



Billy Casper Golf

The New Face of Private Clubs

“Not your Papa’s Country Club”

It’s 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, and the group text messages are just getting started:

“Anyone going to Kids’ Night tonight?” asks Lara, a lawyer. Her husband is taking night classes for grad school, so she will be flying solo with her two kids.

“Chris, Parker and I will be there ... unless this baby comes early!” adds Lindsey, a teacher. She and her growing family are in.

“Tom has to work late, but my crew and I will be there. Can’t wait to see you all there!” That’s Mandy, an orthopedic doctor. She and her three kids will be at dinner.

“We’re in.” That’s Elaine. She, Dave and their two little ones will join us.

I quickly respond that Shawn, Sammy, Benny and I will be there. The work day is crazy, as per usual, and I make it to daycare for pick up around 5:30 p.m. We arrive at dinner to find our huge group has already pushed together the usual tables. Tonight we have eight adults at the table; behind us are booths filled with our 10 children, ages seven months to seven years. Luckily, happy hour wine prices are still available, so we order our drinks first and then food for the kids. Nearby a craft table is set up where a sweet woman entertains our wound-up kiddos. The staff happily puts Wild Kratts (a household favorite) on the TV and the weekly chaos ensues. There’s running, screaming, milk-spilling, and, inevitably, some crying.

We are not at Silver Diner. We are at our Country Club. We are members.

It’s almost hard to call it a country club, but it is. Growing up, my stepfather was a member at an elite club. We never really went; it was more than 20 miles away and mostly just a place where he played weekend mornings and corporate golf. My mom went once or twice a year for a member-guest social event. She wouldn’t know anyone and felt fairly uncomfortable. Rarely, our family would dress up and go have a quiet dinner just to spend our food minimum.

Times have indeed changed; my stepfather is no longer the target member. Believe it or not, I am. Why? Private clubs have suffered to succeed in today’s economy and family dynamics have shifted with a new generation. Given this shift, and my recent entrée into a private club, I decided to use my family as a case study. In doing so, I landed on three points that speak to the new (and improved) private club member



1. It's not all about [traditional] golf

a. This is not an ROI play, and we're not just talking about a Saturday morning men's group. Give us 9-hole leagues and events, one-day member guests, etc. My husband likely won't play enough rounds to actually "break even," so don't make me do the math. (Hint – add additional Value to my experience!)

b. It's about "The 4 C's"

i. **Community** – An old adage, but we need to feel like we belong. Before we joined, the first thing I asked my friends who were members was, "is it snobby or pretentious?" I don't want to raise bratty kids. We want to feel welcome and like the people around us. Give us ways – other than golf – to be social. (Programming for the whole family – I will get to that in a minute)

ii. **Convenience** – Young couples simply don't have time. We already feel guilty about both parents working and putting our kids in daycare. Make it easy on us.

1. We would love to have our friends over for dinner, but that means cleaning the house and folding the laundry. Here, we can all be together and no one has to host ... or clean.

2. Can golf be quick when needed? Are there fun ways to meet other people? Can we work on our game if that's all we have time for?

3. What other fitness/recreation options can be provided? If we can play golf, eat, socialize, exercise, entertain and grab a drink all in one place where our kids are welcome, it's a win-win..

iii. **Comfort** – We're not at our house, but we don't want to feel like we're at a museum either. Modern and casual works; and they certainly aren't ripped so let me wear my jeans. And flip flops please. We will still wear collared shirts on the course.

iv. **Communication** – Gone are the days of monthly printed newsletters. Email me, text me, put it on Facebook and make it relevant. Make it about me and my kids. That's what I care about. That's what matters.

2. Women rule ... or at the very least are created equal (Happy Wife, Happy Life!)

a. Buying decisions are shared.

b. Salary equality is more common.

c. We are working more and corporate golf applies, too.

d. Shared parenting means we both need an outlet.

3. Kids should be seen and heard

a. I mentioned the guilt that all dual working parents feel. We know daycare is great for socialization, but we don't want to spend our time in places where our kids are shunned, shushed or sent to a different part of the building. Moms and dads want to be with them.

b. Programs beyond the aforementioned "Kids' Night" are crucial. The nicer you are to our kids,



the more often we will come, and the more we will eat and drink. Host the popular “Daddy Daughter” “Donuts with Dad,” and include mom too with events like “Mommy and Me Princess Tea,” or “Mommy and Me Pirates and Pizza.” Holiday celebrations are obvious; “Easter Bunny” and “Santa Brunch” go a long way in getting me to overpay for food, fun and a chance to get an adorable photo posted to social media. (Which, by the way, helps you too!)

In review, maybe it’s the kids who hold the true buying power!

Fast forward to next Wednesday when I pick up my boys from daycare. I am running late from a long meeting, quickly hang up a work call and text Shawn to meet me at the club. Everyone’s already there and I definitely need a glass of wine. After the boys are buckled in, I tell my three-year-old that we are going to the club:

“Are my friends coming mommy?” he asks. Yep, mine too, I thought smiling.

“Papa’s club or my club?” Your club, little buddy.

Yes, this is definitely not your papa’s country club.



Meet Our Operations Buff
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