



## **A Platinum Club**

What makes a club Platinum?

The characteristics of America's 235 most highly admired private clubs that distinguish them from 6,000 others.

### **1. A History of Excellence**

The top private clubs have been around for a long time. Many were founded over a century ago. Some, from their inception, and many others through accumulated passage of time, have been recognized by all who know them as being domiciles of excellence. Whether this heritage is perpetuated in a formal mission statement, membership admission practices, or informally passed along within its membership and staff, it is deeply imbued in the fortunate who belong or work there. The membership and staff alike consider the perpetuation of this history of excellence as a mission.

### **2. Quality of Membership**

No club can be great without having great members. This means a membership that represents the best qualities of those communities in which the club exists. Acceptance and compatibility transcend all discriminating issues. Members like each other and the staff that serves them. They are knowledgeable about matters that affect the club and treat the facilities as though they were their own – which, in a real sense, they are. Great members care so much about their club that they work hard to attract prospective new members who are equally great.

### **3. Condition of Facilities**

A celebrated golf course or magnificent clubhouse by themselves do not make a club great. Rather it is the total array of facilities, their general excellence and fulfillment of member needs in every function and activity. These clubs invest on a regular and planned basis in the maintenance, supervision, and replacement of

the grounds, plant, and equipment. They ensure that each piece of equipment, all furnishings, and every facility is well maintained. They do not have to be brand new.

#### **4. Caliber of Professional Staff**

Many is the club with rich heritage and renowned amenities that does not qualify as a great club. Without a staff of equally high quality, such a club is missing on its most important cylinders. This excellence must be as well exhibited by the newest dishwasher or waiter as it is by the club's longest tenured staff. The club will be recognized in its community as a good place to work, where the pay, benefits, work environment, and job security are attested to as excellent year after year. Ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen is a maxim of the finest clubs.

#### **5. Enlightened and Consistent Governance**

Great clubs are led by presidents, owners, and directors who understand that their roles are strategic and policy setting. It is the professional staff that carries out the policies and day-to-day operations. Boards of this caliber work hard at ensuring that there is continuity of effort and direction, term after term. The nominating committee or owner takes their work seriously, ensuring that the best qualified members serve on the board – and that the board itself is broadly representative of the club membership as a whole.

#### **6. Adaptable to Changing Times**

As social institutions, clubs themselves undergo change – gradual as that will be. A Club that resists this, sometimes because of restrictive by-laws or the resistance of elements on the board or in the membership, will slowly wither and eventually perish as members join more vital clubs or quit. Great clubs work at anticipating their members' – and prospective new members' – needs and interests. Such clubs have a mission statement that says who they are and a strategic plan that says where they want to be. Great clubs view this plan not simply as a document to put on the shelf and refer to periodically but as a road map that they are now moving along.

#### **7. Member Devotion to their Club's Distinctive Culture**

Great clubs celebrate their heritage and religiously observe their time-honored traditions. They know that the member/guest golf event is always the third weekend in June, that the general manager gets dunked at the year-end pool party, and that all the ladies at the annual president's ball must be wearing yellow rose corsages. There is pride and togetherness in observing traditions and practices handed down through generations of members – oftentimes the older

and more non-sensical they seem, the better. There is a true cult of culture in great clubs and it is stringently observed.

## **8. Spirit of Generosity in the Community**

Many of America's premier private clubs were founded around a spirit of giving to its community or the nation. This is particularly true of great clubs like the Union League Club of Chicago and the Union League of Philadelphia. Others have developed their philanthropic and participatory relationships with cause and community through the caring nature of members and over the passage of time. Their motivations for acts of generosity are not done to generate overt publicity for themselves but in the spirit of genuine care – with as little publicity as possible.

## **9. Prudent Fiscal Management**

No institution of any kind can go through decades and generations without from time to time encountering serious financial challenges. Many a great club barely survived the Great Depression or the dues deductibility of the 1980's. Great clubs have had the wisdom to plan well and invest well. Initiation fees go into a capital, not operating fund. Dues and other revenues are set to fund operations, improvements, and depreciation, so that member services and facilities are maintained at an affordable and exceptional level. Their boards understand the need for regular dues increases and occasional assessments.

## **10. Universal Acknowledgement of Greatness**

Great clubs are widely known as such by the strata of American society that frequent private clubs and are well traveled. They tout them universally. This perception extends well beyond a club's community or the venue (i.e., a great golf course, etc.) for which it is best known. From time to time a great club will have a poor leader or board – or even a bad apple or two in the membership – but the truly great clubs are like great families. They possess the wisdom to progress, cope, and have fun being together. The future for any great club is what it always has been: The ability to attract and retain the greatest new members it possibly can.

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The Platinum Clubs of America are the 235 most highly regarded private clubs in the United States as voted by the Club Managers and Board Presidents from more than 6,000 private clubs across the country. Every three years, the Platinum Clubs of America surveys every club belonging to the Club Managers Association of America (CMAA) and asks them to complete two nominating forms: one from the Club Manager and the other from the club Board President or club Owner. All of the respondents are asked to consider five critical

categories: Quality of Membership, Tradition and Culture, Amenities, Governance and Quality of Management and Staff. The respondents are also asked to rank the top clubs within the respective geographic region and nationwide. A club receiving a nomination as one of the top clubs nationwide is awarded double the points of a purely regional vote.

Sibbald sums up receiving the award best when he recently said that, "Earning the recognition as a Platinum Club is notable for two main reasons: every club wants to believe that his or her club is the best in the area in which they reside and more importantly new members are always attracted to the best clubs." Sibbald continued in saying that "the Platinum Club of America program is important in identifying the premier clubs as a means of benchmarking and thereby providing a model to emulate for aspiring clubs."