

**Gregg Patterson, General Manager
The Beach Club**

We Feel Your Pain

You're the general manager, a great performer, respected by the members and deeply committed to your profession. A twenty-three year "one club" manager. You love your club, your job and the fruits of your labors. You glow---the good life. It's Sunday, 5:30 in the afternoon, a nine and a half hour day behind you, the end of a six day week with dinner reservations light and a strong management team on the floor. You decide to exit, mount your bicycle for the daily commute, pleased that you'll see your wife and visiting mother at home before sunset. You wave goodbye to the receptionist and exit the clubhouse. The security guard gives you a salute and a smile and a parting comment--- "Getting out early tonight, eh?" Aaaahhrrrggghh!!!

You howl as if struck by a bowling ball. You're bludgeoned by Going Guilt, an angst felt by every professional who leaves before the doors have been locked and the lights turned out. You slither into depression, beating yourself up for abandoning the job prematurely. You arrive home after an hour's ride, a cloud over your head, muttering to yourself, sapped of energy, drained of emotion. Going Guilt has struck again.

We feel your pain.

Managers who read this have felt Going Guilt. Think back. You return from vacation, the first in three years, gone for ten days with the family. You walk into the club refreshed and glowing. Mrs. Clueless runs into you in the lobby and mentions that she's not seen you in weeks, thought you were sick, had taken another job or were simply hiding under your desk.

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Or you're on vacation, having a lazy lunch with wine in a small Parisian bistro and suddenly you feel The Angst, nausea rising in your stomach---I'm here, the club is there, I'm not needed, worthless, two reports unwritten, financials not analyzed, the budget not finished, no-one checking the gym for cleanliness, they'll know I'm a fraud.

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Or you're biking in Europe and on a whimsy call the club to share in the joy of the open road. You discover that there's been a robbery in the parking lot, the new treadmill doesn't work, the roof is leaking in the dining room and thirty protesters are in the parking lot screaming about the club's treatment of birds on the seventeenth fairway. The guilt hits you hard. "I'm here. The problem is there. I've shirked my duty. I'm worthless." Going Guilt. Not pretty.

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Torn between family and club. You've planned your wife's fiftieth birthday party for three years, have flown in relatives you don't really like to share in the celebration, have your speech all written, the champagne chilled. Then the President changes the Board meeting date to accommodate a golf opportunity at Cypress. You tell her you can't make the Board meeting. She looks at you and says "I understand," but her eyes are cold and reproving. Ugh. You'll feel no joy during the celebration. Going Guilty if you stay, Going Guilt if you go.

We feel your pain.

We all know managers who have succumbed to The Guilt, professionals who've come to believe the fantasy that "being there" will relieve the angst. No vacation in five years. Half a day off each week. Fifteen hour days. Marriage in a shambles. Kids in jail. Everything sacrificed to The Job. Miserable if they stay, miserable if they go, life wasting away, going gray.

Going Guilt goes with the turf.

The Engine of Guilt

Managers who love the club business wants to do the job right. Managers "do club" because they feel the love and want to give the love---to staff, to members, to the culture, to the community. Club managers are on a mission---more than a business, a life force, a power for the good---and they want desperately to "do it right" each and every day. To do it right, you need to be there sniffing in the kitchen, looking into shadows, connecting with the team. Those who don't want to "be there" exit the business, look elsewhere for The Good, leave the club business to those on a mission.

Therein lies the rub. Clubs are a **guilt engine** open twenty hours a day seven days a week. Managers need to sleep at least six, talk to the kids, unwind with the spouse, read a book or two, play tennis. Torn between Being There with the family and Being Here with the team. Caring causes confusion. Those who don't care simply wither away and are "exited" by the Board. Those who care will always feel they've left too soon, abandoned the team, done poorly, all eyes upon them, disapproving looks and twitters accompanying their exit. Going Guilt.

Too little guilt and you fail at the job. Too much guilt and you fail at home. We feel your pain.

How did this happen?

Throttling up the Guilt Engine

Managers explain that “members expect me to be here”, that the “staff expect me to be here,” that “things won’t run right if I’m gone.” They tell spouses and friends that the club business is different. It’s a tough life. No-one understands. Feel my pain.

Who’s to blame???

Expectations are to blame and managers form the expectations of members and staff.

Expectations. Who told you that you’d better work an eighty hour week “or else?” Who set the standard? Were you surprised when, after seventeen years of eighty hour weeks, that others believed that eighty hour week are “the norm?” Who built these expectations? You did, fool. You set the standard.

You opened the door to Going Guilt.

Expectations. How many managers have proudly stated that they’re always connected to board, members and staff with cell phones, blackberries and portable computers, that they’d feel unproductive and “out of touch” if they weren’t surrounded by their electronics? Chained by their technology. Who led staff and members and boards to believe that they could and should and better be connect with them when gone? You did, fool. You set the standard.

You shook hands with Going Guilt.

Want to improve your happiness quotient and soften the pangs of Going Guilt? Change some expectations. Here’s how.

Wrastlin’ With Guilt

Going Guilt is a serious business. Want more happiness on the job? Lower some expectations and modify others. Create new patterns. Educate.

Unchain yourself from the blackberries and the cell phones and the computer. Let the board and staff and members know when you’re in the office and who’s in charge when you’re not. Bite off heads when your “emergency” number is used for the routine and the mundane.

When on vacation, do vacation. Don't tell anyone where you're going or how to connect with you when gone. Be open with the board and management team---I'm gone, you're here, handle it through these channels.

Build great lieutenants. Let them know that they'll be in charge every Monday and Tuesday when you're off, during each of the seven weeks of vacation when you're gone, during those five hour committee meetings you attend five nights a week.

Do sports, get into the "zen" of the tennis ball, worry about elbows to the chin, get use to the perspiration escape. Going Guilt will be gone when you feel "the burn."

Don't look for evidence of "the wrongs" perpetrated while you're gone. Don't sniff around trying to uncover screw ups to prove that "you're the man," that things won't work quite as well in your absence as they do when you're present. Expecting team screw ups in your absence will lead to team screw ups in your absence.

Set an example of "Gone" that doesn't include "Guilt." Take vacation. Compensate for working holidays with a compensating day off. Leave after ten hours. Take two days off each week. Don't call in to "check up" when you're gone on vacation, off for the day, at conference in New Orleans. Your going eases the Going Guilt of others. Set the tone. Lead by example.

Find passions, ignite passions, pursue passions. Passions when consumed leave no room for guilt. Sky dive if skydiving is your passion. Go to the opera if that's your passion. Surf every day if that's your passion. Find time to "do passions." Cleanse the soul of guilt.

Tame Your Demons

Going Guilt goes with the turf but it's a dog that needs to be chained. Change expectations. Educate the members, the staff and the board about Your Going. Lead by example. Go.

And enjoy the journey-----