

Create more golfers playing more golf

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Find out how RetailTribe can help you create more golfers, playing more golf

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Two growing concerns in the Golf Industry are how to get more golfers to the Golf Facility, more regularly, and secondly to reduce the number of golfers leaving the game. Please don't discount the research done on behalf of the PGA of America by the Boston Consulting Group, which highlights the extent of these concerns. The research also holds powerful clues as to what ought to be your priorities if you are looking to add feet on the fairways of your Golf Facility.

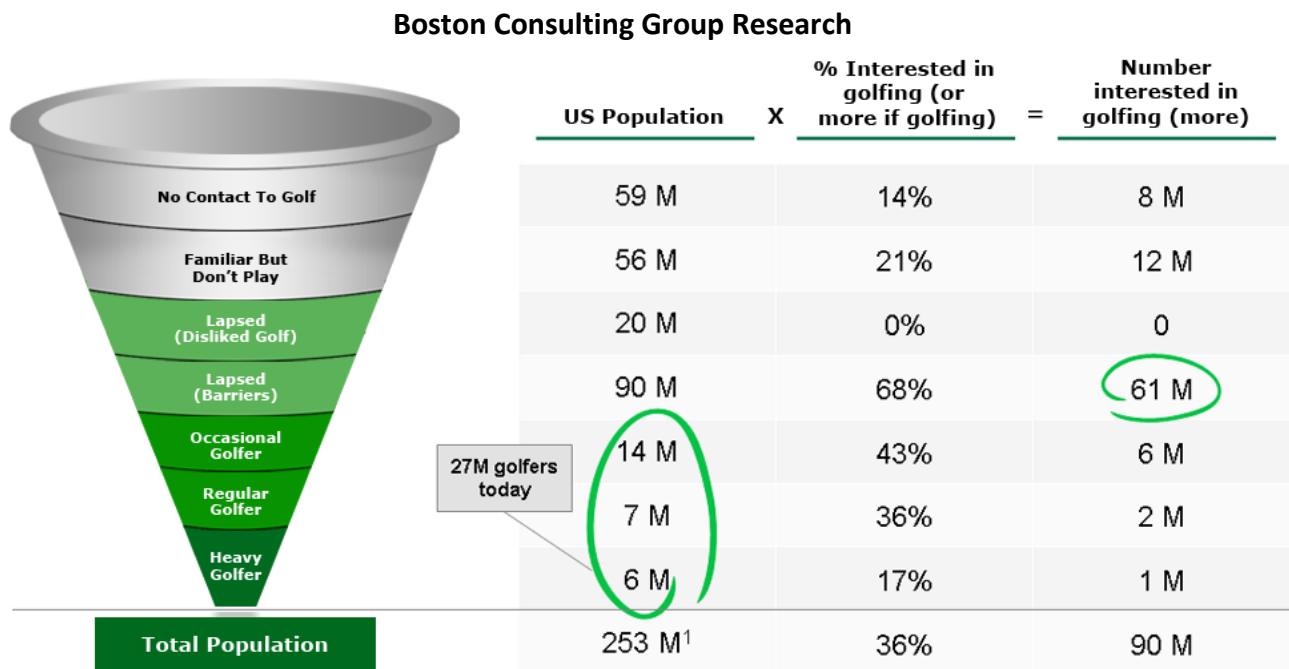
In this short document, you will find four suggestions for areas you should target to create more golf from more golfers, and increasing revenues for your Facility.

The numbers don't lie

We have worked with Golf Facilities and PGA Professionals in building revenues for 9 years. During that time we have conducted our own research in the United States, United Kingdom and South Africa. We have found the ratios to be very similar to those in the table below:

- The relationship between golfers and lapsed golfers will be between 3 and 4 lapsed golfers for every current golfer (an indicator of the horrible 'churn' problem);
- About two thirds of lapsed golfers would not mind playing again but no one is really reaching out and encouraging them;
- About half the golfers are occasional while the other half are what we call 'avid' (regular and heavy below);
- About half of the occasional are 'at risk' of dropping out of the game.

Figure 1



Source: PGA Consumer Survey, Jan 2011; BCG Analysis

A clear understanding of these figures allows us to determine exactly what areas of focus are required if the PGA Professional is going to increase the number of golfers playing golf, and increase the amount of golf each golfer plays. Here are our four suggestions:

1. Plug the leaking bucket

PGA Professionals do a great job of bringing new golfers into the game, but we are losing too many from the game each year. We add water to the top of the bucket, but it's leaking out of the bottom even faster.

Some of these losses are unavoidable – for example; death, economic hardship, and migration – but too few Golf Facilities have actions in place to address the potentially preventable losses. Golfers who are losing interest, struggling with their game, no longer enjoying the game, socially not well connected).

The vast majority of losses are coming from today's 'occasional golfers'. Put in place activities that identifies those that are 'potential losses' and directs focus on these golfers to: a) inspire them to improve their golf; b) connect them to more golfers at the Facility; c) engage them in more activity at the club.

Measure the losses you have each year at your Facility and set about reducing that number. You are trying to close the hole at the bottom of your bucket.

2. Creating more 'avid golfers'

Our process for getting golfers into a Golf Facility could be improved, but they are nowhere near as poor as our process for moving golfers up through the ranks as measured by 'rounds played'.

