

Concise Club Insights

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The CMAA Conference was Notable!

Energy was high at the CMAA World Conference and Business Expo in Tampa, FL, last month. **Notable** made its debut and was very well received. I was thrilled to be able to personally thank (and hug!) so many subscribers and sponsors. I truly appreciate all of the support and hope you enjoy this jam-packed issue with some conference highlights.

Thank you for reading,



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Introduction



Notable is a printable resource

This publication is designed to be easy to share with management teams and board members whether in print or uploaded to a private board or staff portal. Simply click the button below and ensure the print settings are at 100% scale (avoid "Scale to Fit" settings to maintain the intended layout).

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01

An Investment Worth Making

Recent conferences have had a common theme: a significant surge in attendance compared to previous years. The Club Management Association of America (CMAA) World Conference and Business Expo had a record breaking 4,000 attendees and welcomed 565 first time attendees. Membership in the association now exceeds 8,000, which illustrates ongoing development and education are top priorities for today's club professionals.

More than 11,000 attendees participated in the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) Annual Conference which saw the highest number of educational attendees since 2008. Similarly, the PGA Show drew an impressive crowd of 33,000, making it the largest show in 15 years.

Among the many educational topics covered, the CMAA Conference placed the spotlight on employee well-being, mental health, culture advancement and leadership development. The accompanying business expo showcased cutting edge software and products designed to streamline operations, enhance efficiency, reduce labor, drive efficiency, provide actionable insights through more accurate data.

Resource: [CMAA](#)

02

Record Number of Young Players Have Taken To Golf

According to the National Golf Foundation, 71% of post-pandemic growth in rounds played came from golfers ages 49 and younger. In 2023, the largest group of on-course golfers was between 18 and 34 years old, accounting for 6.3 million of the 26.6 million total golfers, according to a recent article in *Golf Inc.*

Several factors are driving this shift. Dress codes have relaxed, music is now common on carts, and the rise of entertainment driven golf experiences like Topgolf has made the game more engaging and accessible. Younger players are finding golf more appealing and enjoyable than ever before. To embrace this momentum, clubs must keep an open mind when shaping policies and programming. Creating a welcoming, less intimidating atmosphere and evolving social events around golf will be key to sustaining this growth and fostering the next generation of players.

READ MORE ON YOUNG PLAYERS IN GOLF

03

Cyber Concerns: What You Need To Know

In a packed session at the CMAA World Conference, Patrick Hynds, CEO of Pulsar Security, revealed new ways hackers are targeting private clubs. “Hackers compromise a club’s system by gaining access through a third-party partner or vendor,” Hynds explained. “They focus on weaker links in the supply chain, using those vulnerabilities to deliver malware and viruses.”

For example, hackers can infiltrate club servers through POS systems, QuickBooks, financial and payroll software, inventory management systems, and more. They are becoming increasingly sophisticated and aggressive in their efforts to access club data. Hynds predicts third-party attacks will soon rival ransomware in scale and impact.

He shared several alarming insights: Supply chain attacks have evolved dramatically in recent years. These attacks are more frequent and sophisticated than ever. Large groups of cybercriminals are collaborating to maximize their reach. In 2024, 81% of companies were affected by supply chain attacks.

“You have to vet the people and vendors you work with because their security is your security,” Hynds warned. With so many devices, software platforms, and systems now connected to the internet—including thermostats, HVAC controls, irrigation systems, and alarm systems—clubs face significant cybersecurity risks. Hackers can exploit these vulnerable access points to infiltrate club servers and steal data. Hynds shared a striking example: One club’s entire system was hacked through a fish tank thermostat that was connected to the internet.

To protect sensitive club data, he strongly recommends establishing a dedicated network for payroll, member databases, and other critical systems—separate from the network used for internet-connected devices. This adds an essential layer of defense. Hynds also outlined key measures clubs should take to strengthen their cybersecurity:

- › Evaluate vendor security before partnering with them and ensure they follow strong cybersecurity protocols.
- › Regularly update software to protect against vulnerabilities and use multifactor authentication to add an extra layer of security.
- › Conduct security audits to identify potential risks and monitor network activity to detect unusual behavior.
- › Encrypt sensitive data to protect it both in transit and at rest.
- › Train employees on cybersecurity best practices and how to recognize phishing attempts.
- › Restrict access to sensitive data, limiting it only to those who need it.

With cyber threats evolving rapidly, clubs must be proactive in safeguarding their data. Strengthening cybersecurity measures today will help prevent costly and damaging breaches in the future.

Resource: Patrick Hynds, [Pulsar Security](#) | patrick@pulsarsecurity.com

04

Time To Seriously Consider Robots in the Clubhouse?

Robots are increasingly gaining traction in club environments, not solely as a response to labor shortages, but for broader operational advantages. According to Charles Kempton from Bear Robotics, clubs and hospitality venues are experiencing **improved employee engagement and operational efficiency when integrating robots.**

Key benefits include:

- **Robots are cost-effective and reliable** for difficult-to-staff roles such as food running and bussing. By automating tasks like delivering food or clearing tables, clubs can keep service staff “out front” and focused on member interactions. This alleviates stress, reduces turnover, improves staff efficiency and optimizes workflow.
- **Automation elevates member service** as food and/or drinks can be sent to member tables as soon as they are ready, which leads to increased member satisfaction and the potential of increased tips or survey ratings.
- **Robots reduce physical strain** by handling heavy loads up to 88 pounds or more, benefiting employees in roles from service staff and bartenders to kitchen staff and dishwashers. This not only reduces risk of injury but also eases physical demands of carrying heavy boxes, dishes or trays of food.

The affordability of leasing robots, typically around \$21 per day, combined with their versatility and customization (including personalized display messages and speech capabilities), makes robots a useful addition to clubs aiming to enhance member service and improve the employee experience. Clubs looking for new ways to streamline operations may want to explore the use and benefits of integrating robots.

