

Membership opportunities

With more sport and recreation options than ever before, the choice as to where people spend their leisure time has never been greater. Recognising the busy lifestyles, family commitments and financial constraints on people, golf clubs need to be innovative in order to provide a range of membership options.

By reviewing membership trends and any specific age/gender groupings where membership is weak, clubs can explore options that will be attractive to these groups.

Consulting with current and previous members may be helpful to determine what golfers want for their membership fees and what may be attractive for members' family and friends. New members often have fresh ideas about the club as they see the club from a different perspective whilst they assimilate.

Value

Whether it is a member or visitor coming to your golf club, they will be spending money through membership, green fees, food, beverage, golf retail, lessons and social events and both expect value for money, particularly members!

Value proposition is a term used to describe the promise of value to be delivered and a belief from the customer that the value will be experienced.

Clubs cannot expect to develop loyal relationships with their members without consistently delivering membership value. This includes facilities, services and a high level of customer service at the right price.

By actively satisfying your member's needs and wants, you are demonstrating a good level of service, making them feel welcome and giving them confidence that they are receiving value for money.

Offering value is also important to non-members as this will likely influence whether they choose to use your club's facilities, and potentially become member of the club in future.

Contributors to members feeling they are getting value for money?

The following is a list of potential activities that could influence value: •

- A golf course consistently in good condition
- A new members' induction to the club when they first join
- Opportunities to develop as a player and improve a handicap
- A range of competitive opportunities
- A well-stocked golf shop
- Coaching opportunities through a PGA Professional
- Quality food and beverage service
- Competitive prices and consistently high quality service
- An opportunity to socialise
- Family, friendly environment, including family discounts
- Friendly and helpful members of staff who learn members' names
- A shared future vision for the club
- Multiple payment options including direct debit, BPAY and pay by instalment
- Categories of membership to suit a diversity of member needs
- Swap days with other clubs and reciprocal arrangements giving members a chance to experience other clubs and courses
- Playing frequency – the more a member plays, the less average \$ cost per round.

Playing frequency and 'at risk' members

One way to look at member value, is to look at a member's average \$ cost per round. This can be simply calculated by dividing a member's category fee by the number of rounds played by that member.

Members of the same category who play more frequently will have a lesser average \$ cost. Members of the same category who play less frequently will have a higher average \$ cost.

During the annual renewal process, some members will consider whether they have received value during the year by roughly calculating their average cost per round and comparing that value to their membership experience.

If members have a relatively high-cost per round, these members could be 'at risk' of not rejoining.

Given the above, you should be regularly monitoring the playing frequency of your members and identifying those who are playing less frequently. Then consider initiatives to contact these members and 'encourage' them to visit the club to play more often.

An alternative response to the 'at risk' member is to eliminate the 'annual renewal event'. Many clubs now offer monthly payments via 'direct debit' and these arrangements can easily continue month to month. To assist with any increase in administration requirements, there are services such as 'Pay as you Golf' which provide a service of collecting subscriptions instalments from members.

Communicate and promote

Through regular communication with members, a club can not only promote different aspects of the club, but can also encourage feedback. Regularly updated websites, social media and e-mail news are ideal, along with posters and literature on notice boards.

A volunteer with a background in marketing or communication can be a great help in getting the club's message out to the members and wider community.

Keep members regularly informed about:

- Competitions and playing opportunities
- Special offers - course, clubhouse, coaching, golf shop
- Recently held social events and upcoming social events
- Course renovations and the requirements behind disruptive works such as coring, verti-draining, scarifying and course spraying
- Tree condition/removal and pruning
- Information regarding future planning and development
- Club rules and traditions
- Changes in the handicapping system
- Golfing achievements and hole in one winners
- Teams representing the club
- Details of fees and types of membership available for juniors, families, country and interstate members
- New members of staff
- Tips from the golf professional on improving puts, chip shots, pitch shots, wedge shots and bunker shots.

As well as the above, why not ask for feedback from members to find out their thoughts on different areas, such as playing opportunities, the clubhouse and what they would like to see happen at the golf club.

Feedback from visitors is also important, as a non-member's perception of your facility may be very different to that of a member. To gather this information all non-members could be given a short feedback form or the club could have a suggestions book.