

Club Director

SPRING 2024

PERSPECTIVES FOR LEADING PRIVATE CLUBS

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Staff Satisfaction

*Keeping Employees
for the Long Term*

22 COMMUNICATIONS | Talking to the Next Generation

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Cover: Baltimore Country Club bartenders Giovanni (left) and Danny (right) and Assistant Director of Food & Beverage Brittany (middle).

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Crafting a Distinctive

By Raed Jumean

Living, breathing entities nestled within communities: We absolutely love clubs for all the dynamism they bring to public life.

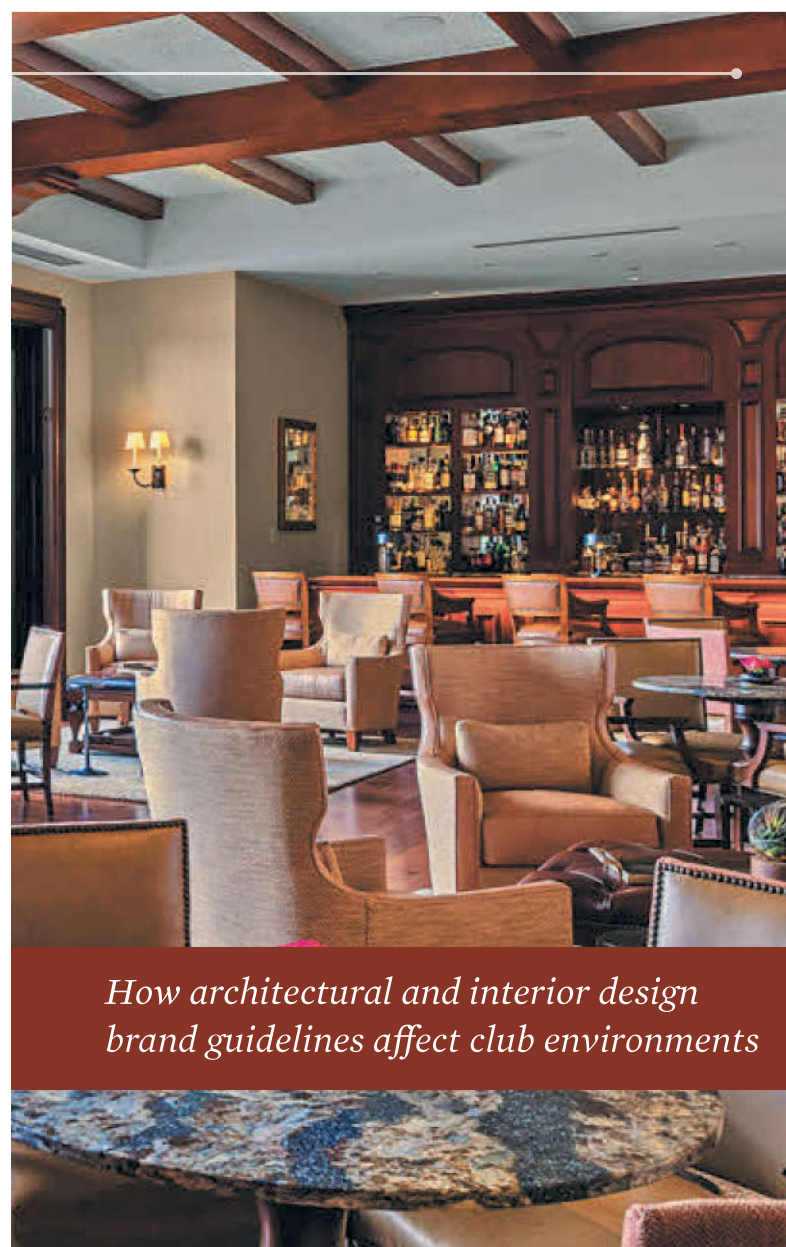
A club is a unique expression of its location that should have a distinct and individual architecture and design. For members, it holds the promise of daily adventures, luxury, tranquility, connections, scenery, sanctuary, affairs of the heart, or sports—a unique blend of possibilities hard to find elsewhere, encapsulating numerous aspects of life and adventure.

As customer expectations continue to evolve and increase competition, today's challenge for clubs is to offer this life and adventure at the same time as having soul. We've all been to hotels, clubs or restaurants

without one. Whether they failed to align with our finest principles or simply fell short of our expectations for an ideal getaway, these places leave us disappointed.

A soul is defined as something intangible, not physical, suggesting a connection to a greater spirit. Hence, the notion of a club having a soul implies an existence beyond its physical walls; a quality we can refer to as "soulfulness."

So, what amounts to soulfulness within hospitality establishments?



How architectural and interior design brand guidelines affect club environments



Identity

Finding Soulfulness

As architects and designers, we may have undertaken projects that, despite our best efforts, fell short of capturing this elusive quality. Not necessarily through lack of effort, to be fair, as the design process is integral to securing such an outcome. Issues may range from crowded design decision-making processes to authoritative directives lacking depth, resulting in crippled experiences and compromises that fail to capture the imagination or the magic of a setting.

