

Derek Johnston & Michael Gregory

Derek is a Partner and Michael is a Senior Manager at Global Golf Advisors, a specialty consulting firm focused on golf and club related businesses. Contact Derek at djohnston@globalgolfadvisors.com or (905) 475-4002 and Michael at mgregory@globalgolfadvisors.com or (905) 475-4033.



5 Steps to Creating a Marketing

Building an efficient and effective marketing and communications plan for your business can be challenging and the approach you take can have a dramatic effect on the outcome. We wholeheartedly believe, and have witnessed repeatedly, that the best plans are built with purpose and on a foundation of research.

The following is a proven and systematic approach to guide you when building your marketing and communications plan for 2017, along with suggestions and ideas to help you develop a solid base of research.

DEVELOP A COMMUNICATION PLAN

To do something well, it is typically necessary to take a structured approach, even for something that may require creativity and out-of-the-box thinking. The following five steps will assist you in building a successful marketing and communications plan:

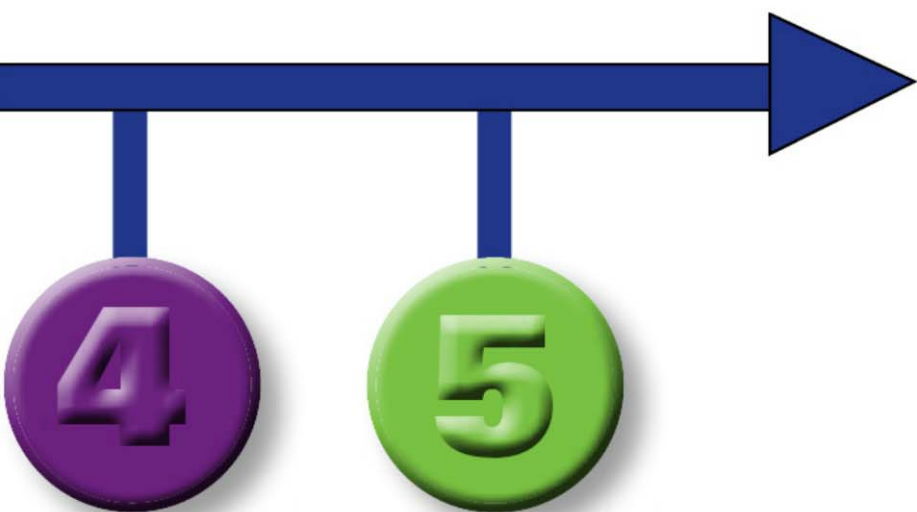
1. Gather and Source Important Information

2. Evaluate Past Performance

3. Define Channel Options

4. Craft Key Messaging

5. Set Tactical Implementation Plan



and Communication Plan

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Before you get started, there is important information to collect. External market analysis applies to market information outside of the course's front gate while internal market analysis applies to existing members and customers.

Gather the following internal information about your business:

Financial and Performance Data

- Rounds played by segment and month/week/day/hour
- Revenue by type
- Other utilization information

Customer Information

- Demographic profiles (age, gender, income)
- Home addresses
- E-mail addresses

Marketing Budget

- Last year's budget market plan and key assumptions
- List of all channels you used and analytics ("likes", followers, reach of each post, website visits, etc.)
- A copy of all marketing material
- Any editorials in which the club was featured
- Library of all messaging

Conversely, you should gather the following external information about the market that your business serves:

Demographic and psychographic Information

- Demographic and income data
- Details on the lifestyle groups in your market area

Supply and Demand Data

- List all competitors in your market area
- Collect data to quantify demand (golf participation rates, studies, visitor information, etc.)

Learn More About Your Market

- Demographics at statcan.gc.ca
- Customer and demographic mapping information through Google
- Comprehensive reports at tactician.com or envirionics.com

Equally important is to take some time to research and identify market trends that may have an impact on your decisions and will help guide your thinking. Here are four examples of established and emerging trends impacting privately-owned golf clubs that should be considered:

1. Golf Fitness – Extends golf-life for Baby Boomers. Improving core strength, balance and flexibility improve one's golfing life. Many

golfers are looking for walking options and specialized fitness programming.

2. Hand-Held Solutions - People (particularly Millennials) are accustomed to doing everything with their handheld devices. This includes researching where they might play next, booking, paying for their round, and providing consumer feedback.

3. Social Media Engagement - Constantly evolving with new platforms emerging every year. Evaluate Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat for keeping your course on golfers' minds.

4. Increased Practice Sessions for Busy Schedules - With lifestyle changes and growing time constraints practicing is becoming more popular. Some facilities have capitalized on this and created 'courses' on their range that are fun and great for training.

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EVALUATE YOUR PERFORMANCE

Use the market information you gather to measure prior performance, analyze trends in your own data and identify opportunities for improvement.

