

MASTERING THE MEMBER EXPERIENCE

How Peacock + Lewis delivers for private clubs, creating exceptional spaces that blend style, functionality, and the unique character of each club.

By Mark Pazdur, Publisher

NORTH PALM BEACH, FLORIDA: The well-regarded *Architectural Digest* magazine, launched almost a century ago, offers rare access to the most beautiful private spaces in the world—and the fascinating people who create and inhabit them.

Peacock + Lewis Architects and Planners is a company you may not know by name, but you are likely familiar with many of their clients. They have completed over 2,000 new and remodeled hospitality and club projects worldwide and crafted over 250 site-specific master plans for private clubs across the country.

One of their recent projects involved the redesign of the historic and iconic clubhouse at Oakland Hills Country Club in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan with partner firm JBD JGA Design & Architecture. This storied venue, which has hosted 11 modern-era major championships, required a restoration following the devastating 2022 fire that destroyed the clubhouse. Other notable clients include The Breakers in Palm Beach, Florida, Ocean Reef Club in Key Largo, Florida, The Bear's Club in Jupiter, Florida, Muirfield Village Golf Club in Dublin, Ohio, Seminole



Oakland Hills Country Club (rendering) in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. In collaboration with JDB JGA Design & Architecture.



High Ridge Country Club in Lantana, Florida

Our 53rd Year

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Brian Idle

“BY MERGING technical expertise, a collaborative spirit, passion, and dedication with our profound understanding of the club industry, Peacock + Lewis enhances the success and relevance of our clients’ amenities by delivering innovative solutions that exceed expectations.”

—BRIAN IDLE, CEO AT PEACOCK + LEWIS



The Club at Mediterra in Naples, Florida

Golf Club in Juno Beach, Florida, Old Warson Country Club in St. Louis, Missouri, Bay Harbor Yacht Club in Petoskey, Michigan, Jupiter Hills Club in Tequesta, Florida, and Sailfish Point on Hutchinson Island, Florida. The company's work could easily fill an entire year's worth of issues of *Architectural Digest*.

THE GREAT PIVOT

When founded in 1961, Peacock + Lewis was considered the go-to architectural firm in South Florida designing all building types. Its growing team of architects and interior designers was responsible for the design and look of the Palm Beach County skyline. The majority of its work centered on the growing town centers and condominiums on the beach.

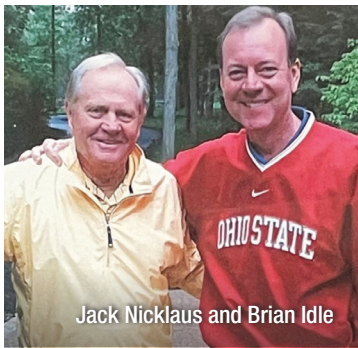
Brian Idle joined the Peacock + Lewis team in 1987 and sensed an opportunity. “I was part of a team that had just designed an award-winning prototype high school for Palm Beach County and was proud of the outcome which was receiving national acclaim,” recalled Idle, now CEO at Peacock + Lewis. “It was later in an exit interview with a school board committee that I became disillusioned. As reported by the committee, the originally budgeted \$30 million campus ended up costing \$43 million. After investigating the situation, we found out that the overruns resulted from excessive expenditures, including high staff costs assigned to the project by School Board staff, many of whom were architects and engineers. This experience made me realize that the public sector wasn't for me. The waste of

“THE CLUBHOUSE is as important as the golf course in attracting new members. I’ve enjoyed working ‘hand in glove’ with Brian [Idle]. Peacock + Lewis greatly contributed to the successful design and completion of our clubhouses at The Bears’ Club in Jupiter, Florida, and Muirfield Village in Dublin, Ohio.” — JACK NICKLAUS

money and resources by noncontributing bureaucrats seemed excessive.

“With my passion for golf, I wanted to pursue private club work which at that time accounted for approximately two percent of our company’s revenue,” continued Idle. “I approached our partners, suggesting we develop a specialization servicing the golf industry. The concept of a gated golf course community with a golf club connected to a mandatory real estate purchase was a relatively new business model. Let’s say I was met with skepticism.

“One of our founders, Robert Carroll Peacock, a fellow passionate golfer, developed a sudden illness that required him to retire,” said Idle. “I offered to ‘fill the void’ and decided to make golf a focus of the company in his honor. Our first golf project, under my leadership, was a modest halfway house at Old Marsh Golf Club. I immersed



Jack Nicklaus and Brian Idle

myself in the minutiae as a ‘pet project’ to help launch the new golf-focused studio within our firm.”

Today, Peacock + Lewis, with offices in North Palm Beach, Naples and Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, has become recognized as the premier planning, architecture, engineering, and interior design firm serving the private club and hospitality industry.

