



Communication Channels

March 2010

Introduction



Building Awareness of your Club Offering

Once your club has agreed it's various categories and pricing for new membership recruitment, it is important to communicate your offerings to your club's target audience.

The following slides are designed to provide ideas on how to promote your club – there is little point in having good ideas without telling people!

Many clubs have the mistake of assuming people know what you are offering but communication is vital if you are to reach the customers you are trying to attract...

Word of Mouth



Use your own members...it's the cheapest form of communication

- The majority of your own members will be your club's best 'brand ambassadors' so ensure they are well aware of opportunities for new members.
- Encourage them to communicate membership offerings to their friends who aren't members – use letters, e-mails or newsletters to provide them with information on joining, which they can pass on.
- Incentivise your members to introduce their friends and family – perhaps a £30 Bar or Pro Shop voucher...a small investment for a potentially long-term return.

Club Website



Make the most of your website

- Whilst the focus of many club websites has been to market your club to visitor golfers, your website can be a great cost-effective tool for marketing to new members.
- We would encourage you to have a Membership section on your website, featuring all the information needed to join your club – downloadable application form, step-by-step guide to joining, membership categories, payment options and contact details.
- Also ensure that all your communication features your club's web address as a call to action for more information.

Leaflets & Flyers



- A traditional but effective way of promoting your golf club is through flyers and leaflets, concentrating on your local area and neighbourhoods.
- For promotion of membership purposes, a simple but well designed 4 or 6 page flyer can be inexpensive to produce, but can feature lots of information about your club.
- The key to a good flyer however is distribution – ensure you save some budget for sending your flyers out, either using the post office, inserts in a local newspaper, new housing estates etc.
- You can also save money by leaving them in local shops and businesses (ask your members who may own these outlets).

Local Advertising



- Advertising is a more costly method of communication, but with good application, can also be very effective – most golf clubs will have a well read local newspaper to advertise in.
- Don't be afraid to negotiate a good deal! Advertising spend has declined during the recession so most newspapers have good deals available – don't accept the rate card price, particularly if you are buying more than one insertion.
- We also recommend asking for some free editorial – perhaps offer the newspaper a prize for them to run competition e.g. a four-ball, 3 months free membership or a meal in your clubhouse.
- **Make sure your advertising has a clear call to action!**

Promotion in Other Facilities



- Whilst some other local facilities may consider the golf club as competition, it is worth approaching organisations in your local area to enquire about using them as a platform for advertising.
- For example, the local football or rugby club will be busier than your golf club in the winter months, which would be a good time to advertise to prospective members.
- There may be an opportunity to work in partnership with other local facilities – you could combine a golf club membership with the local gym and offer a discounted deal for joining both.
- Or you can offer them a reciprocal arrangement by allowing them to advertise their offers in the golf clubhouse.

SGU Golf Central



- The SGU Golf Central facility within www.scottishgolf.org is a free advertising platform for your club, with an average of 18,000 unique users per month.
- Having your membership details up-to-date on the site gives you the opportunity to promote to thousands of golfers, some of whom may be local to you or interested in joining your club.
- The 'call to action' on the SGU's national marketing campaign will be 'Visit your local club or go to www.scottishgolf.org', meaning interested golfers will be looking at what your club has to offer.
- For more information on updating your club's listing on the site, contact Audrey Rees at the SGU on 01334 466477.

Facebook/Social Networks



- Social networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn are hugely popular with the 16 – 35 year old audience and can offer free marketing opportunities for your club.
- You can set up a 'Fan Page' for your golf club on Facebook and encourage your members to sign up to the page – from there, you can list opportunities for new members.
- Why not encourage some of your younger members to get involved – the viral effect of Facebook means word is spread very quickly.
- LinkedIn offers an opportunity within the business community and again can prove a free, effective means of communication through your existing members.

Local PR Activity



- A good news story relating to your club can generate positive PR in your local area and create opportunities for some free publicity to promote your memberships.
- This can range from your club supporting a charity, a family fun day, one of your junior members performing well at Area or national level, or changes/improvements to your course or clubhouse.
- Ensure you have the contact details of all your local media outlets – newspaper, radio, community website etc – and send them a press release relating to any relevant activity above.
- You can include some text about your membership offers within the press release – it might not always get picked up but it helps to continuously reinforce the message.

Plan & Budget



- Before embarking on any communication, we recommend someone in your committee puts together a marketing plan using some of the ideas we have identified.
- You should set aside a budget, then ascertain some of the costs involved, from buying advertising space to printing of leaflets. You should also consider using a local design agency (or ask one of your members who has marketing experience) to assist with the activity.
- Once you have identified all the costs, you can decide on the priority areas based on what budget you have.
- Try and plan your marketing spend in the same way you would for course maintenance.

Summary



- Good communication doesn't have to be expensive.
- Identify which communication channels you currently have (i.e. website, members) and evaluate the costs of external communication such as advertising.
- Ensure your communication has a clear call to action – be up front with membership fees, joining fees, any special offers and who to contact to join or find out more information.
- Update your website if you are directing customers towards it – many club sites are geared towards visitors rather than new members, to ensure your information is up to date.
- **Keep communicating with all your members...new and old!**