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## CONSTRUCTION STAGING FOR CLUB RENOVATIONS: NOT ROCKET SCIENCE, BUT A LITTLE BIT LIKE BRAIN SURGERY

By Hervey Lavoie

Brain surgeons need to keep their patients on life support and anesthesia during a highly invasive procedure on a vital body part. Similarly, club owners must keep their facilities open for business and running smoothly during construction work related to renovations, expansions and remodeling.... which are also highly invasive procedures requiring a form of life support for the facility and pain management for the membership.

No club owner can afford to close down club operations and refund membership dues on top of making significant capital investments in facility improvements. Therefore, major renovation on active club facilities must be developed with construction staging strategies that account for the extra time, the added cost and the inherent loss of efficiency as construction operations tip-toe through the tulips of dues-paying members who do not take kindly to a loss of access to facilities they are paying for. The invasion of the club environment by construction operations can be disruptive, noisy, dirty and dangerous. Fortunately, there are proactive measures which can be taken to minimize the negatives –*the temporary loss of enjoyment*- and build on the positives – *long term gains in the quality of the member experience which will result from such capital improvements*.

**Building Temporary Replacement Facilities:** Locker room renovations are most challenging for a club. Efficient sequencing of construction trades demands that significant blocks of space be vacated for significant blocks of time. Creation of a temporary changing facility is one way to accomplish this. A temporary facility can serve, in a two step sequence, as a substitute for male and female locker rooms during the construction shutdown. We have seen such temporary facilities 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 were more than offset by the savings realized in faster, more efficient processing of the main renovation work.

**Planning Construction Staging:** In addition to the space under renovation, construction activities require support space for materials storage, administrative functions, waste removal and equipment staging. Planning for these needs, while minimizing disruption to the member experience, is the 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. This early involvement of construction expertise can provide a strong assist for the design team in understanding how the sequencing of the renovation work can be most

efficiently anticipated and planned for. The savings thus realized more than offset the potential benefits of a competitive bid process which adds both time and risk of change order driven cost increases to the all-in project costs.

**Planning Construction access:** In order to assure member safety and security throughout the duration of construction, careful attention must be paid 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 it is necessary to provide lockable access points on the construction related route so that off-hours management of deliveries can be implemented. Construction activities will increase the volume of non-member traffic through your doors. With this “outsider” traffic comes the risk of criminal activity and the need for heightened security throughout the property.

**Assuring Member Satisfaction:** While there will always be a vocal minority of your membership who will dislike any improvement and long for the “way it used to be”, the vast majority of your current members and your pool of potential members will be really pleased to see a reinvestment in the club. This positive resonance is an important contributor to member tolerance of the inevitable construction-related disruptions to their enjoyment and can be enhanced, from start to finish, by thorough and pro-active communication of project specifics to the membership. This means that drawings displayed in the lobby and posted on your website are just as important as those needed to obtain building permits and secure sub-contractor bids. These presentation drawings must convey to the membership a positive message of value to be received.

When the negative impact of an upcoming club improvement is properly managed and the positive benefits effectively communicated to both membership and market, we have seen our clients benefit from both an increase in new member sales and a decrease in member terminations during the construction period, as interest in the project outcome fuels desire among members to stick around and experience the transformation for themselves.