew up through the financial setbacks of the world and are wary of brand promises. They are frugal and prefer experiences. They expect transparency and service and technical excellence. Whilst we lament our lack of knowledge on how they think and how they should be engaged, we must remain cognizant of the fact they will represent 40% of the buying economy from 2020 and they are needed to prop up the private club industry.

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One way to understand them is to remember that while the millennial grew up with three screens on average, Gen Z have had five (TV, smartphone, iPad/iPod, laptop and desktop). Their attention span lasts about eight seconds and if you take away their devices, 79% have shown a tendency towards emotional distress.

Although not the solution, the way to engage with them is through one of those five screens while bearing in mind that instant gratification, immediacy and transparency should be the guiding principles. Using this communication tool will get their attention because you can invite them to an experience you may wish to deliver.

Think of one of the more prevalent analogies today. Can you imagine a Millennial or any Gen Z kid today picking up the phone to ring for a taxi? Can you imagine him waiting on one end of a ringtone, having to engage with a human voice and asking for a taxi? The agony for him/her would not end there. He or she would have to speak and then give an address they might not actually remember. When the ordeal is over, they have an excruciating wait of perhaps 15 minutes wondering how come there was no real update on an ETA.

Why would you expect this same person to ring your club, hope for an answer, be passed onto a facility manager or representative just to inquire if they could bring their friends over for dinner or drinks or tennis at 4pm that day? That is simply rude to expect him/her to put up with such lethargic service.

Mobile apps can play the role of the genie that brings the club to their fingertips helping them place requests, answer queries, keeping them updated about the happenings at the club and connecting with like-minded members at the club. It's easy to use, provides all the information, is available 24/7 and yet, remains unobtrusive; exactly the way Millennials and Gen Z stay connected and engaged with the world around them.

In case you are still not sure why a Private Club needs their own mobile app, here are the many reasons why GMs need to





consider, as identified by Rathan Kumar, Founder and CEO of MobiCom. When viewed from a member's perspective, a mobile app can be an important tool to keep them updated and engaged in many ways. Here is how.

Staying in touch with the club 24/7

Being in touch with the club and updated about the latest happenings, news, events and activities is invaluable to the club member. Ability to view the club's events calendar, registering for activities, viewing and RSVP invitations and requesting special arrangements are all extremely functional everyday needs of the member. With a club engagement mobile app, it becomes possible for members to book facilities, make reservations for rooms, restaurants or the banquet hall without ever needing to call or visit the club to make these arrangements. A mobile app enables the club to cater to these basic needs and expectations.

Connecting with the community

The club is where members connect with like-minded people, exchange ideas, opinions and make new friends. The community shares similar tastes and values the good things in

life. A member engagement mobile app can make it easy for members to discover like-minded people at the club, connect in real time and exchange over topics of common interest. One-on-one messages, blogging and responding to surveys are the many ways that build a vibrant community and keep the member engaged at the club.

Managing membership and transactions

Ability to manage and keep track of transactions conveniently helps the member manage their membership better. Accessing transaction details, summaries of membership dues, requesting information or sending across queries anytime and from anywhere helps the member manage his/her membership at the club better.

The Platinum Club standard for excellence in member engagement can only be something that elevates the experience and caters to every need or preference of the club member. Millennials and Gen Z members will be grateful for the convenience mobile apps extend and would be delighted to see how quickly the club is *Adapting to Changing Times*, one of seven Selection Criteria for Platinum Clubs®. ■