



## SELECTING A NEW CATERING MANAGER

Ray Burniston sets out the procedures for selecting a new catering manager, whether it be a franchise or individual employee.

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*Most clubs will go through problems with their catering service. You as the secretary will need to make sure if you have to replace the current staff you take every possible step to make a successful appointment. There are several ways of providing a catering service in a golf club and you are recommended to read GCMA Library Document 2070 – Good Management Guidelines - before making any decisions.*

This particular article is going to look at the appointment of a self-employed caterer often referred to as a Franchise Caterer. In this case the club will provide the kitchen and equipment and the caterer will supply a service according to their service agreement. In these cases they usually provide and pay for the staff but be wary of the situation when the caterer leaves as legislation on the existing staff has changed and the club will be responsible for seeing they are either employed by the new caterer or compensated for loss of their job.

The time of change could be a good moment to have a review of the kitchen area and equipment to see if the club needs to carry out any major or minor work. If you are likely to have a period of several weeks between the current caterer departing and a new one taking over then it is better to have the disruption before they arrive. It could be a good starting point for the new incumbents to start with new equipment and the kitchen area freshly decorated.

At the same time remember the accommodation, if it is provided by the club. Thoroughly check this and repair and decorate if required. This goes a long way to get the newcomers in a good frame of mind.

The first thing the committee or proprietor will need to do is to assess the current catering operation and spotlight any weak areas so that these can be put right with any new incumbent. If the club has had a succession of caterers during the past years then it is probably a good thing to conduct some sort of survey within the membership to see what is their general requirement. It is pointless telling prospective caterers that you think the membership will support them if the record in the past suggests otherwise.

Support is particularly important in the financial part. Does the club currently pay any retainer or better still, does the caterer pay a fee to the club? It is no good demanding a fee if the current caterer is leaving because of poor returns. Be careful in subsidising the catering because this

usually becomes a bottomless pit and each year the subsidy demanded gets more. Try to obtain turnover figures and profit and loss from your previous caterer. Remember if the turnover is over the current figure set by Customs & Excise, they will have to register for VAT. Time spent by you on these matters will go along way to determining the success or failure of the operation.

If you engage either an independent (franchise) caterer or even a husband & wife try to have some means of monitoring the turnover of the operation so that you can be in a position to advise both them and your committee in the future. Most members assume the caterer makes large profits but in many cases the returns against the hours worked is low.

You will need to draw up a Job Specification (JS) and go through all the points with the House Committee or Board. Having agreed this you will need to appoint a sub-committee to make the appointment. It is better outside of any House Committee and if necessary do not hesitate to include any member who may have a good working knowledge of catering within the club. The usual mistake made is to include the Ladies' Captain because being a female and cooking for her family she will know all about catering. There is no connection between catering for a golf club with varying numbers and requirements to providing for a family of four or five. Therefore try to get on your sub-committee persons with either a commercial catering or business background. You will have to include the Captain, Chairman, House Chairman and possibly the Vice Captain, with perhaps one other who may have some experience.

Having sorted out the JS and agreed a Personal Specification (PS) you will need to advertise. Your JS and PS may include whether you are looking for a husband and wife team or an individual. It is best to be flexible on this than specify one or the other at this stage.

The drafting of the advertisement is very important and you should spend some time on agreeing a suitable draft. The suggested places to advertise will depend on several factors; firstly if you have accommodation then you can advertise nationally in publications such as the Golf Weekly and Hotel & Caterer. If you have no accommodation then you will probably be best to advertise in your local papers. Secondly the size of the operation will decide how much you spend on advertising. In this instance it is best to ask them to just send brief details and you send them an application to fill in.

Once the replies start coming in you will need to spend some time sorting them through and the first interviews are best done by yourself and perhaps one other person because often you will find several do not turn up for their interview wasting the time of both you and the committee. Send out to those invited for an interview the JS and details of the Club. You will often find only a very small number of replies for a Caterer, in contrast with a considerable number of replies for a Secretary, Professional or Course Manager appointments. It is likely you may have to keep to just one interview with the sub-committee of hopefully two or three persons. Arrange for someone to take the applicants on a tour of the clubhouse and accommodation, if any, and also to meet any of the existing staff. In most cases they will have to take on and work with the staff so you can get some idea of the first impression from them.

You will need to spend sometime drawing up suitable questions for each committee member to ask and this is where if you have a person with experience in catering on the committee it can be helpful. If your club has a large catering operation then you must make sure that the person taking over has the financial support to carry this out. It will be necessary to ask for a bank reference as well as personal references. You will need to know that they can handle staff as well as cater for large numbers.

As for all interviews of this importance allow plenty of time and be prepared to follow up their previous posts, especially golf clubs, as you can save yourself a lot of time and trouble this way.

When you have satisfied all these items as far as possible, then you will be in a position to offer the post to one of the applicants. The contract for services needs to be carefully drafted out and checked by the Club Solicitor along with any licence to use the accommodation. Inform the other applicants of the appointment and it is best to keep them on file until the newcomers have taken residence.

Make sure you inform the members of the changeover and see that they have everything in place before starting. The first impressions of a new club caterer can be the difference between getting the support of the members or not. Always be careful if the caterers want to do meals on say a Friday/Saturday evening, see that the staff can cope and they have sufficient expertise to do this. Bad news travels round a club like lightening and one bad meal to a member will be common knowledge in the clubhouse by noon the following day.

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