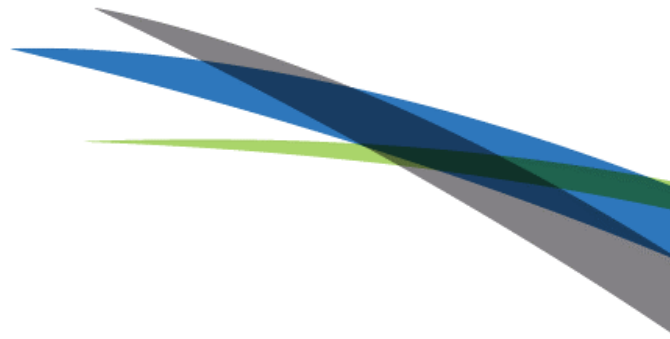




CORPORATE HOUSING
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Striving for Operational Excellence

From Strategic Planning to Software

By Scott Higgins and James Higgins, Revalant Consulting and Recruiting

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DEFINING OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

To advance an organization, one often attempts to quickly identify a single underperforming department, employee, or logistical component, hoping this simple 'fix' leads to success. According to the philosophy of operational excellence, however, this idea is both overly simplistic and idealistic when addressing large-scale organizational issues. Leaders in the business world describe operational excellence as a philosophy, a general ideological framework in which problem-solving, teamwork and leadership efforts result in continuous organizational improvement. While this somewhat vague description appears overly simplistic and opaque, a closer examination of key principles applies to corporate housing operations and could strengthen internal logistics via new technology and software. Instead of using the outdated mindset of an immediate, singular identification of problem and solution, operational excellence is a more nuanced reflection on company culture, performance, and communication to create long-lasting and self-sustaining organizational improvement.

IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Identifying large-scale opportunities for change to grow your company may be difficult, as it requires deep introspection and potentially confronting historically accepted areas of inefficiency. It also may be difficult to identify areas of inefficiencies at all organizational levels. This is where one key element of operational excellence can be practically applied: strong communication with employees to inform areas for improvement. Within a typical corporate housing company, internal dialogue about the company may not be presently occurring. Getting every single employee to share their opinions provides valuable insight into the organization's framework and highlights areas for growth. If this type of feedback is atypical within your organization, start with an anonymous feedback portal or survey. These opportunities afford every employee the chance to share their perspectives and can begin this critical dialogue. Developing cohesive company culture does not happen overnight, and this is a small, practical step towards operational excellence. Utilize platforms like Qualtrics, Google Forms, or CultureAmp to start this process. Depending on your company size, large in-person meetings encouraging every employee to provide a piece of negative operational feedback may also be challenging. This is where technology can help uncover invaluable insight into company pressure points or overlooked inefficiencies. It is important not to penalize an employee or respond harshly to critique, as the cultural framework of operational excellence is one of harmonious, balanced, free communication. Eventually, issues will come directly to executives or change makers without having to ask for them. At that point, operational excellence is within reach.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Only after all perspectives are considered, all employees are empowered and large-scale inefficiencies are identified should a strategic plan be put in place to address them. Developing a strategic plan includes:

- Analyzing personnel and systems

- Identifying desired outcomes and working backwards to develop a manageable action plan
- Developing timelines and metrics for the action plan steps
- Incorporating steps to implement, evaluate, and modify the action plan

The plan's details are dependent on the specific needs of each organization, identified after a careful analysis of employee responses. The framework, however, stands as a tried-and-true system to achieving operational excellence in practice.

UTILIZING TECHNOLOGY TO MOVE TOWARDS OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Based on surveying clients and their employees, a frequent source of inefficiency lies in the lack of clear, consistent internal communication that impacts customer interactions. These interactions may be an incorrect date or time for a booking, inconsistent promotions for a client, or miscommunicated inventory availability. Whatever the situation, these communication missteps are all rooted in the over-stratification of a company's internal operation management that can lead to a less-than-optimal client experience. With the many typical moving parts and different departments operating via emails, conference calls, or even in-person exchanges, managing company operations can be quite challenging. Ensuring that all communication is uniform and consistent will not only help the client's experience, but it will also foster a positive culture within the organization that will contribute to operational excellence. Consider investing in an all-encompassing software solution to handle all communications, even minor updates, to give every employee access to accurate and timely information on the logistics of their company's operations.

Centralizing all moving parts of a company in one place is a strong step toward operational excellence. Technology platforms that accomplish this are worth the investment of both money and time to streamline processes such as inventory management, accounting, and client booking expenses. Each platform has its individual advantages based on a particular organization's needs; however, all are rooted in the fundamental idea of a single space in which all operations can take place. Perks of moving your operations to an all-inclusive platform can include:

- Backend management featuring analytics and branded website design
- Automated messaging to clients
- Centralized listing management
- Team task tracking and communication records
- A file management system
- Direct booking access for client usage
- AI-informed workflow streamlining suggestions

A lack of clear communication both internally and externally is what inhibits most corporate housing organizations from reaching operational excellence. Addressing internal needs through open communication will reveal inefficiencies and roadblocks that can be managed through strategic planning. These efforts take self-awareness, proactive encouragement of constructive criticism and confident empowerment of less experienced colleagues. Managing the necessary changes after their initial identification can be difficult and time-consuming, so opting for a singular platform is a worthwhile investment in an organization's future. These services help you interact directly with clients from the same space as one interacts with other employees, consistently condensing all communications in one system. Phasing in new changes through the implementation of more automated software can save time, money and frustration as an organization strives for operational excellence.

About The Authors

James Higgins is the founder of Revalant Consulting and Recruiting. Serving as the Senior Partner, Revalant specializes in corporate housing, residential real estate, and the hospitality industry. As a former Vice President and sales leader at BridgeStreet, Oakwood and Convene, he has an expertise in having companies act more strategically, reach their maximum potential, achieve significant revenue growth, and deliver market expansion through sales development, branding, marketing, project management, and talent acquisition. Scott Higgins is the contributing author and head research analyst at Revalant. He is a 2021 graduate of George Washington University with a degree in both psychology and English.

Revalant works with organizations to successfully sell into the Fortune 1000, vertical markets, and uncover sales and operational advancement. Members of the Revalant team are experts in millennial workforce integration, business development, lead generation and project management. With exceptional leadership and a unique perspective for developing and driving others to fulfill their potential. Revalant delivers results on both the strategic and tactical level by providing executive leadership and direction, targeting sustainable revenue growth and market expansion. Revalant aims to assist businesses that are looking to improve various aspects within their company. Revalant tailors their approach to the company's specific needs and budget, while isolating key areas for development and creating a plan to implement and execute for success.

About Churchill Living

Churchill Living is a premier provider of furnished housing and furniture rental in prime locations nationwide. Headquartered in Hawthorne, NJ, with coverage extending from coast to coast, Churchill offers short- and long-term accommodations that feel like home, complete with high-end furnishings sourced from their own inventory of housewares and furniture. With the capacity to serve the global market through the proprietary Flex-Smart Inventory Technology, Churchill meets the needs of every traveler with personalized solutions and award-winning customer service. www.ChurchillLiving.com

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CHPA is the only trade association dedicated exclusively to the corporate housing industry. The association advances the highest standards in business and professionalism; provides valuable insight, knowledge and resources to the industry; and increases visibility among related industries. Along with networking, education, certification, and information sharing, CHPA members grow their business and expand their reach through an international network of partners. Find out more about corporate or furnished apartments at www.chpaonline.org.