ACE UP THE SLEEVE

As Peacock + Lewis grew, a significant turning point for the firm was presented by The Bear’s Club. “Among the countless accolades that separates him from all others, Jack Nicklaus holds the record for playing in 154 consecutive majors when he announced that he would not be participating in the 1998 British Open to have a hip replacement,” explained Idle. “During his recovery, he dedicated substantial



The Bear's Club Bar in Jupiter, Florida



Sawgrass Country Club in Ponte Vedra, Florida



Bear Lakes Country Club in West Palm Beach, Florida



Woodfield Country Club in Boca Raton, Florida



Jupiter Hills Club in Tequesta, Florida



Old Palm Golf Club in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida



John's Island Club in Vero Beach, Florida

“PEACOCK + LEWIS is a leader in club amenity planning and design while shaping and defining emerging trends in the industry.”— JOE TRAUGER, PRESIDENT & CEO, NATIONAL CLUB ASSOCIATION

“IT’S MY PLEASURE to give Peacock + Lewis my highest recommendation. We have worked together on dozens of projects over the last 25+ years at The Breakers.”

— PAUL LEONE, CEO OF THE BREAKERS AT PALM BEACH

time to the design of a new Florida private club, The Bear’s Club. His vision was to create a Florida club of the same quality and stature as his Muirfield Village Golf Club.

“A turning point in the process emerged when Jack and Barbara weren’t totally sold on the clubhouse the design architect had provided,” said Idle. “Jack asked me if I would like to take a crack at designing the clubhouse. Understandably, I was enthusiastic and asked when he would like a follow-up meeting. He said Monday morning. It was Friday afternoon. I had very few hours of sleep and plenty of coffee that weekend.

“At the follow-up meeting, Jack signed off on my sketches reestablishing a relationship with the Nicklaus family from 1969 when Mr. Peacock designed their Lost Tree Village home and kindled a collaboration in golf club design that has lasted nearly 30 years. Our relationship grew through our work together and includes a friendly wager on the Ohio State - Illinois football game (Go Illini!). Even when I get the point spread, my alma mater typically ends up on the losing side, which results in me wearing Ohio State clothing on the golf course or buying dinner.”

MIGRATING FROM A REGIONAL TO NATIONAL FOOTPRINT

Five years ago, Peacock + Lewis received a significant cash infusion from a private investment group—Tidewater Capital Group—that includes the founders of Palm Beach Capital, further strengthening the firm. Idle explained, “The club amenity development business is fragmented, often requiring clients to contact multiple vendors from across the country to complete their projects. Our partnership is the first step in Tidewater Capital Group’s vision of establishing a ‘one-stop shop’ where several best-in-class industry professionals collaborate to provide complementary services efficiently and seamlessly.

“ClubWorks was created to build an unrivaled portfolio of professional services firms and industry experts for premier club clients,” said Idle. “Now, with more than 200 employees, ClubWorks can provide soup-to-nuts services for club boards, management, committees, and golf amenity developers. We offer a symbiotic relationship across all service offerings to better serve our clients.

“If it has the word ‘club’ in its name, we handle it,” said a satisfied Idle. “Before the formation of ClubWorks,

we had to refer approximately 50 percent of the opportunities that came our way because we simply didn't have the in-house expertise, bandwidth, and resources."

CHANGE YOUR PLAN TO PLAN FOR CHANGE

The one constant that exists in the club industry is change. Sooner or later, all clubs must face the "renovate or raze" dilemma. Well-orchestrated amenity master plans and projects allow clubs to position themselves to compete in the ever-evolving marketplace.

"Facility improvements are often made reactively rather than proactively for various reasons, one of which is the significant capital required," stated Idle. "The first step is acknowledging that your club may struggle to attract new members, which impacts financial performance and threatens the club's survival. While all Boards have good intentions and are frequently made up of highly successful individuals who focus on strategy and club success, often they may not seek the advice from highly experi-



enced club design professionals and specialists.

"You've heard all the clichés before: 'We are unique,' or 'We have a fine club just the way it is,' or 'If it isn't broke, don't fix it,'" said Idle. "If club leadership listens to all these excuses, it could eventually become irrelevant to the next generation of members and could lead to failure. It's already challenging for food and beverage operations to break even. Just imagine if your executive chef heard a member say, 'This is the fourth time this season that we couldn't come to the club to attend theme night dinners because the dining room was sold out and the grill room was full. So, we decided to eat at home!' Today, more members are using their club—especially post-COVID—that were originally designed for fewer people."

"The next generation of members won't mirror your existing membership. Current trends include larger and better-amenitized women's locker rooms, quick, casual and healthy dining options, Zoom rooms, coffee shops, wellness centers, resort-style aquatics, pickleball, youth facilities, golf teaching and performance centers, expanded short game practice areas, simulators, and short courses. Many members and club leadership believe a trendy 19th hole is as important as the previous 18 and that a signature restaurant at the club is a must." ■



QUESTIONS TO PONDER

WHAT?

Determine the scope

WHY?

Often traced to declining revenues or market shares

HOW?

What is the first step in the planning process

WHEN?

Proactive planning costs are minimal compared to reactive rebranding or catch-up projects

WHO?

Which design firm do you hire

PROPER PLANNING is a major component of any successful outcome. A clear picture of anticipated spending is a must. Here are the seven steps to success.

1. Conduct a member survey (typically takes 2-4 months)
2. Evaluate building infrastructure (including structural, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing needs)
3. Evaluate future programming desires (plan for growth)
4. Develop master plan solutions (investigate inefficiencies)
5. Conduct member focus groups and workshops (rumors and innuendos can lead to failure)
6. Create an informational booklet (a video is even better)
7. Plan a final presentation before the vote (discuss feedback, merits of the master plan, and financing options)

To learn more, please visit peacockandlewis.com.