

Tribal Magic

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Tribal Magic

It's tournament day at Club Big. You're a guest of Mr. Long Time Member. And you're buzzed.

You drive into the club parking lot and see the signs---"Members Only." The security guard gives you The Wave and asks that you park in the Guest Parking Lot. You park, walk the long walk and enter the clubhouse. You're greeted at the Front Desk by a smiling Ms. Chirpy who welcomes you with a "can I help you find the member you're looking for?"

You sit in the lobby and wait for your friend, observing. You watch members arrive, greeted by name as they enter the clubhouse, laughing with other members, slapping each other on the back, men giving men high fives, women giving women big hugs. You notice that the members are dressed vaguely alike, that they're talking "the talk" of people who are educated, successful and confident. You sink deeper into the overstuffed chair and take in the high ceilinged lobby, the dark wood walls, the paintings of dead guys on the walls, the thick wool carpet underfoot.

You feel an emotional itch, a longing to be part of all this. To be an insider.

Your friend arrives and your pondering stops. The two of you exit the lobby, walk through the Hall of Presidents looking at photos of old geekers long dead; down the Hall of Trophies filled with polished silver; past a pro shop filled to overflowing with club logo-ed golf balls and windbreakers; into the locker room where you see naked men showering, shaving and laughing; through the card room where grey haired fat guys are shouting at each other, throwing cards on the tables, exchanging money, calling each other names, and laughing; into the Grill where the bartender waves to

your host, greets him by name and pours a couple of the Club's famous "First Tee Screwdrivers" to "prime the pump"; through the Grill past an enormous round "players only" table where The Team sits aggressively eating, drinking and yapping about the tourney, their jobs, their friends, their wives, the new members, the old members, the worthless players from the neighboring club, and the condition of the course.

The two of you walk to the first tee and join the gallery of watchers. You gaze in awe as the club champion swings for the fences, hitting a "biggie," everyone oohing and aahing. You join the crowd and walk the course, following the Champ, trees everywhere, none of the "great unwashed" anywhere to be seen; finished with the games, into the Grill, laughter and smiles and scores being exchanged, drinks drunk, food eaten, gossip told; speeches given, awards awarded; then out of the clubhouse, having had a few too many "club specials" , having met some really great people, having been embraced by "good guys" you'd never met before, knowing you could be "one of them," knowing that you want to be "one of them"; driving home, traffic a mess, feeling lonely, a bit empty, knowing you're missing people and a place that you never knew you needed.

You reflect and sigh. You've experienced something special, unique. You feel warm inside, happy with the world. And you know that no hotel, fast food joint, high class restaurant or your own day use golf course can deliver the sort of Tribe and the Type of Magic you've just experienced. Special. Different. Distinct. Exclusive. Primal. Powerful.

You ponder. You know deep down that you need Tribe---That Tribe. You know deep down that you need a tribe that has something that's identifiably different, a Magic that's expressed in the parking lot, lobby, grill room, first tee, back nine and in the lockers.

And you ask---Do I know enough people to join? Do I have the cash in the bank? Can I rob the trust account?

You feel The Hunger.

Strong medicine's needed to fill the empty and ease the angst.

Tribal Magic.

Needing Tribe

People need people---Their Tribe, unique, welded together through experience, amplified through stories told "round the campfire". Some primitive part of our

brains craves people, herd, the gang experience, the unique, the different, the exclusionary. People hunger for The Magic great tribes provide---a powerful intangible something that transforms the routine into the exceptional and the ordinary into the profound.

The need for tribal magic is deeper than “stuff” ‘cause an awful lot of people who’ve got nothing but fire---have Tribe.

Tribes are close. Tribes tell the world that we are separate, we’re distinct, we need our own space, we’re different and we’re proud of the fact.

Tribes protect members of the tribe emotionally and physically. Tribes reject “outsiders”---ideas, values, experiences. Tribes possess a collective “wary eye” that affirms values and secures the territory.

Tribes are at war with other tribes. They compete to prove that their tribe is better than “your tribe” and want “the spoils of war” to show the world they smacked down the Outsiders.

Tribes provide escape from the constraints of civilized society. They push the envelop and release the animal spirits---with drink, with food, with music, with dance.

Tribes affirm their unity with gestures and signals. They strengthen the tribe with shared stories to salute The Good and condemn The Bad.

And people will sacrifice to remain---in the tribe. Through good times and bad. A band of brothers. A bond unbreakable.

And when a club has Tribe and when the tribe has Magic, members of the tribe will sell the house before they’ll sell the membership.

Creating Magic

Tribes are highly networked groups of people. Most tribes are built without consciously knowing that Tribe’s getting done. It’s part of nature, in the genes, and for most people tribe “just happens.”

But club managers are, by nature, builders who “do” and don’t “wait.” They know that people need Tribe and that Tribal Magic makes a good club great. Managers who know the value of Tribe know that Tribes can be built one brick at a time. They pay attention to the fundamentals, a tribal checklist that includes:

Insiders and Outsiders---those who are members and those who aren’t.

The Burden of Proof---through an admissions committee, selectively chosen.

Warriors and Heroes---champions, presidents, managers who've "done good" and are considered The Best.

Sacred Spaces---a clubhouse that only members can use.

Holy Texts---that explain "the good"---bylaws / house rules / newsletters.

Bonding Opportunities---tourneys, locker room, card room.

Rites of Transition---old enough to compete in the club championship.

Opportunities to Break Bread and Tell Stories---an active dining room and bar.

Annual Rituals and Communal Celebrations---holiday weekends.

Shared Sacrifice, Common Moans and Communal Groans---the dues increase, the government.

Enemies to Defeat, Mock, Humiliate---the neighboring club.

Combat Opportunities---club tourneys.

The Spoils of War---trophies and prizes.

Myths---stories of members long dead, told around the cocktail table and in the newsletter.

Holy Relics---history displayed.

Moments of Madness---parties that feature too much food, booze, music and dancing.

The Passing of the Torch---during the annual meeting.

Loyalty to the Tribe----members and staff join and stay for a long, long time.

Exiling the Unworthy---kicking out the "bad boys" and sending the aberrant to purgatory.

Success----Tribes make the people within more successful either by making their life easier or making their lives better. Tribes work when they “fill holes” in the lives of their members---when the benefits of being “one of the tribe” exceed being “outside the tribe.”

And clubs with Tribal Magic---win.

Beat the Drums

Times are tough. Members are leaving. Wait lists are gone. Competition is heating up. Clubs need a magnet to attract and retain members. To get them in the door and coming back for more.

Managers who can build tribe and create magic have a good chance of staying employed.

Knowing what’s needed is Job One.

Translating principles into practice is Job Two.

Begin building.

And enjoy the journey-----