It is important to understand the essence behind a brand, having carried out vital research into the club, its history, its values and what it means to people and the community. For design to have a major impact, it has to be involved at a strategic level rather than as an afterthought or in any manner that is superficial or post-creation.

With such failings, clubs are vulnerable to losing their identity according to the preferences of individuals who happen to be in a position of influence. Clubs are likely to experience regular personnel changes, so guidelines need to be used robustly if a brand's identity is to remain intact.

From Great Designs to Great Brands

Imagine design as your perfect dance partner; graceful, tailored, and seamlessly integrated with lush surroundings, you only need to fall into step to produce the best results. Whether the club is a grand estate or a cozy retreat, the goal is to make it feel like an inherent part of the landscape. A place that belongs.

Think of a club as a friendly neighbor: warm, inviting and full of character. The design plays a crucial role in ensuring any club will match such a vision. It's essential for fashioning an atmosphere that's not just about golf or tennis, for example, but about the entire experience and spatial transitions.

Whereas architectural and interior designers take on the roles of artists, painting a picture to capture the essence of a club, the club's brand guidelines serve as its signature style, guiding the designers to create spaces aligned with the feelings members seek



group of people and extends beyond superficial aesthetics.

By investing in comprehensive architectural and interior design brand guidelines, clubs make a strategic investment in their long-term success, ensuring that they remain appealing and relevant throughout changing trends. Indeed, a well-designed space that reflects the brand's ethos can withstand the test of time, remaining relevant and appealing to evolving audiences.

Shrewd design guidelines provide the secret ingredient that will keep members coming back. Crucially, they should be robust enough to protect the soul of the club from random design decisions that could prove harmful, or even from the scenario of unqualified designers getting involved. Hence, guidelines act as guardians of the club's essence, ensuring that each decision aligns with the intended experience and character.

when stepping onto the course or relaxing in the clubhouse.

We all know that great design has a critical role to play in building a great brand. But how do we go about making this happen? The role of branding in shaping and communicating the soul of a private club establishment is pivotal for creating a distinctive and memorable experience.

Many commonly associate the term "branding" with visual aspects: the logo, the overall aesthetic appeal, etc. Even so, this visual representation is merely the tip of the iceberg. Beneath the surface lies a complex network of assorted elements, all combining to collectively constitute the club's brand. The possession of a logo, visual qualities and colors alone does not suffice for establishing the necessary connections with members. These steps are just the beginning.

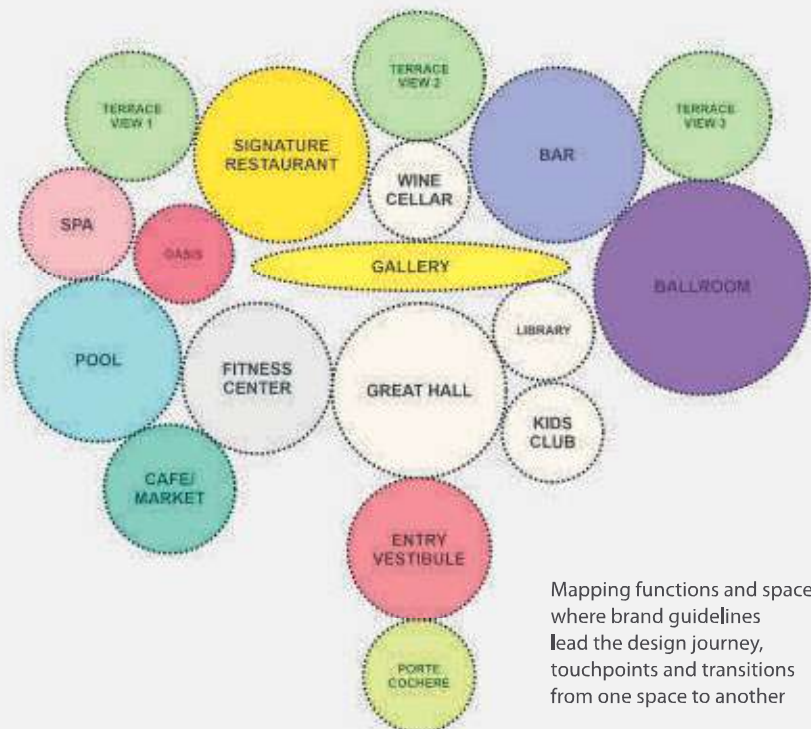
Inseparable.

Robert Brunner, author of "Do You Matter: How Great Design Will Make People Love Your Company," says, "A brand is not your logo or ID system. It is a gut feeling people have about you. When two or more people have the same feeling, you have a brand."

Defining a club's brand guidelines involves distilling the essence of what

will make it uniquely attractive to a specific demographic when compared to its competitors. While this concept may seem complex, especially for local clubs, it essentially revolves around creating an identity that resonates with a particular

Figure 1 Conceptual Space Planning for a Clubhouse



Mapping functions and spaces, where brand guidelines lead the design journey, touchpoints and transitions from one space to another



Figure 1 represents an example of how brand guidelines emerge in parallel with architectural space planning.

