

Adding value as a PGA Professional

Golf professionals – as never before – are expected to lead their clubs to improved financial results and are being judged on their ability to do so. PGA Professionals have embraced this duty and need new tactical solutions to improve the finances at their clubs and demonstrate this value to their committee or owner. Global Golf Advisors Henry DeLozier and Rob Hill offer some helpful advice that will help.

Understand and contribute to the business metrics of your club

You should seek to understand thoroughly your club's key business metrics and strategic direction, no matter the terms of your engagement. Although wanting to spend time with the treasurer may not naturally appeal to a club pro, understanding such metrics will put you in the shoes of your club's committee who will make influential decisions based on such data. Here are some steps for you to consider:

● **Understanding the club's financial health**

The metrics you should be aware of include the club's earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA), revenues, fixed costs, yields, working capital, debt position, membership breakdown and rounds. The combination of these will help you grasp the financial health of the club and its capacity to support capital expenditure propositions.

● **Strategic plan**

The club's strategic plan will detail its ambition and priorities and should strongly guide your own plans and contributions.

● **Develop key performance indicators (KPIs)**

Once informed, develop a set of aligned business goals and key performance indicators (KPI's) that you can influence and assume responsibility for, which support the club's objectives. These may relate to indicators such as revenue per round, cost as a percentage of gross revenue, revenue generation, member satisfaction, rounds and membership growth. Develop these goals with input from appropriate committee members and general manager so as to secure 'buy-in'.

● **Present KPIs**

Once completed, present these goals and KPIs to the committee as a performance benchmark and demonstration of your alignment with the objectives of the club.



● **Monitor and Communicate**

Monitor the KPIs on a daily, weekly, monthly and annual basis and communicate progress to the club. The successful accomplishment of performance goals can be easily measured and monetised, allowing you to then demonstrate to your club's leaders your efforts are delivering value.

Focus on increasing revenues

Increased revenue has the effect of holing 30-foot putts. Adding enthusiasm and increased expectations, building revenue is a key for golf professionals this year and beyond. The regular question is 'Yes, but how?'. Focus on the key attributes of revenue growth and dedicate your efforts to expanding the greatest potential first.

Incremental increases in volume and frequency – the number of rounds played by your golfers – is the starting point. Have you issued invitations to your golfers to play more golf? Often it is a simple invitation that causes golfers to play more at your club. Invite your golfers – regardless of their current regularity of play – to play more.

Track the number of rounds played by your golfers. Recognise those who play most during the season. Give awards for rounds played! Celebrate golfers who pass certain mileposts of rounds played with signage in your golf shop or a posting on the club's website. Award prizes with every tenth round played or the most rounds played within a 30-day time period or before the Open Championship. See that the prizes are attractive enough to encourage behaviour change – golf passes to PGA competitions or nearby fourball matches. Promote golf and the playing of it.

Send a hand-written note to those who are playing less than in past years. Tell them you note their absence and invite them to join you for a round of golf or lesson refresher. Encourage those who are 'too busy' to make time for golf. It is the greatest game!

Revenue increases spawned by visits to the club ripple across the operation. PGA World Alliance research tells us lesson takers will spend 65 per cent more on food and beverage and 70 per cent more on retail in the year they participate in a coaching programme. This demonstrates such engagement leads to revenue and retention.

Personalise services to increase share-of-wallet

Major retailers and consumer-facing concerns have homed in on one immutable truth: people like to be shown they are special and unique.

The key to a successful personalised service is having a deep understanding of your members and the population base around your club. The better you understand them, the better you can engage; the more effective your service, the more value you will deliver for your club. Truly understanding your members' attitudes, expectations, habits, likes and dislikes, preferences and lifestyles should be a goal of every club professional. Know your members better than anyone else.

Member surveys and focus group sessions in particular will assist you in gathering and retaining such data as will publically available demographic and psychographic trends from government departments. The information that results will inform your business decisions and serve as a measurement tool for service performance.

