



Prestonfield Golf Club: Business Planning

INTRODUCTION: Prestonfield Golf Club is set in a former deer estate within two miles of the centre of Edinburgh. The course is a challenging one and the Club welcomes golfers of all ability levels. The Club was determined to address the issue of dwindling membership through installing an effective business planning process.

THE ISSUE

In 2002, Prestonfield Golf Club was thriving with a healthy membership of 650 full members. Over the next decade, as the economic recession increasingly affected the area, Prestonfield lost an average of thirty members per year. By 2012, the number of full members was below 300 and the Club feared that if it did not address the issue of dwindling membership it would have to close within five years.

THE SOLUTION

In October 2012 several representatives of the Club attended a one-day Business Planning Workshop, organised by Scottish Golf. Inspired by the workshop and assisted by the guidelines provided by Scottish Golf, the Club developed and implemented its first formal business planning process in early 2013. A key element in this process has been the implementation of customer satisfaction surveys, from which Key Performance Indicators are derived for the purpose of the Business Plan.

For each core business area, between two and four SMART objectives were identified, along with two to three specific initiatives designed to enable the Club to achieve its objectives.

In order to take forward the planning process, a Business Plan Committee was formed comprising the Captain, Vice-Captain, Ladies Captain, Finance Convenor, Marketing Convenor and Club Secretary. The Committee meets quarterly to review and update the business plan. Each of the Club's Convenors has objectives and initiatives to action and report on in their monthly report to the Council. A one page summary plan based on the main Business Plan is produced, and progress towards the objectives listed on this summary is regularly posted on the Club's website. The current Business Plan will be updated in early 2015.

Two member forums have been held to help ensure that members are actively involved in business planning and that their views and preferences are taken into account.

Scottish Golf has provided invaluable support in Prestonfield's business planning: a representative of this organisation attended the first member forum, and has regular meetings with the Business Plan Committee. Scottish Golf also provided a proforma for use in conducting customer surveys, which was adapted by the Club for its own use.

AT A GLANCE...

>> Prestonfield was hit hard by the economic recession, losing more than half of its membership over a decade.

>> Closely supported by Scottish Golf, the Club implemented a systematic business planning process to improve performance.

>> A Business Plan Committee meets regularly to review and update the Plan.

>> Members are actively engaged in the planning process through surveys and forums.

>> The process has provided a clear sense of direction for the Club and resulted in a financial turnaround.

“If we had not addressed this issue the club may have gone out of business within five years.”

THE CHALLENGES

The main difficulty that the Business Plan Committee encountered in establishing a business plan was in deciding which items to include, and how to prioritise these. Scottish Golf originally suggested thirteen areas but the Club identified fifteen core areas reflecting its own business planning needs. These were based on Key Performance Indicators, identified from the customer surveys, which are clearly important in enabling the Club to attract and retain members.

One challenge that continues to be faced by the Club is how to improve attendance levels at member forums. Though the initial forum was well attended by around 60 to 70 individuals, the subsequent forum was less well attended. As a result, it was not possible to obtain a diverse representation of the views of the Club's membership for use in business planning.

NEXT STEPS

The Business Plan is intended to be fluid and is continually updated as the Business Plan Committee learns more about the planning process and the Club's requirements and situation. The AGM and regular member forums are important in generating this information. The Club intends to develop a new Business Plan each year, with the Business Plan Committee continuing to drive and facilitate this process. All changes will be reported to the Council and, once agreed, will be posted on the Club's website.

IMPACTS

By December 2014 Prestonfield's Business Plan was eighteen months old and clear benefits were emerging. Over the past year, the Club generated a profit of £22,000. This compared with a 2013 loss of £36,000, which was mainly due to declining membership in that year.

The Club has identified several key benefits of the business planning process. These include the ability to analyse how the business is being run and the key drivers of success. This information enables the Club to influence these key drivers in order to generate results. For example, it has the ability to modify its outgoings and contracts over time to improve cost-effectiveness.

Effective governance has been given a high priority at all times, and it is believed that this focus on good governance has been instrumental in enabling the Club to achieve its business planning objectives and ultimately increase its membership.

“Take advantage of any assistance offered by Scottish Golf. As we have found, you can't do it on your own and need help to push you forward.”

A FINAL WORD FROM PRESTONFIELD GOLF CLUB

Prestonfield Golf Club has come a long way and learned a great deal about the business planning process. The Captain summarised the experience up as “Very positive. As Captain I feel I have knowledge now of what I need to do to run the Club and my successors will have the same. Prior to this we just went from day to day not knowing what direction we should be heading. Now we have plans for the future.”

FIND OUT MORE

If your club would like to promote its business success story or require support in this area, please contact your Club Development Officer:

GREATER GLASGOW:

C.MIDDLETON@SCOTTISHGOLF.ORG

TAYSIDE & FIFE:

I.EVANS@SCOTTISHGOLF.ORG

CENTRAL:

M.MARTIN@SCOTTISHGOLF.ORG

NORTH:

W.MACKAY@SCOTTISHGOLF.ORG

SOUTH WEST:

C.CHALMERS@SCOTTISHGOLF.ORG

GRAMPIAN:

A.BOOTH@SCOTTISHGOLF.ORG

WEST:

S.LAIRD@SCOTTISHGOLF.ORG

EAST:

L.NICHOLSON@SCOTTISHGOLF.ORG

