

High-tech success stories



From scheduling apps to systems that provide instant feedback, here are some of the latest products that help smooth private club operations. **By Katie Thisdell**

James Crocitto, CCM, can't imagine going back to handwritten schedules for his staff at Dalton Golf & Country Club.

That's what he had been using until the start of this year. The clubhouse manager found nothing wrong with the handwritten system until he discovered an application that made the weekly task infinitely easier.

"It's a pretty nifty piece," Crocitto said about Homebase's free employee-scheduling software. It's not designed specifically for clubs. It's used by many service-based industries, from restaurants such as The Melting Pot to retailers such as The UPS Store, businesses such as iFly Indoor Skydiving, and even the YMCA.

"It makes everything easier," Crocitto said. "You can see your weekly hours, and you don't have to manually add up hours. It's easy for employees to request time off, and you're not handling any papers. It keeps it all

documented for you. It just makes everything easier."

New technology and software products, developed both within and outside the club industry, are helping to make managers' jobs easier. That includes everything from improving communication with staff to better serving members and guests.

At the Dalton, Ga., club, Crocitto uses Homebase to set weekly schedules for 35 front-of-the-house staff members. Different positions are color-coded, and the web-based program calculates how many staffing hours are being used each week. If it exceeds a set level, the manager receives an alert.

On the employee side, users can indicate when they're unavailable (pending manager approval) and coworkers can easily see schedules and communicate with each other to trade shifts.

"I'm really excited about it because it makes it really simple to see who's

supposed to be here and who's not," Crocitto said. The club uses a separate system for its time clock and payroll needs.

There are numerous similar programs available for scheduling and timekeeping.

Kirtland Country Club in Willoughby, Ohio, uses ADP for payroll and timekeeping, but it uses another free app, When I Work, for scheduling.

"It's very user-friendly on both ends for servers and staff," said Amanda Tidwell, the club's catering manager. "It's as easy as clicking and dragging things over. The schedule takes maybe 30 minutes to do."

Managers who supervise servers, locker room attendants and lifeguards are using the system.

Just as with Homebase, employees enter their availability into the system and submit requests for time off. The app shares all employees' schedules and allows staff to communicate with



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each other via the app, rather than by phone, text or email.

“The staff really likes having it at their fingertips and being able to see when they’re working,” Tidwell said.

ADP makes clocking in simple for Kirtland employees. When they’re within a certain radius of one of the club’s computers, they can use the app to clock in or out.

Many clubs also offer club-specific apps for their members. Wianno Club in Osterville, Mass., has its own app obtained through Clubessential. After an attempt to install beacon-controlled software at the club failed because of poor cell reception in the area, Wianno Club enabled push notifications

through its existing app.

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be informed.”

Wianno Club can target specific groups of members and send out notifications related to all sorts of things – food and beverage offerings, golf course updates, alerts about weather at the beach, and details about upcoming events.

Clubs are also using new technology to get feedback from members. After all, the more they know about what their members think about service, the more they can improve operations.

For example, The Country Club at

DC Ranch in Scottsdale, Ariz., uses the Humm system to track employee performance and to get immediate input from members.

Diners are presented with a small mobile device alongside their check after meals. As they pay, they can add a brief comment. The food and beverage management team reviews results weekly to reward employees who have received positive comments and to address any issues that arise.

“In the past, we had struggled at times with our food and beverage offering consistency. This has helped to improve the operation while also holding our staff members accountable,” said General Manager Kyle Draper, CCM. “We get instant feedback that is not a burden on the member to fill out

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“We get instant feedback that is not a burden on the member to fill out a time-consuming or lengthy survey.”

— Kyle Draper, CCM, general manager of The Country Club at DC Ranch



a time-consuming or lengthy survey. It also shows the members that we care about the experience that they get at our club.”

The club has used the Humm system since 2014 at a cost of \$350 per month. During that time, the level of service at the club has increased, which has resulted in higher a la carte food and beverage sales, Draper said.

A similar product designed specifically for clubs is MemberInsight, from a sister company of Jonas Club Software. The MemberInsight tool attempts to simplify the survey process.

It is based on just one question: “What is the likelihood you would recommend ‘X’ to someone you know?” Clubs set parameters for who will receive the survey, which survey

they will receive and how often. It is sent via email to selected members, who are asked to respond to the question with a rating of between 1 and 10.

“It’s so easy to take, to quickly pick a number,” said Diane Willi, communications director at Carmel Country Club.

The Charlotte, N.C., club has been using MemberInsight for three months, beginning with surveys for the overall club and for the pool. Willi plans to expand its use with surveys of other departments this fall.

Every day, she assigns staff to follow up with any member who left a rating below 6. Willi is able to see when that contact has been completed and learn

the outcome.

“The reaching out, that’s the coolest part of it,” Willi said. So far, 78 percent of members who have responded

have given the club a 9 or a 10. Many of the lower scores are not about being unhappy with the club, but rather with worries about it getting too big. She plans to take common concerns such as this one to the membership.

The club has done various types of surveys in the past, including annually and after each visit. For people who might visit the club to play golf five days a week, daily surveys can be annoying. The MemberInsight product allows clubs to control the frequency of surveys to avoid that possibility.

An advertisement for ForeTees Club Software. At the top, the text "GOLF IS FUN, SO IS OUR APP!" is written in a white, sans-serif font against a light blue sky background. Below the text, two cartoon men are standing on a green golf course. The man on the left is wearing a grey cap, glasses, a white shirt, and blue pants. The man on the right is wearing a white shirt and blue pants. Between them is a red golf cart with a black roof and a golf bag on the back. Musical notes are floating around the cart. At the bottom of the advertisement, there are three logos: the Apple App Store logo on the left, the ForeTees logo in the center (a stylized "FT" in a circle), and the Google Play logo on the right. The text "ForeTees CLUB SOFTWARE MADE SIMPLE" is positioned to the right of the ForeTees logo.