It will also allow you to personalise the services that you and your staff provide in some memorable ways:

● What's in your bag?

Conduct a check-up with each of your golfers twice each year – usually at the beginning and the end of each golfing season – to enable them to empty their golf bags – and, in so doing, their emotional kit regarding their golf games.

You will hear cues that signal the need for increased coaching from you for putting, short-game and course management capabilities.

Your golfers will tell you of their doubts and points of strengths. When you better know your golfers, you will help them more.

Note the availability of superior equipment – hybrids and personalised club fitting – at the beginning of the season, see your golfers have playing equipment and accessories that will contribute to their enjoyment of the game and their best season yet.

At the conclusion of the season, conduct the second check-up. 'How was your golfing year?'. Learn what solutions worked and which ones did not. Let your golfers tell you more of their intentions. Become their treasured coach.

Ask 'What are your off-season plans for your game?'. If it is travel, see that each of your golfers has proper travel kit for golf. Help them with arrangements at clubs at their destinations. Facilitate introductions and accommodate special requests for access to top courses. A call to a fellow professional will work wonders and give your member lifetime memories.

How much should one charge for such one-on-one attention? Nothing. Great service and the personal attention being dedicated to each of your golfers will be repaid to you many times over. See that your golfers know that you look after them – and their games – because you are a professional.

● Keep a club in your hands

Take a demo club or the latest arrival from the hottest vendors with you to lunch, committee meetings, and your everyday duties at the club. See that you can share interesting features and benefits of each club that you carry when asked 'What do you have there?'. Enthusiastically tell of the success being enjoyed by the top players and how this club is helping golfers of all skill levels.

Explain why hybrids are so much easier for average golfers to use successfully. Demonstrate how the sole shape makes each wedge so effective for specific needs. Teach why certain golfers are fitted with upright and flat lie angles. The retailer, Sy Simms observed that 'an educated consumer is my best customer'. The quality of your service and the range of your knowledge will win you more trade.

Focus on children and their mums

Golf participation in the most economically advanced countries in the world is consistently lowest among women and children. These categories represent a tremendous upside for golf and the professionals who serve the game. Remember a simple formula 'Win the children and you win the mums. Win the mums and you win the game.'

Try these three tactics for increasing participation for children:

- Host children's golf programmes in which the top priority is having fun. Save the rules and proper grip discussion for another day. Tell the children stories of legendary golfers who overcame adversity and self-doubt to succeed. Emphasise that there is a place for everyone with golf.

Provide each child with a pass to bring their parents to participate in a putting event – not competition – at a time when you and your staff can attend to the families. Emphasise with the parents that golf is a teacher of etiquette and a developer of character. Parenting is a demanding duty and golf can help.

- Host a mothers-only programme to discuss the instructional activities you and your staff offer. Emphasise the value of participation and the promise that every child will be encouraged. See that the venue is safe and carefully looked after. Let the mothers know you and your staff will honour the responsibility of caring for their children.

- Support every golf programme in your reach – town, county and beyond. Get engaged.

Understand, plan, act and measure!

Supporting the financial growth of your club requires a commitment to understanding the needs of the business and the people it aims to serve. This understanding will help you better plan your contribution to its objectives and measurement will allow you represent the value of that contribution. You and your club deserve no less.

- The PGA will be holding a webinar on this topic with Henry DeLozier and Rob Hill on Friday November 13 (2-3pm). To register your interest to attend the webinar, please email cpd@pga.org.uk A seminar with Henry and Rob is also planned in early 2016.



About the authors

Henry DeLozier (left) and Rob Hill (below left) are partners with Global Golf Advisors (Formerly KPMG Golf Industry Practice), the largest advisory firm in the world dedicated to golf-related businesses.



From offices in Canada, USA and Europe, GGA has served more than 2,700 clients worldwide specialising in strategy, finance, business planning, market research, membership, governance, communications and club operations.