Evaluate Last Year's Performance

- Review utilization metrics and rounds played - Identify high demand versus low demand periods and any unusual occurrences (rain days, closures, etc.) to determine potential opportunities.
- Review revenue and net rate per round by segment - The key is getting strong data that allows you to measure your plan and determine what days and times generate the highest and the lowest net rate and utilization.

Review and Measure Last Year's Marketing Plan

- Was your previous plan measurable? If your past activities were not designed to be measurable or you haven't measured them, there is no time like the present to do so.

Analyze Your Market Area

- Define your facility's draw area - It is helpful to quantify potential demand for rounds in your draw

area versus the supply of rounds from all other courses in the area. This will give you an indication of the extent to which you must identify and attract local golfers, or import golfers from other draw areas.

- Crystalize your thinking on who your key competitors are and where they are located - Understanding how your facility, pricing and packaging compares to these competitors is critical (i.e. peak rates, specials, leagues, passes, dues).
- Identify the market segments that best match your customer profiles - Look for target areas within the local population to help focus your marketing and communications efforts to realize maximum benefit for the least investment.
- Leverage psychographics - Data regarding income and net worth, age, family status, travel habits, preferred media, and recreational habits is very helpful to understand and consider when determining your channels and key messaging.
- It is important to establish and clearly define primary, secondary and opportunity markets and segments to target before moving on to the next important steps.

3

DEFINE CHANNELS

Your marketing and communications plan should clearly define each channel that you intend to participate in. To define and ultimately select the most efficient and effective media for your business, it is important to evaluate each of those that are available. There is no shortage of options to consider:

- Website
- Social Media
- Email
- Public Relations
- Strategic Partnerships
- Events
- Publications
- Advertising

The way people perceive messages from each type of media is a critical factor to consider when selecting the right channel mix.

People are placing increasing trust in media that is relatively impartial, such as reviews and positive news stories, while placing far less trust in media that you explicitly pay for, such as radio, television, newspaper, and banner advertisements.

It is far more important to build loyalty than it is to advertise. Loyal followers are your most effective source for new customer retention and sustained growth.

Word of mouth is one of the most powerful channels for carrying your message. We live in a digital age where social media enables word of mouth to spread considerably faster. Therefore, it is important to enable word-of-mouth communications by continuously enhancing your digital footprint:

- Keep your website fresh and up-to-date and avoid static content. Your website is your virtual front door.
- Maximize the power of social media, by engaging and actively managing social media channels.

- **Online Reviews Matter.** Have a strategy to respond to negative ratings and reviews politely and effectively, turning lemons into lemonade by tackling negativity in a positive way.

- **Engage members and regulars** to provide content. Customer-generated and club-curated content carries with it a significant amount of perceived trust that provides a high-impact message at a low cost.

Strategic partnerships and alliances are important and should be considered a key component of your plan. Focus on building relationships that matter. Partner with groups, organizations and associations that have tremendous reach into your target audiences.

Hosting events such as charity tournaments and attending events such as consumer shows are great opportunities to reach a large and in many cases extended audience in a meaningful way.

Publications - Editorial stories provide credibility. Target writers in local and regional magazines to help tell your story as opposed to paying for advertising.

Once you have thought through each available channel, refine your list, develop a strategy for each channel and prioritize.



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

To enable effective execution of your plan, develop and document a process, prioritize the action items, and assign responsibility. Assign responsibility and set timing for the following on-going processes:

- Public Relation Efforts
- Content Creation
- Social Media and Online
- Presence Management
- E-mail Marketing

Planning for implementation should not be considered complete until a 'production timeline' has been developed to help keep everyone on the same page. This is an essential tool to leverage for efficient and effective implementation of the marketing and communications plan that you have worked hard to develop.

Golf course owners and operators can succeed in building marketing and communications plans with a clear understanding of the end results – more business – and methods.



CRAFT YOUR MESSAGE

As you develop your key messages, take into consideration that the buying funnel has changed. Brand research and familiarity now play a key role. You must have a brand identity and communicate it consistently across all media platforms. A brand statement should support this. Your brand statement is a promise that you will deliver what you sell. It should convey a message that is:

- Aligned with the brand's core values.
- Clear, engaging, unique, and relevant to your target audience.
- Able to incorporate an element of positive emotional attachment that is better than just "good".
- Echoed within your business, internally and externally.
- Consistent across multiple marketing and advertising mediums (print, online presence, etc.).
- Continually reinforced within the organization so that your employees consistently deliver what is promised.
- Conveyed in as few words as possible.

Your key messages should be documented in a way that ensures they are available to all employees and easily accessible for your designated marketing and communications team member.

BASE YOUR BUSINESS DECISIONS
ON **FACT** NOT FICTION



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