Resource: Charles Kempton, [Bear Robotics](#) | ckempton@bearrobotics.ai

05

Governance is Hard

It's no secret that dysfunctional governance undermines many clubs and according to George Pinches of GGA Partners, it's because strategy is hard and operations are easier. When club directors become too mired in the day-to-day operations, they struggle to effectively do their jobs. “One of the most important responsibilities of the board is to look to the future and maintain the club’s relevance,” Pinches explained. Club performance and evolution are directly correlated with the sophistication and efficiency of the governance model the club adopts. “Ultimately, **the secret to club success is effective governance working in step with effective management,**” he concluded.

Resource: George Pinches, [GGA Partners](#) | george.pinches@ggapartners.com

06

Modernizing the Club Brand: Is It Time for a Refresh?

Private clubs have experienced remarkable growth over the past five years, driven by increased demand and a wave of younger members. However, as clubs adapt to evolving preferences and lifestyles, many find themselves at a crossroads—striving to remain relevant to longtime members while staying competitive in a changing market.

For clubs questioning how to maintain their relevance and clearly communicate their value, a fresh look at branding may be the answer. A club's brand is more than just a logo; it reflects its identity, culture, and standing within the industry. To ensure their brand remains aligned with member expectations and market trends, clubs must periodically assess whether a refresh is needed.

Carey Pack, board member at Frenchman's Creek Beach and Country Club in Palm Beach Gardens, FL, recently navigated the rebranding process and offers key insights for clubs considering a similar journey. He recommends starting with a thoughtful evaluation, asking critical questions such as:

- Is the club's message clear, and does it align with current and future member expectations?
- Is the club's value proposition well-defined and effectively communicated?
- Has the target audience shifted, and does the brand reflect that change?
- How does the club compare to industry trends and competitor positioning?
- Are marketing materials, digital platforms, and on-site branding consistent and up to date?
- Does the club's visual identity—including colors, fonts, and signage—align with its brand image?

Many clubs are finding the answers to these questions point to the need for a refresh. A modern, well-defined brand not only strengthens member engagement but also enhances a club's ability to attract the next generation of members in an increasingly competitive landscape.

Resource: Carey Pack, [Frenchman's Reserve](#) | carey.pack1@gmail.com.

07

Yacht Club Struggles

During a yacht club session at the World Conference on Club Management, yacht club managers shared their ideas, successes and struggles. A few points worth noting are:

- Yacht clubs are seeing less volunteerism as members have less time to volunteer for service at the club. As a result, there is a growing expectation for more paid professional staff to cover the responsibilities. However, this shift risks diminishing the traditional volunteer-driven spirit of clubs.
- More yacht clubs are managing risk by increasing deductibles and self-funding insurance, reducing the need to assess members after catastrophic events while keeping insurance coverage affordable.
- Yacht Clubs have seen dues increasing by 8-9% per year the last two years but labor has been increasing more than dues which adds financial strain.
- Educating new members early about the importance of capital contributions is essential. Clubs that proactively invest in improvements thrive, while those that resist often struggle.

Resource: [CMAA](#)

08

The Perks of Private Aviation

As private clubs continue to evolve, finding new ways to enhance the member experience remains a priority. Private aviation is one such opportunity, offering convenience and exclusivity that align with the lifestyle of many club members. While some already utilize private aviation for business or leisure, navigating jet card programs and fractional ownership can be complex. According to Aaron Lofald of Highlight Aviation, “Clubs can provide exclusive and unexpected value by offering access to aviation expertise that simplifies the process and elevates the travel experience.”

By fostering a trusted aviation partnership, clubs can save members time, reduce frustration, and extend their commitment to personalized service beyond the clubhouse. Private aviation may also present a strategic way to attract prospective members by filling a gap in travel services that align with their expectations.

Major providers like NetJets and Wheels Up offer options for private clubs, but boutique firms such as Highlight Aviation may better match the high-touch, relationship-driven service that members value. These specialized providers focus on tailored guidance, ensuring aviation solutions that align seamlessly with the club’s dedication to exclusivity and convenience.

Resource: Aaron Lofald, [Highlight Aviation](#) | aaron@highlightaviation.com

Quick Notes

Bottling Beverages An Expo Product Feature

The business expo accompanying the CMAA World Conference featured numerous products to elevate the member experience. One such unique product is a beverage packaging machine where any liquid can be poured into a clear plastic cup (with a logo of choice printed on the side) and then sealed with a can-like pop top. Any beverage from beer to specialty cocktails can be **canned for easy travel, distribution and consumption** on the course, at the pool or anywhere on club property.

Resource: Matt McLaughlin, Drinks2G.com | matt@drinks2g.com

Getting Clear An Expo Product Feature

The monotony of polishing glassware can be alleviated with an **electric, steam-er-like glass polisher that eliminates hand-to-glass contact**, reduces breakage and can polish a glass in 15 seconds or less. This portable polisher may give your service staff a boost of energy and your glassware more sparkle.

Resource: Chrissy Coughlin, [The Clear 360](https://TheClear360.com) | chrissy@theclear360.com

Future Proofing Your Club

As society's focus on sustainability increases, **future proofing your club is about prioritizing environmental, social and economic responsibility**. Lynne LaFond DeLuca of the Association of Club Catering Professionals (ACCP) encourages clubs to minimize waste, promote recycling and conserve water, pollution and energy. In addition, supporting local businesses, ensuring healthy/organic food options, eliminating single use items and donating leftover food to local shelters speaks to members who want to feel they are contributing to a healthier planet.

Resource: Lynne LaFond DeLuca, [TheACCP](https://TheACCP.com) | lynne@theaccp.com