

Raising the Bar On Revenue

When it comes to growing your business, you sometimes have to look beyond traditional programs, promotions and amenities. Joe Petrash, managing principal of Borders Golf Group, offers these ideas for increasing revenue:

• **TRANSFORM YOUR FOOD-AND-BEVERAGE SERVICE.** Everyone enjoys personal attention, so take this a step further by delivering breakfast or lunch to customers on the course. The staffing cost is minimal, but the impact can be profound. Plus, by eliminating the need for groups to stop at the turn, you can speed play.

To create an even greater “wow” factor, consider putting your chef and your friendliest server on the No. 8 tee box. The chef can help golfers select a food item that’s more appealing (and profitable) than a premade sandwich, and the server can make ordering a lot easier and personal than speaking into a phone or box. Golfers place their order, play the next two holes, and their made-to-order food is ready when they make the turn. In

many cases, capture rates can approach 90 percent.

• **UTILIZE THE MINI-BAR EFFECT.** Hotels generate considerable impulse buys from convenience-oriented guests who use the mini-bars in their rooms. Borrow that concept and take it to the next level by selling from the golf car. A few beers and candy bars in the cooler, ball markers and divot repair tools in the dash, and hats in the sweater basket all make tempting teasers for golfers on the course, especially if they’re enjoying their experience. Just be sure to explain before they tee off that these items are for sale rather than complimentary keepsakes.

• **FRACTIONALIZE TEE TIMES.** Interval ownership (often referred to as shared ownership) revolutionized the resort housing market; it can work equally as effectively for course owners. Selling the rights to a particular tee time for, say, 15 years creates an opportunity to capitalize on income—twice. Much like a company that sells fractional units, you collect the upfront cash from a golfer who purchases a time slot, then receive a share of the money that the fractional owner gets when they release the tee time back to the course for sale to the general public.

• **MARKET LIFETIME PRIVILEGES.** Some operators balk at the idea of selling passes of any kind, but what’s wrong with rewarding customers who want to support your course for the long haul rather than just today? Determine if the membership includes green fees or all fees, then price it fairly—for you and the customer. Chances are you won’t sell a ton of these privileges,

but it’s one more offering that can differentiate your facility from others.

• **MAXIMIZE TRANSACTION SIZES.** Whether it’s equipment, apparel or food and beverage, forget about the sales price of each individual product and sell with overall margin in mind. By encouraging bundled purchases rather than pushing a single item, you increase the overall transaction revenue and move merchandise that might otherwise not have been purchased. The result: found money.

Truth is, there are many ways to maximize revenues on the course and in your clubhouse. The key is to look to other businesses to see what they’re doing, then move beyond the mindset that this industry is unique and apply proven sales strategies to golf.

REMAINING RELEVANT

MANY OPERATORS HAVE MARKETED UNIQUE “EXPERIENCES” AS THE PRIMARY STRATEGY to sell the golf lifestyle, but “relevance” promises to be the product that determines success for clubs in the future. Whether it’s building a gym and spa to serve a fitness-oriented customer base, offering free babysitting services so parents can play a quick round without having to worry about their children or creating a theme dinner that appeals to older members, the cornerstones of this concept are programming and amenities that meet members’ and guests’ needs, regardless of who or what they might be.

Two clubs in Florida have capitalized on this concept by creating promotions that appeal to a more mature clientele. Ballen Isles Country Club in Palm Beach Gardens facilitates opportunities for members with similar interests to meet and spend time together. In addition to an active social calendar, Ballen Isles has created 10 special-interest clubs, ranging from an investment group to a lecture series to a cycling club.

Meanwhile, The Club at Longshore Lake, a casual dining and athletic club in Naples whose members also enjoy reciprocal privileges with several area golf clubs, has struck a chord with its “Turnback Tuesdays” promotion. The chef prepares comfort foods like meatloaf and pot roast, while music from the 1950s is piped through the dining area.