Despite the complexity and multifaceted task in designing such spaces that go beyond mere aesthetics, professional strategic designers and planners play a pivotal role in ensuring that a club not only stands out visually, but also cultivates a distinct and cohesive identity.

While architects and interior designers contribute significantly to shaping the overall atmosphere and ambiance, brand guidelines serve as guiding principles directing the creation of spaces that not only cater to the aesthetic but also evoke specific emotions. Whether aiming for high-energy excitement or fostering an atmosphere of relaxed sophistication, your brand guidelines ensure the design aligns seamlessly with the intended experience.

This dynamic interplay between architecture, interior design and brand guidelines holds the power to form profound

emotional connections. Hence, a club possessing a well-defined identity and thoughtfully designed space has the





potential to evoke a profound sense of belonging and attachment, thereby fortifying the bond between the brand and its community—thus, brand loyalty.

The presence of an experienced design firm crafting brand guidelines for clients offers several significant advantages:

- Seamless integration of design and brand identity. Architects and interior designers comprehend the physical spaces and aesthetics of a setting on an intimate level. When working on brand guidelines, design elements can seamlessly be integrated into the overall brand identity, ensuring consistency and harmony between the physical space and the brand image.
- Enhanced user experience, human-centered approach. Organizations that are vibrant and purpose-driven will ultimately produce more meaningful experiences. A focus on how the brand translates into the user experience within physical spaces allows design choices to align with the intended emotional response and the overall atmosphere. This combines with a human-centered

approach prioritizing the needs, preferences, behaviors and well-being of both members and staff throughout the design process, resulting in spaces that

resonate with all involved. Overall, the goal is to create environments that not only fulfill functional requirements but also enhance the overall human experience—building a deeper connection with members and fostering a sense of belonging within the defined demographic.

- Consistency across physical spaces. Across the project's various physical spaces, architects and interior designers can address the challenges of maintaining consistency. This includes interiors, exteriors, landscaping, and other architectural elements, ensuring a cohesive and unified brand experience.
- Informed material and finish selection. Applicable materials and finishes are the cornerstone of any design professional's expertise. Their direction will ensure that recommended materials align with a brand's image, bringing out the desired aesthetic via the creation of a cohesive and intentional





design language. The stage is then set for a delightful backdrop, enhancing the overall experience of the club's amenities and premium services. Art and décor play a crucial role in shaping visual encounters, allowing members to appreciate carefully selected materials and colors that, ultimately, contribute to an atmosphere reflecting the club's character. Complementing the visuals, the luxurious feel of carefully

chosen fabrics, finishes and furniture is also vital for adding a touch of comfort and sophistication to the club's ambiance. Subdued lighting is an excellent addition to any relaxed and inviting atmosphere, ideal for helping members savor those leisurely moments, whether for casual gatherings or more intimate experiences. The best club designs will foster a feeling of exclusivity that visitors will cherish and wish to return to:



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- **Flexibility and adaptability.** The best architects and interior designers are familiar with the evolving nature of design trends, localization, and user preferences. Their involvement remains versatile, ensuring that brand guidelines are not static but can adapt to changing design landscapes and remain relevant over time.
- **Documentation.** Design professionals contribute to creating comprehensive brand guideline documents covering the complete range of architectural principles, interior design guidelines, and other relevant details that will make up the club's DNA. This documentation will serve as a valuable resource for leadership and all stakeholders for years to come.
- **Unified vision.** The collaborative nature of architectural and interior design strategies is essential for creating brand guidelines that, ultimately, will reflect a unified vision for the entire project. This coherence between the physical environment and brand identity is vital for strengthening the brand's overall impact and effectiveness.

In a nutshell, establishing a unique identity and ensuring consistency are imperative. Brand guidelines serve as the guiding principles defining a club's identity, values and service levels:

- **Enhanced experience.** Consistency in standards directly translates to an enhanced member experience. When members anticipate what to expect, they feel more comfortable and satisfied.
- **Operational efficiency.** A robust and effective operational performance will provide a clear roadmap for staff training and service. When employees understand and adhere to these standards, smoother operations will result, and the likelihood of errors will be reduced.

- **Members' trust and loyalty.** Members who have positive experiences are more likely to remain with the club and recommend it to others. A trust-building process nurtures loyalty, therefore, which is also a significant revenue driver.
- **Market edge.** Clubs with well-defined brand standards often have a competitive edge. Indeed, members are more likely to choose a recognized and reputable brand over a confused one. Such an advantage can lead to higher memberships and premium pricing.

The world is viewed through the lens of our experiences, which may differ greatly from one person to another. Hence, it should always be pertinent to ask the question: To what extent does your club support the universality of experience? Nevertheless, challenges will always be present in pursuing this goal. You may be forgiven for thinking that the creation of architecture and interior design brand guidelines will require constant renovating to meet new standards or tastes, but the contrary might actually be true. With the fast-paced nature of design trends in the world today, it should always be important to avoid overly complicated decisions. A simple, well-thought-through, authentic approach from the outside in is always the best!

Instead of looking to cover every base, just look for that trigger. Every movement needs a trigger to activate a fresh and novel experience that could soon become contagious! 



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