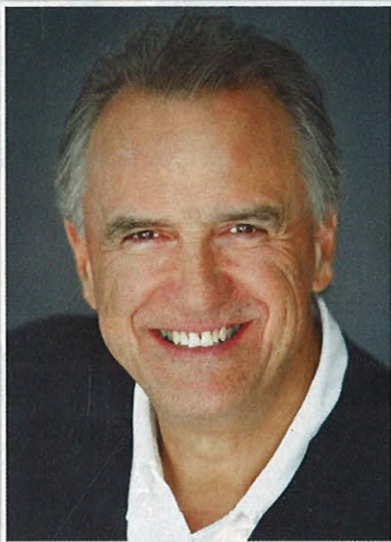


# Burden of Club Construction Should Not Disrupt Business Operations



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**B**rain surgeons need to keep their patients on life support and anesthesia during a highly invasive procedure. Similarly, health club owners must keep their facilities open for business and running smoothly during construction at their club. Renovations, expansions and remodeling are highly invasive procedures that require their own form of life support for the facility and pain management for the membership.

No club owner can afford to close club operations and refund membership dues while making significant capital investments in facility improvements. Therefore, major renovation on active club facilities must use construction staging strategies that account for the inconveniences that construction can cause, including any extra time it may take, the added cost, the inherent loss of efficiency and the upset members. Consider implementing the following strategies to offset the burden of construction:

- **Plan construction staging.** In addition to the space under renovation,

construction requires support space for storing materials, administrative functions, waste removal and equipment staging. Planning for these needs while minimizing disruption to the member experience is key to successful club renovations. For this reason, we often recommend that the club owner work with the design team to preselect a construction contractor during the conceptual planning and design phase of the project. Starting early to involve construction expertise can be beneficial for the design team in understanding how the sequencing of the renovation can be most efficiently anticipated and planned.

- **Plan construction access.** To assure member safety and security, pay careful attention to the routing of materials and labor to and from the area under construction. If possible, this routing should never cross an active member circulation path. Where such crossings are unavoidable, provide lockable access points on the construction-related route so that off-hours management of deliveries can be implemented.

Construction also will increase the volume of nonmember traffic through your doors. With this outside traffic comes the risk of criminal activity and the need for heightened security throughout the property.

- **Build temporary replacement facilities.** Efficient sequencing of construction demands that significant areas of your club be vacated for significant amounts of time. This can be particularly challenging for locker room renovations. However, creation of a temporary changing facility is one way to enable this

sequencing without inconveniencing your members too much. A temporary facility can serve as a substitute for male and female locker rooms during construction sequencing. These temporary facilities can be set up as exterior trailers with an enclosed link to the building or as a demountable installation of portable units in a racquetball court or gymnasium. Either way, the costs involved in creating the temporary accommodations will more than offset the savings realized in the faster, more efficient processing of the renovation.

- **Assure member satisfaction.** Although a vocal minority of your membership may dislike any improvement to the facility and the disruption it may bring to their routine, the vast majority of your current and potential members will be pleased to see a reinvestment in the club. Member tolerance of the inevitable construction-related disruptions can be enhanced throughout the process by thorough and pro-active communication of project specifics to the membership. Display presentation drawings in the lobby of your facility and on your website to convey to the membership a positive message of the value they will receive from the renovation.

When the negative impact of an upcoming club improvement is properly managed and the positive benefits effectively communicated to both membership and market, you will benefit from an increase in new member sales and avoid member terminations during the construction period. Interest in the project outcome will fuel desire among members to stick around and experience the transformation for themselves. ●

## BIO

Hervey Lavoie is president of Ohlson Lavoie Collaborative, an architecture, aquatic design and interior design firm. With 35 years of design experience, Lavoie has completed club design assignments in 42 states and six countries.