



Membership Retention - Ideas for Clubs

January 2011

Introduction



- **A vital part of your club's Marketing Strategy should be thinking of ways in which you can retain your existing members.**
- With competition from other leisure activities increasing, disposable income and leisure time at a premium and other challenges, it's important that you consider the needs of your current membership.
- More engagement and improved communication with your members is a simple way of generating increased 'brand loyalty' towards your club, whilst adding value where you can should keep your members happy.
- This presentation offers a brief guide to the steps you should consider to increase your existing membership retention.

Benefits of Membership



- Do your members know the benefits associated with being a member of your club? Why not let them know or remind them? This will reinforce the positive message about being a member of your club.
- These could include:
 - ✓ Opportunity to play golf as often as you like
 - ✓ Great value for money golf
 - ✓ Good for your social life
 - ✓ Value for money food and drink
 - ✓ Chance to play regularly with friends or meet new people in the community
 - ✓ Regular competitions and events
 - ✓ Somewhere you belong and feel a part of
 - ✓ Play in open competitions at other courses
 - ✓ Chance to play leading courses at SGU preferential rates e.g. Muirfield & Royal Troon
- **See Related Documents for 'Benefits of Membership' summary.**

Scottish Golf Card



- The Scottish Golf Card is exclusively available to members of affiliated golf clubs, giving each of your playing members (social members excluded) the opportunity to play golf at other clubs for 50% of the green fees.
- This adds significant value to being a member of a golf club – meaning your members can play more golf at other courses around Scotland.
- Cards cost just £10 per annum and can be purchased at any time of the year, valid for 12 months.
- We would encourage as many clubs as possible to participate in this scheme and promote this facility to your members – by taking part, your own club should also see an increase in business from other Scottish Golfers.
- **For more info, visit: <http://www.scottishgolf.org/go/play-the-game/scottish-golf-card>**

Spreading the Payment



- Why not consider offering your members the opportunity to spread the cost of their membership throughout the year?
- These days, we pay for many if not most of our domestic services via monthly Direct Debit, such as energy, telephone and car insurance. In some cases, we are even offered discounts to pay in this way.
- Again, reference to the fitness industry illustrates the popularity of spreading payments over 12 months.
- During the current economic climate it is a lot to ask people to stump up £500 - £1000 in one lump sum and may put people off re-joining. Spreading the cost may be a great incentive to retain these members.
- We can recommend Fairway Credit as a company who can assist your club in setting up such a scheme – visit <http://www.pclddms.co.uk/fairway.asp>

Transitional Categories



- Current demographics indicate an ageing profile within many golf clubs and a particular lack of members between the ages of 20 and 45, with younger members not renewing when they reach adult status.
- Many clubs are facing an increased percentage of senior members who pay a discounted subscription, although this is a nice reward to offer your most loyal members. You should consider only offering these discounts to those who have been members for a set number of years (e.g. 10 or 20).
- You should also therefore consider a transitional category of membership to younger members, to help bridge the gap between junior and full adult – **perhaps an 18 – 21 category; 22 – 25 category; 25 – 30 category.**
- This should help your club retain a higher percentage of young members.

Talk to Your Members



- **Treat your members as customers!**
- In any service industry, it is vital to understand what the customer wants and whether the service provider is giving the customer what they want. Golf should be no different.
- Clubs may like to consider two tools to help in this area:
 - 1. Membership Satisfaction Survey (see next page)**
 - 2. Membership Exit Survey (see next page)**
- These surveys can provide you with a valuable insight into how your members regard the club, both positive and negative, and help you tailor membership packages in the future.

Talk to Your Members



1. Membership Satisfaction Surveys

- This survey can be conducted annually or biannually and can prove very useful in measuring customer satisfaction.
- They should be brief, straightforward and easy to fill in and you should consider offering an incentive to complete it e.g. win a golf lesson, case of wine, £50 pro shop voucher.
- It is also useful to communicate the results of the survey with your club members (perhaps in an e-bulletin) to show that you have listened to your members and taken the ideas on board.
- **A sample survey can be found on the Membership Marketing Related Documents section of www.scottishgolf.org**

Talk to Your Members



2. Membership Exit Questionnaire

- Although losing members is ultimately a negative outcome, some good can arise from it. It is useful to know why the departing member is leaving your club as it may prevent future departures.
- Being aware of any negative issues at the club may allow you to remedy them for the future or address them at committee level (this may often include pricing issues).
- In certain cases, the reasons for departure can be out with the club's control, such as moving from the area, however the club should work hard to ensure that every effort is taken to retain a member.
- **A sample survey can be found on the Membership Marketing Related Documents section of www.scottishgolf.org**

Communication



3. Newsletters

- Many clubs operate a newsletter to members, helping to communicate key messages to your customers.
- This can be done cost-effectively, either via e-mail if you have permission to use your members' e-mail addresses, or paper copies distributed in your clubhouse (to avoid the more expensive route of postage).
- You can use your newsletter to promote any added value offerings given to your members (free bacon roll Sunday or ½ lessons with the pro) whilst keeping them up to date with developments at the club.
- Many other sports organisations or service industries use this channel of communication and they can go along way to improving your relationship with your members.

New Members Welcome



- Having recruited your new members, your club should ensure every effort is made to retain them – consider staging a start of season welcome night for all your newly recruited members.
- Its easy to assume that all golfers know what they are doing when it comes to entering or playing in a medal competition, taking part in knock-out of foursomes events, using all the facilities on offer or bringing guests to the club.
- Particularly if someone hasn't been a member of another club, don't assume anything! Make them feel welcome and inform them of the various areas that they might not be familiar with.
- Something as simple as a 'Frequently Asked Questions' document can be friendly and effective way of answering the queries new members may have.

Other Considerations



- Golf Clubs should be striving to improve the benefits and value of being a member of your club and evaluating this on an annual basis.
- **Other areas for your to consider should include:**
- How many of your members want to play in competitions every week? Is your club too focused on this sector? What can you do to improve the membership experience for non-competitive golfers?
- Do you offer new members a 'Welcome Night' and/or a buddy system?
- Can members bring their families (maybe non-golfers) into the club? Do you offer other categories of non-playing membership e.g. marital associate or parental (to encourage parents of juniors to use the facilities)?
- **Always think of you would like to be treated as a member of your club!**