



TIRED OF RUNNING A BUSINESS THAT FEELS CHAOTIC AND STUCK?

Discover how Bill Hickey is helping Itasca Country Club bring **organization, structure, and clarity** to their business and execute on a shared vision for growth and expansion with the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS®)



“Even though our business had achieved a certain level of success, our core challenges were never being addressed and we weren’t growing. Having Bill implement the EOS framework, we’re creating the structure and accountability to grow to the next level, and we’re seeing the positive impacts. My confidence as a business owner is higher than it’s ever been.”

LARRY SWETS

PRESIDENT, ITASCA COUNTRY CLUB

ITASCA COUNTRY CLUB

Itasca Country Club is a for-profit country club located in Itasca, IL that features a golf course, pool, and recreation opportunities.

HIGHLIGHTS

Challenges

In early 2023, Itasca Country Club was at a crossroads. Since 2014, owner Larry Swets had steered the club out of bankruptcy and into profitability; leaned into its unique for-profit structure; and held a greater vision to expand into a hospitality company. Yet despite these great gains, the club's growth had stalled, leaving Larry to contemplate if it was time to sell the business.

Solution

Larry hired Bill Hickey, a Professional EOS Implementer® with 30 years experience in leadership and business operations, to implement EOS® — a simple, proven business operating system that helps entrepreneurial organizations clarify, simplify, and achieve their vision through structure and accountability.

Results

- Thoroughly defined their core values, core focus, marketing strategy, priorities, and issues
- Set weekly, quarterly, and annual goals
- Now view themselves as a hospitality company
- Clearly defined each staff member's roles + responsibilities
- Hired a Head of Sales and Marketing
- Now address issues as a team
- Experience more productivity in work + meetings
- Consistently track progress against their big vision goals
- Now work + hire from their core values
- Have leveraged Bill's experience to grow as leaders

CHALLENGES

Figuring out how to jumpstart stagnant growth or decide to sell the business

Before Itasca Country Club brought in Bill Hickey to implement the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS®) inside their organization, they were at a crossroads — especially club owner Larry Swets.

After taking ownership of the club in 2014, Larry had steered it out of bankruptcy and into profitability; leaned into its unique for-profit structure and opened the club's restaurant and banquet facilities to the public; and held a greater vision to expand the club into a multi-dimensional hospitality company.

Yet despite these great gains, the club's growth had stalled due to COVID and other factors and there hadn't been any real progress toward Larry's bigger vision.

So, at the beginning of 2023, Larry was left wondering what to do next.

“We'd had success so I knew we were doing something right, but we also had challenges that were never being addressed or solved,” Larry said. **“I could see where the business needed to go, but taking it to the next level felt risky.**”

“I didn't have the confidence to start hiring people to fill the holes I knew existed, and I didn't have the



skills to empower people to do what I thought they could do.

“I was struggling with where to go next. I didn’t know if I could sell the business because, from my perspective, it had become quite stagnant, but I had lost the desire and passion to be as involved as I would need to be to keep it growing into something more.”

Larry wasn’t the only one feeling this crossroads moment; other members of the club’s leadership team had recognized it, too.

Itasca Country Club’s General Manager and Chief Operating Officer Leeann Repta agreed that the club’s growth had stagnated, and said she knew that in order to continue growing they’d need to have an internal shift.

“We’d done so many great things, but we had truly hit a ceiling,” Leeann said. **“If we were going to move forward toward Larry’s vision we needed to become more organized, efficient, and effective in the way we were operating as a team and as a business.”**

Steve Curtin, the club’s Assistant General Manager and Director

of Recreation, said one key area that needed restructuring was their leadership meetings.

“We had two types of meetings: one about the day-to-day operations and another about the big visionary things. The meetings often conflicted with each other and felt like a tug of war, where in one meeting certain things would be pulled one way, and in the other meeting another group would pull things the other way.”

Leeann agreed.

“In the meetings where we talked about the big, visionary topics, we would commonly leave without knowing where to start because we hadn’t organized the priorities.

It definitely was a push and pull between running the day-to-day operations of the club and figuring out how to make progress on the big picture things. There wasn’t enough clarity and direction.”



A proven framework for business clarity and growth

When Larry heard his long-time colleague and Professional EOS Implementer® Bill Hickey describe EOS® — a simple, proven business operating system that helps entrepreneurial organizations clarify, simplify, and achieve their vision by focusing on six key business components — he immediately recognized a fit.

“When Bill told me about EOS, all of these lightbulbs started going off,” Larry said. “It was a very structured framework with a built-in system of accountability. **It felt like the missing piece we needed to get to a better place with the business,** and the exact thing that would give me the confidence that we could actually get there.”

