

**I**n my position as a Culinary Search Consultant, I am in contact with numerous culinary and F&B professionals throughout the country on a daily basis. Not only do I discuss their careers and self development, I often call just to touch base and nurture the friendships that have been created. In a recent conversation with a close culinary friend, I was moved by his anticipation of how he believes the current economic climate has been driving operational practices while changing philosophies of those in charge. From his culinary point of view he delivered a concise perspective, “In his 30-year-plus years of industry experience as a chef, he has never seen a greater need for the chef to have business sense.”

I knew exactly where he was going; however, I probed a bit further to fully understand his viewpoint. He spoke about the need of an acute “market awareness” directly influencing one’s approach to “menu development/ engineering, product utilization, and maximizing labor efficiencies.” “Right-sizing menus,” “working leaner with a reduced labor budget,” and developing “marketing strategies” driving usage and loyalty are a Chef’s and F&B Operator’s reality.

He also stated that with these additional duties firmly on the shoulder of the chef, increased management effectiveness was required to improve communications and overall operational success. With this concern in mind, I verified his observations with a few club managers and chefs to develop a presentation titled “Fusing Quality Working Relationships Between Culinary and Foodservice Managers.” This program was recently delivered to a joint chapter meeting of the Texas Lone Star Chapter South Region CMAA and the Texas Chef Association at River

Oaks Country Club, Houston. The following are few insights from the presentation.

Beyond restating the obvious importance of positive, ongoing communications between BOH (Back of the House) and FOH (Front of the House) partners – including the essences of weekly F&B and event review meetings, daily line-ups, journals and logs, and the value of the chef periodically dining with the GM/ F&B Director in the club’s restaurant outlet – the program ventured to reveal a lighter yet meaningful insight about professional character qualities and perceptions that influence the organization’s culture. A few of these perceptions follow; knowing these paradigms may enhance your relationship approaches and overall management effectiveness.

### CHEFS BELIEVE THEY ARE ...

- Extremely Dedicated (nearing obsessive)
- Passionate, Artsy, Creative and Tireless
- Analytical, Business & System Focused
- Entrepreneurial (their name’s on everything)
- Organized, Multitasking Experts
- Highly Resourceful, Responsive & Spontaneous
- Approachable, Accommodating & Sensitive

### OTHERS MAY VIEW CHEFS AS...

- Temperamental, Territorial
- Inflexible, Highly Critical & Demanding
- Unapproachable, Volatile & Provocative
- Egocentric

### MGRS/F&B DIRECTORS, CATERING & OUTLET MANAGER BELIEVE THEY ARE ...

- Accommodating, Engaging, Hospitable
- Acutely Aware of Membership Expectations
- Personable and Service-Focused
- Business, Community and Team Leaders
- Sales, Revenue and Expense-Focused
- Visionary, Dedicated and Loyal
- Financial Watchdogs, Budget Engineers
- Relationship Savvy and Genuine

### OTHERS MAY VIEW MANAGEMENT TO BE...

- Political, Indecisive, Pragmatic, Aloof
- Indifferent and Impractical
- Unrealistic

Additionally, discussions touched on perceptions and fundamental needs from Chef and Operation Management including...

### CLUB CHEFS WANT FROM MANAGEMENT, MEMBERSHIP & STAFF

- Open dialogue and positive lines of communication throughout organization
- A clear, communicated understanding of required club a la carte fare, coupled with appropriate creative outlet incorporating current/popular production methods, products, and cuisines
- A realistic labor budget to secure and retain a competent staff
- A realistic cost of goods budget to purchase best quality products
- Realistic menu pricing to achieve these objectives

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## PUT ME IN, COACH! GET TOP PERFORMANCE FROM YOUR TEAM MEMBERS

Coaching employees is part of managing. Not the whole job, but a vital element. It centers not on telling people what to do, but on finding out how they can succeed and guiding their strengths and ambitions in the right direction. Start by asking the right questions:

- What skills would like to learn, or strengthen?
- What do you want your career to look like?
- What's important in your life?
- What three goals would you like to accomplish this year?
- What action do you need to take to achieve those goals?
- What's preventing you from reaching them?

While you're coaching, be sure to avoid these common traps:

- Trying to solve all the problems. Your role as a coach isn't to "fix" things for employees, but to provide advice and support so they can tackle challenges on their own.
- Becoming a psychotherapist. Don't get tangled up in people's personal issues.
- Trying to change people. You can't force someone to transform his or her personality. Don't insist that employee act or behave exactly like you do, or the way your "favorite" employee does. Just help people discover how to do their best. •

## New Worry: What employees say on MySpace

Employers are clearly worried about what their workers are saying on Facebook and other social networking sites.

A survey by *Travelers* found that one out of eight people share work-related information on social media sites, and 30 percent say they don't think posting information about their employer is a problem as long as they believe the information is true.

"An employee could inadvertently post confidential information that could cause irreparable harm to a business," says Kathy Swendsen, President of Travelers Global Technology.

"In addition, the speed and ease of publication to a wide audience makes it virtually impossible to remove the information once it is posted."

## F&B Notes *Continued...*

- An appropriately equipped and mechanically functional kitchen that flows
- A perpetual and realistic capital equipment budget
- Ability to interact firsthand, quarterly minimum, with House Committee
- A sales and service team with solid food knowledge that can drive revenues

## OPERATIONALLY, CLUBS WANT FROM THEIR CHEF

- Consistently produced, quality cuisine incorporating frequent menu changes
- Exceptional member and employee relations skills
- A strong yet approachable personality and professional decorum
- Exceptional financial management skills
- Full engagement with senior staff and committees
- Exceptional marketing sense both within club and the community
- Exceptional sanitation and housekeeping practices
- Exceptional staff training abilities
- Certification and re-certification
- Continuous learning

These issues are influenced by club culture, an individual's life experiences, and one's management responsibilities. Understanding how other management thinks, coupled with a better understanding of their responsibilities, can enhance communication, built a more efficient and positive work environment, and add to your own professional happiness. •

*David Meyers is a former private club Executive Chef and General Manager and a recognized presenter to various ACF Chapters, Culinary Institutions and CMAA forums on topics affecting the club culinary trends and career management. He is the Master Club Advisors' Culinary Partner, a respected consultant placing executive chefs with top private clubs and the resort community. David welcomes your questions by phone at 847-705-6700 or email at meyersdgm@comcast.net .*