



## CASE STUDY – MEMBERSHIP MARKETING FOR SMALLER CLUBS

### 1. The Challenge

Having thoroughly assessed their membership base at the start of the year, Borders club Hirsel discovered that membership numbers were declining. The club also found that their membership base largely consisted of an older generation, so with the future of the club in the mind action was required.

As one of the smaller clubs in their area the challenge that Hirsel faced was finding the finances to promote the club and its facilities to potential new members.

### 2. The Solution

Hirsel held an Open Day on Saturday 11th September to give visitors to the club the opportunity to play the course, promoted as the 'Augusta of the Borders' following a Golf World article written by Barry Wood. They were able to try the course and sample the fantastic facilities available for just £10.

Included within the fee on the day was a clubhouse welcome with a 'cuppa' and a filled roll, where visitors were able to find out more details about Hirsel Golf Club and the benefits gained from joining the club. In addition, visitors were given entry to the club's fun golf day competition where many prizes up for grabs such as nearest the pin prizes, longest and straightest drives and selected "Fun Challenge" holes.

The Open Day was promoted to all age groups, with a 4-hole short course, practice ground, putting green and local PGA Professional Philip Sadler on hand to help anyone looking for a few pointers while at the same time taking in the facilities at The Hirsel Golf Club. Members of the club were also taking part on the day and were on hand to meet with all visitors and play with those who attended to help further showcase the club.

In conjunction with the Open Day the club was offering some superb deals to all interested in becoming new members of the Coldstream club. The club offered the following rates enabling new members to join until 31st December 2011:

- ❖ JUNIORS TO AGE 15 - £30
- ❖ 16 TO 17 YEARS - £50
- ❖ 18 TO 21 YEARS - £95
- ❖ 22 TO 25 YEARS - £150
- ❖ 26 TO 28 YEARS - £235
- ❖ 29 TO 30 YEARS - £315
- ❖ OVER 30 YEARS - £350

The club was very proactive in their promotion of the Open Day including a local radio advertising campaign on Radio Borders, a leaflet mail-drop and a feature in the latest edition of UK-wide golf magazine [Golf Monthly](#) as well as further selected Golf publications.

### **3. The Outcome**

A successful Open Day was held by the club with thanks to some beautiful weather. On the day itself 18 new full members, 4 country members and 12 new members from the various categories in the club's new under 30 year old category were signed up by the club as new members, totaling almost 10% increase to the current membership numbers. The offer was left open for a few weeks after the day for those who attended and took an application form away with them for consideration.

Overall the club brought in well over £8,000 in new business for a day that only cost the club approximately £1,200 to advertise and run.

### **4. Key Learnings**

The club has learned that by taking a step back to look at their current membership base that trends were evident and that the only way that this trend could be shifted was if the club took action. The Open Day has given Hirsell Golf Club an excellent platform to offer further tailored offerings to new members in the future.

### **5. The Future**

The club is now turning its attention to ensuring that the new members of the club are made welcome to the club. The importance of bringing in new members in the under 30 category was of huge significance and developing these newly acquired members as the future of the golf club is another priority for the club going forward.

### **Q&A with Alan Rodger, Secretary of Hirsell Golf Club**

How did you identify the need for an Open Day at Hirsell GC?

*"I noted that numbers were falling in the early part of the year and also noted that our makeup of membership was loaded towards the middle aged to old aged so we really needed to target some golfers under the age of 30 years old."*

How did you promote the Open Day?

*"I advertised in Golf North East, had a 2 week advertising campaign on Radio Borders, the SGU ran the story free of charge as did Scottish Golf View website and also kindly Golf Monthly magazine and website and also on the Golf Monthly Forum. Leaflets were also dropped into surrounding area shops and also where I could get away with it golf clubs!"*

Did you target a specific age group/gender when advertising the Open Day?

*"Not a specific gender no but we were running a promotion for golfers under the age of 30 to run in conjunction with the Open Day."*

What advice would you give to smaller clubs in Scotland who are losing members due to difficult economic climate?

*"I would advise them to run an Open Day as we have seen a great return for a comparatively small cost and effort."*

What were the contributing factors to the success of your Open Day?

*"The course was in superb condition so people enjoyed the course, the price we charged was a bargain, the fun events we had on made it a light hearted, relaxed event and the sun shone!"*

Will you do it again?

*"Yes!!!. I think when you see the benefits I am amazed more clubs are not holding these type of days!"*

What will you do differently next time?

*"Not a huge amount, it was a great success."*

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