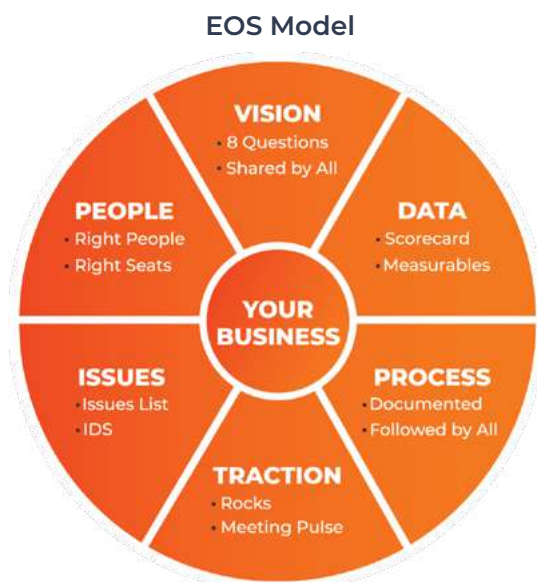
Larry also loved that Bill would be the one implementing the EOS®

framework with his staff. Having worked with Bill in various business settings throughout his career, Larry knew Bill’s 30 years of leadership experience and strengths as a facilitator and coach made him the perfect person to partner with.

“Bill has been in lots of dynamic organizational situations and seen lots of change and stress,” Larry said. “He knows how to identify what’s wrong in a poorly functioning and poorly organized business, and he knows how to fix it to make it grow.”

Sold, Larry hired Bill to begin implementing EOS® with Itasca Country Club in June of 2023 — a decision that went down well with the staff, especially Leeann.

“I felt gratitude when Larry decided to bring in Bill as our EOS Implementer®,” Leeann said. **“It was great to know we were investing in ourselves and our organization,** and I was happy we were making the decision to rise to the challenge and grow into a hospitality company.”



RESULTS

A well-defined structure that creates immediate, short-term, and long-term impacts

Implementing EOS® takes roughly two years from start to finish, and Bill kicked off the process with a series of three day-long sessions:

- One “Focus Day™” that introduced the club’s leadership team to the foundational tools of the EOS® framework
- Two “Vision Building™” days that helped the team thoroughly define their core values, core focus, marketing strategy, priorities, and issues, as well as set weekly, quarterly, and annual goals that would lead them to achieve their 10-Year Target™ for the business

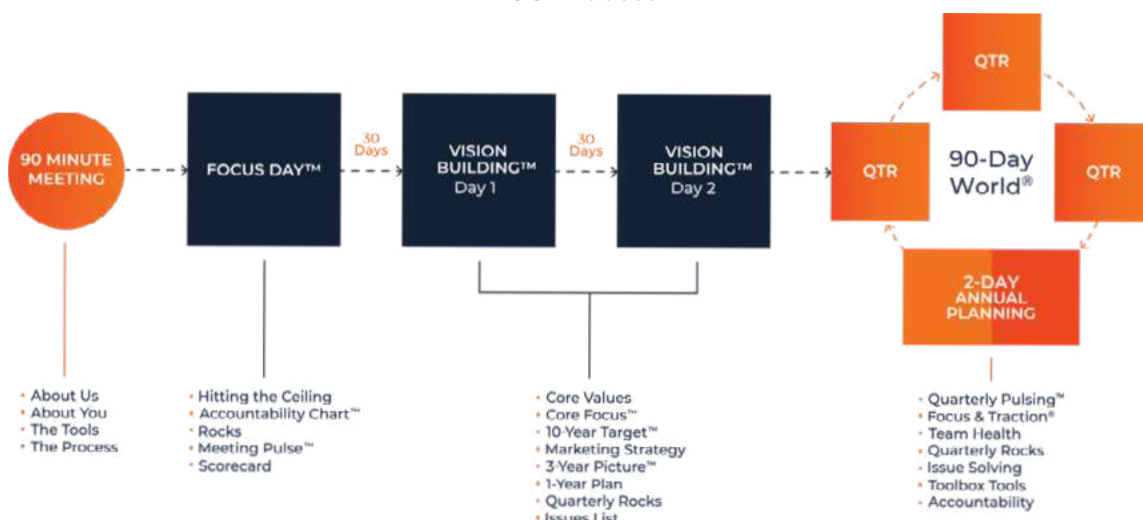
Leeann said there were a few key shifts that happened during these initial sessions, including **how they viewed themselves as a company and how they prioritized their work.**

“The biggest shift that happened in those first meetings was that we truly began to see ourselves as a hospitality company,” Leeann said. “That was monumental, and signified that we were really going someplace.”

