



BILL BOOTHE

Survey Says!!

FAMOUS WORDS FROM RICHARD DAWSON (AND MANY OTHER HOSTS OVER THE YEARS) – AS FAMILY FEUD HAS OFFERED TV VIEWERS MORE THAN 35 YEARS OF SURVEY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS IN A COMPETITIVE GAME FORMAT.

Now comes the National Club Association (NCA) and the Hospitality Financial & Technology Professionals Association (HFTP) with an important survey focused on private club technology.

Organized by the NCA/HFTP Technology Task Force, this comprehensive survey was issued in April 2011 to more than 1,500 private clubs. Over 200 responses were received, with the results published in the fall of that same year (visit www.national-club.org or www.hftp.org to obtain the full survey results.)

While the survey produced a lengthy list of interesting – and sometimes surprising results, the key finding was this: The top technology priority for private clubs is **Electronic Communications**. Respondents defined electronic communications to include:

- Club websites
- Email
- Social networking
- Text messaging

These results are a far cry from surveys performed some years ago, which put club management software, POS and networking issues at the forefront. Today's focus is clearly on member communications – using technology to broaden and improve club-to-member and member-to-member interactions.

For example, here are a few key findings regarding club websites:

- 98 percent of responding clubs have a website.
- 72 percent analyze their website traffic by monitoring total page hits and most popular pages.
- 37 percent update their website content on a daily basis.
- 37 percent employ a full-time site administrator.

This data clearly indicates a significant commitment from private clubs to increasing the breadth and depth of electronic communications with members. I was especially taken by the data related to website administration.

More than a third of responding clubs update content on their website *every day!* And a third employ a *full-time* site

administrator to keep their content fresh and timely. Obviously these clubs have discovered the value of a well managed website – and are deploying resources to make sure their online presence is smart and engaging for the members.

The survey also provided data on member usage of their club websites:

- 91 percent of the websites provide an online calendar of events.
- 75 percent offer online access to member billing statements.
- 37 percent take online event reservations.
- 24 percent offer an online bill pay option.

Clubs are aggressively moving to the web for member services that have traditionally been provided in printed form, by phone or face-to-face. The immediacy of these services is attractive to a growing segment of private club members, and is reflective of the population at large as technology becomes intertwined with most every function of our daily lives.

SURVEY SAYS!!

In reviewing these and other results from the survey, it occurred to me that those responding to the survey may be a bit ahead of the technology curve as compared to the entire population of private clubs.

First, the survey went to HFTP member clubs. My experience in the industry has shown that, on the whole, clubs that have one or more staff as members in HFTP tend to be more advanced technologically than those who do not.

Secondly, it's a well-known fact that survey respondents are often those who are most interested in the survey topic. So the specific results (percentages) may not be representative of the club population as a whole.

However, there should be no question that these survey results are indicative of a growing trend in private clubs: the expansion of electronic communications with and among members. **BR**

Bill Boothe is president of The Boothe Group, LLC, an independent consulting firm providing a wide range of technology consulting services. During his 20-plus years in the club industry Bill has assisted more than 300 private clubs with the planning, evaluation, selection and implementation of computer technology in all facets of their operations. He is also a founding member of the NCA/HFTP Technology Task Force. Bill can be reached at bboothe@BootheGroup.com and at (561) 281-0459.