The 'occasional' are your target here again. If you could turn 25% of the occasional golfers into a once a week golfer then that would generate approximately 150 million extra rounds of golf per year. If half of those are fee paying then that is a lot of extra green fee revenue. Just imagine how many extra golf balls, gloves and tees go with 150 million extra rounds.

To show you how reasonable that target might actually be, consider that 43% (nearly 7 million) of America's occasional golfers said they would be interested in playing more golf.



It is up to you to have actions in place to turn 'occasional golfers' into 'regular golfers'. Look at your actions in this last month. How much time was devoted to turning 'occasional' into 'regular'?

3. Reaching the lapsed

Looking at both the Boston Consulting Group figures and our own research, this is the richest seam of opportunity. A lapsed golfer knows how to play the game, almost certainly has the equipment, and would probably fit into the regular rhythm of the Golf Facility the quickest.

So, what 'pathways' do we have in place to help re-introduce these golfers back onto the fairways and into our Club?



Peter Myers, PGA Professional at Hainsworth Park Golf Club was able to re-introduce 155 golfers to full membership of his Club in a 13 month period, and not one of them at a discount. Working with him we created special events that made it easy for the less practiced golfer to participate and have fun. At each event an effort was made to get the 'recovering golfer' into a fun game improvement program, and from there it was up to the coach to 'engage' them with other members, ensure they participated in other events, and then joined the club. This was more than a simple 'refer a friend' initiative. It was a plan that targeted ex-golfers through the existing network of golfers with the incentive of more fun for everyone.

4. Make more of the avid golfer

While an argument can be made that by targeting more golf out of the regular and heavy (avid) golfer we are working with diminishing returns, we recommend that this group should absolutely be a focus as they will influence the 'health' of the community.

Most PGA Professionals we work with tell us that this group cannot play more golf. In fact that may be the case that this group possibly can't play many more 18-hole rounds. We should, however, have a 'Playbook' of non-9 or 18-hole events that brings these golfers down to the Facility as often as possible and delivers them even more value. The Facility will benefit from increased F&B revenues and the PGA Professional will benefit from revenues (lessons, equipment, and shop), but probably just as importantly from loyalty and support from a very influential group in the Facility.

For example, a FREE 20 minute 10-yard challenge where the PGA Professional backs him or herself to add at least 10 yards to a golfer's tee shots delivers big rewards:

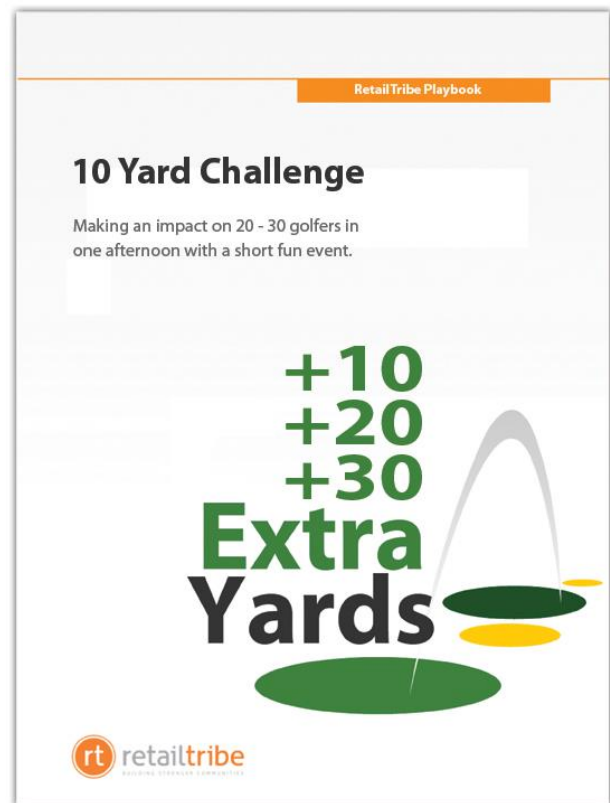
- An avid golfer will take 10 yards extra on their Tee-shots as a much bigger prize than a 10% discount on 'stuff' from the shop;
- The impact on the golfer's game, enjoyment and handicap is tangible and real, therefore the 'value' the golfer has received is real – and that improves the relationship beyond knowing each other's name;
- The golfer will almost certainly purchase something that delivers them an extra 10 or 20 yards on their tee shots;
- The result for the golfer is more fun, and that means more golf.

There are many quick events where the PGA Professional can engage with golfers to improve their performance. The result is always a better relationship.

Creating a strategy to drive your bottom line

A focus on anyone of the areas we have highlighted will have a material impact on the amount of golfers and the amount of golf played at your Facility. Don't complicate this. Think through the action you could take, with each area that would deliver the result of more feet on the fairway.

And please don't think anything here is theory we haven't practiced. Everything comes from our experience of what works and what doesn't work. All plugged into separate, simple to execute Playbooks.



This is a movement we are all part of

We are on a mission to help PGA Professionals create more golf, to strengthen their position in the industry and to unlock more golfers, playing better golf and having more fun. In that mission we see the PGA Professional as the “rainmaker” for the industry.

We would encourage you to give us your thoughts and feedback and of course all ideas for “more golf” are gratefully received. You can email me at ianjames@retailtribe.com.