“The other shift was defining our priorities and creating specific goals [called ‘rocks’]. I love having ‘rocks’ in place so that we’re all in agreement about what we’re going to work on each quarter. **It provides so much organization and clarity,** and keeps us focused on the things that are going to move us toward the future.”

For Steve, a huge shift was having each staff member’s role clearly

EOS Process



defined and making sure each person was doing the work that matches their strengths.

“Previously, operations and sales and marketing were all welded together, and each function of the club was in charge of their own marketing,” Steve said. “Given my role as Director of Recreation, I was pretty much involved in all of it and was wearing too many hats.

“With EOS, sales and marketing is its own thing and operations is its own thing, and there are very few individuals that float between the two. So, realizing that a lot of things that had been on my plate would be absorbed by other staff members who are really good at sales and marketing was huge for me. It was also exciting, because **it gave everyone on the team the ability to focus on what they’re good at.**”

The clear distinction between roles meant that the club needed to hire someone to focus exclusively on sales and marketing — and when they kicked off the hiring process, Bill encouraged them to speak candidly about the EOS® framework and use it as a way to filter through candidates.

Doing so helped them find and hire a Head of Sales and Marketing they were really excited about and who would fit in well with the team and with EOS®.

“Hiring Susie Lah as our Head of Sales and Marketing was the biggest injection of excitement and confidence I’ve had in this business in the ten years I’ve owned it,” Larry said. “That would never have happened without the EOS framework.”

Susie said having Bill come in to implement the next part of the EOS® process — 90-Day World® sessions that happen each quarter — was a great way to establish purpose and direction in her new role and get her up to speed quickly.



“It’s easy to feel lost when you’re new to a company and just starting in a role, but having our first quarterly meeting with Bill helped me set clear goals and find my purpose, which is so important to have in order to thrive.

“The meeting was so well organized and Bill is a wonderful educator, presenter, and facilitator. **He really knows how to capture the team and keep us engaged.**”

Steve and Leeann felt the impact of the quarterly session, too, and appreciated the touchpoint it gave them to review how they were doing against their weekly and quarter goals.

“I like how the quarterly sessions tie into what we’re doing day-to-day,” Steve said. “We’re looking at the business from a different view, but it ends up helping us

map out what our week-to-week and day-to-day looks like. It’s all so relevant to making sure we’re on track to meet our bigger goals.”

“I also love how the quarterly sessions intentionally take us out of the daily operations and give us a chance to work on the business together as a team,” Leeann said. “That has been game-changing.”

That game-changing impact continued as Bill facilitated another core component of the EOS® framework at the start of 2024 — the 2-Day Annual Planning session — which focused on tracking the team’s progress against their priorities and goals and helping them work even more cohesively together.

Steve said that for him, the 2-Day Annual Planning session allowed the opportunity to see how far he and the team had come in their first six months of working within EOS®.

“I felt like I understood so much more in the annual session because of the groundwork we’d laid in the previous sessions. We were talking about our 10-Year Target™ and our



3-Year Picture™ and everything was starting to click. Before EOS, I had never discussed the company in that way. It was nice to be a part of those conversations, and **it definitely got me more and more excited about the future.**”

For Leeann, the value of the 2-Day Annual Planning included the extra time allotted to learn about leadership, do team exercises, and soak up some of Bill’s leadership experience.

Additional results the team has experienced because of EOS® include tackling issues and challenges more thoughtfully as a team; holding staff members to higher levels of accountability; and enjoying more productivity in their work and meetings.

“We’re accomplishing so much more as an organization because we’re all aligned and using our time more efficiently,” Leeann said. “I also love that we’re working better as a team. We all have our own goals and ‘rocks’, but we all need to support each other to make sure they get met.”

Yet perhaps the biggest result thus far has been in the way the team has begun to operate out of the club’s core values.

“Our ability to hold to our core values is what has changed the most,” Leeann said. **“Our values are so much clearer now and I’m so grateful for that because it gives us that missing piece of the puzzle. We can make it clear to our team how important these values are and how they support our success.”**

“It also helps us build out our team with people who share our core values so that we have the right people in place to work toward our future vision.”

Leeann said of all the ‘right people’ they have in place, having Bill as their EOS Implementer® is one of the most critical.



“We would never be able to accomplish this without Bill. You really need an outside facilitator to implement EOS, and Bill is a true partner in helping us build our business in the way we need to around our people. **His dedication to EOS and to our organization is just above and beyond.**”

Larry agrees.

“Bill doesn’t want to provide open-ended consulting; he wants to deliver a full and complete solution. That’s what EOS is. I’m seeing its positive impacts, and my confidence as a business owner is higher than it’s ever been.”

PROFESSIONAL
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Learn how **Bill Hickey** can help your business clarify, simplify, and achieve its vision through **EOS®**.

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