

Grow the Game
News and Notes – April 2011

The PGA as well as other golf governing bodies has identified “Time and Money” as the two biggest reasons our great game loses players and struggles in getting new players. Focusing on the new prospective golfers I have heard of many who hear these discussions of time and money from established or one time players. The prospective player is turned off right away and especially as we all have been struggling in our economy. They are deterred before getting more information that can suggest otherwise. We need to inform them better so they can take the first step.

The following can be applied to all type facilities with modifications to cater to the type of clients at your facility. The example will be my plan at Heritage Harbour Golf Club.

I compared the Average Entertainment Hourly Cost for playing golf against other popular activities like going to a baseball game; I used boating because Annapolis is popular with that activity. I tried to use as many activities as possible to show how golf is competitive or even better in value.

Heritage Harbour is a private 9 hole par 3 facility. We have memberships available to our community owned facility and also pay as you play greens fees available. All residents are members and our “Membership” is really a frequent players program. As a member you can forego a membership plan and pay as you play.

9 holes greens fee - \$ 10.50 + Cart \$ 6.50 = \$17.00

Average round takes 1.5 hours = Approx. \$ 10 per hour entertainment value

18 Holes greens fee - \$ 14.50 + Cart \$ 10.50 = \$ 25.00

Average round takes 3 hours = Approx. \$ 8 per hour entertainment value

Comparison between baseball game and golf

Orioles Game - Average ticket \$40.00 + Hot Dog and Coke \$7 + Parking \$ 10 = \$57.00

Average game 3 hours = Approx. Entertainment value \$19.00 per hour.

Compared to golf, going to a baseball game as a spectator you get no exercise as well.

Certainly someone from say Blacksburg, Virginia would be less likely to go to an Orioles game than those from Annapolis, Maryland because of location. You may want to leave this comparison out or if you do include will need to add gas to charges. Play with it but also be prepared to answer more detailed questions/discussions. Try to work with popular activities in your area and be prepared to discuss issues like the initial costs for golf such as lessons and equipment. Those two I will talk about later. The idea is to compare as many activities as possible that show the benefits in both time and money being an active golfer. Post these around your clubhouse or wherever you feel can help exposure. I included boating, trip to Six Flags Amusement Park, day trip to Ocean City etc...

When the economy started its turmoil, people naturally cut back first on entertainment. Going out to eat less, golfing less or not at all etc. The good thing is, over time people start to find ways to go back to those things they loved and gave up because they are tired of being depressed from inactivity in these areas. I think we are gradually getting back to that and this information could be the incentive to have them start thinking about golf or golf again and wipe away their most recent thought that golf is too time consuming and expensive.

I will be presenting reports on Grow the Game in August 2011 and December 2011 as well. I think once we can convince those that the game can be time and money managed, our next obstacle will be the costs of equipment and the time and cost for lessons.

Now I will briefly touch on topics to be in those reports for:

Lessons

How we as PGA Professionals can offer a once a month (or whatever you feel appropriate) free clinic to beginner/brand new golfers. The residual income can be much bigger than your donated time.

For time reasons, how we can modify practice sessions for those busy people. An example would be informing (especially beginner golfers) how making 30 practice swings (with good purpose) every day (time 5-10 minutes) in the back yard is just as productive and probably more, than hitting a bucket Monday then no activity then another bucket Saturday. Certainly hitting balls is desirable but if you cant, at least do your swings every day and you will actually use less time in the week as opposed to going to the range only twice with inconsistent/broken activity.

Equipment

How I would like to see the entire MAPGA Section approach Club Manufacturers about the possibility of offering Golf Set Leasing. A way where a new golfer can lease a set of clubs for a specified period of time before deciding on a purchase. Monthly, seasonally leases etc. could be offered. These can be last year's models or demos. The Pro will do a club fitting and set up the Lease for the player (with a small cut naturally). Everyone can win if this can be arranged with details still to be investigated. In the meantime each individual PGA Professional can think about approaching Manufacturers about this possibility right now for their facility. The initial cost of equipment can be greatly reduced this way

Jon Magarace, PGA
Heritage Harbour Country Club
Jonmag27@hotmail.com