



## SIREN CALL TO MEMBERSHIP

Summer's high season is the time for clubs to commit to retention. GGA director of the EMEA region, Rob Hill, got an unexpected (and valuable) lesson from his mobile phone network provider.



I received a rare phone call recently from the customer service department at my mobile phone network provider. The outcome was not just rewarding, but served as a lesson that golf operators in the EMEA region should consider when seeking to attract and extend the commitment of their club members.

The call was to let me know that, after analyzing my phone usage, the network provider determined I was spending too much. The representative suggested a change of package would give me everything I needed while saving nearly 25 percent on my monthly bill.

As it turned out, I was required to renew my contract to take advantage of the savings, which I was happy to do, particularly as the offer was made while I was enjoying a positive experience.

In the world of the short-term commitment service sector, the battle for the heart and mind of the customer depends on designing a service that fits their personal needs and taking a proactive approach to retaining their business.

Golf clubs have a lot in common with the retention challenges of today's phone companies. Consumers have become accustomed to short-term commitment and seek greater flexibility in how they engage with a service. For the operator it means that advanced planning and proactive management are critical to attracting and extending the member's commitment.

Many clubs in the EMEA have reacted to the general decline in membership numbers by moving away from the traditional joining fee model and toward renewable annual fee structures. This trend has created a transient market where loyalty to a club and membership renewal is no longer a given.





Most of these membership offerings are based on 12-month calendars and clubs have a tendency to wait for the busy season to come to a close before actively seeking commitments for the following year.

The risk in this approach is that it shortens the time available to analyse the club's membership performance, research the market and formulate a plan for the year ahead. It may also cause you to miss an opportunity to engage in customer research during the club's busy season.

As we move through another golf season, this is not the time to shift emphasis away from membership retention. Instead, with members and potential members moving through the club in greater numbers now, retention should be at the forefront of the club's strategic and operational plan.

Encourage an early commitment for membership extension based on a flexible valued offering and assist in making your customers' decision a little easier for next year's membership commitment. It works for the phone company; it can work for you, too.

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