

golf shop retailing

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Finding Your Edge:

How to Jumpstart Golf Shop Growth

Unique ideas provided by PGA Professionals include teaming up with a local minor league baseball team and photographing members with their dogs

Eagle Ridge Golf Club has formed a partnership with the Lakewood BlueClaws, a local minor league baseball affiliate of the Philadelphia Phillies.

In these days of stretched budgets and economic uncertainty, PGA Professionals have to work harder than ever to bring revenues to their facilities and into their golf shops. Whether it's about different types of advertising and marketing, forming partnerships with local businesses and organizations, providing additional services for members or advertising and marketing in new and innovative ways, successful clubs are continually coming up with ideas to jumpstart growth.

Tom Harris, PGA head professional at Delaware Country Club in Muncie, Ind., believes in using multiple approaches to marketing. When he's having a sale or special event, he will place signage alerting members in and around the golf shop, in the men's and ladies' locker rooms, in other parts of the club and, when possible, in the golf cars.

"I'm in a shop separate from the clubhouse, so they need to have a reason to come in here," Harris says. "You have to make people aware of it, but there's no question that if we do these things on a daily basis it drives traffic into the shop."

For example, for Father's Day this year, he offered a special "buy one at full price, get the second one for \$20" promotion on tops and bottoms. It was highly successful, bringing a lot of people into the shop in the days leading up to the holiday. "The signage doesn't take up a lot of space and it draws peoples' attention to a pretty good sale as well," he says.

In addition to using signage, Harris drives home each promotion with emails, sending out two reminders per week in the two weeks leading up to each event. To further the impact, he also promotes it on Facebook and Twitter, making sure he covers all avenues. And the best part, he says, is that the whole marketing program costs you nothing except for the paper for the signs and a little toner in the printer, adding, "I can put together a program like this in 30 minutes."

Golf facility marketing can go well beyond advertising sales and specials in the golf shop. Sometimes it's about bringing new people to the facility and exposing them to the game of golf. For example, Eagle Ridge Golf Club in Lakewood, N.J., has formed a mutually beneficial partnership with the Lakewood BlueClaws, the Philadelphia Phillies' Class A team whose stadium is about five miles across town. Staff from Eagle Ridge will attend five BlueClaws games this season, setting up a table with information about the golf course to promote summer camps, clinics and other activities, while also giving kids free lessons in the Kids Zone area at the stadium. In turn, Eagle Ridge is hosting five clinics over the summer for kids in the 11-12 age range where one or two of the BlueClaws players come to Eagle Ridge and – along with the club's PGA Professionals – the kids can enjoy a golf and baseball lesson.

"The players and the PGA Professionals hit some baseballs and some golf balls to show the kids who love baseball some of the things that are similar about

golf, which helps them translate what they know from playing baseball,” says Mike Attara, PGA director of operations at Eagle Ridge. “Part of our partnership includes Blue Claws tickets that we can give as prizes at our summer camps, which is a nice change of pace from giving out golf balls or candy bars.”

The kids participating come from the BlueClaws fan club, which has a database of about 17,000 kids, many of whom have not been exposed to golf previously. With anywhere from 150 and 200 kids participating in the clinics this summer – and many more hitting golf balls at the BlueClaws games – Eagle Ridge is hoping they’ll gain exposure with a whole new community of potential golfers.

“It’s a good community partnership, and it’s not costing either of us much money. We’re talking about them, and they’re talking about us,” Attara says. “And maybe if we can reach (the kids) at this age, they’ll come back and do more events at Eagle Ridge.”

The Eagle Ridge-BlueClaws partnership is just one of many examples of how a golf facility can form a mutually beneficial partnership with other organizations in the community. Each year since 1995, Evansville (Ind.) Country Club has hosted the Deaconess Classic for Women’s Health, a golf outing that raises money to provide free healthcare services for local women in need. To make the event more of a draw, Deaconess Health System brings in an LPGA Professional to participate for the entire day, and those have included Nancy Lopez, Val Skinner and this year’s participant, Paige McKenzie. The LPGA player comes in for the

breakfast, hosts a clinic, attends a brunch and then the ladies tee off at noon. She also signs autographs, takes pictures with the participants and does a meet and greet.

“It’s a wonderful event for a very worthy cause that has raised more than \$1.6 million over 18 years,” says Mike Reynolds, PGA director of golf at Evansville Country Club. “It’s a day just for the women – women relating to women.”

In addition to raising money for a worthy cause and increasing Evansville Country Club’s standing in the community, the event earns about \$20,000 for the club, including roughly \$1,000 in golf shop merchandise sales.

In another example of a clever marketing plan, since 2010, Country Club of Detroit has been sponsoring a “Clubs, Paws and Claws” event, where members can bring their dogs to the club to be part of a family photo. It costs \$50 to participate, and the member receives a high quality photo and \$25 gift certificate for the golf shop, with the other \$25 going to the local chapter of the Humane Society. With the event taking place in early November, the members often use the photo as a Christmas card, and the gift certificate drives members into the shop to do their Christmas shopping.

“It’s good will for the shop, and not only does the member get \$25 to spend but they get a beautiful Christmas card photo out of it. Plus, they can feel good that their participation helped a worthy cause,” says PGA Head Professional Matt Bodde. The event, which attracted a dozen participants the first year, brought in 30 people in 2011. This led to a

Three **questions** with new Ahead CEO Anne Broholm

After seven years of leading the sales team at Cutter & Buck, industry veteran Anne Broholm was recently named CEO of sister company Ahead, where she oversees sales, marketing and finance for Ahead’s four business units: Men’s Apparel, Ahead Headwear, the “Heavy Metal” line of golf accessories and the Kate Lord Collection of women’s hats, apparel and accessories. (Ahead and Cutter & Buck are both owned by Sweden’s New Wave Group AB.)

Broholm told *PGA Magazine* some of her short- and long-term goals in her new role with Ahead and how she will help move the brand forward in the golf marketplace.

PGA Magazine: What are some of the things you’re concentrating on in these first days at Ahead?

Broholm: My first 100 days are focused on really getting to know Ahead by spending time with our staff in New Bedford (Mass.), as well as



connecting with sales representatives and key customers. I’ve spent a lot of time listening to these key constituencies, many of whom have a long history with our company and the Ahead brand. I’m focused on preserving what is great about Ahead, while at the same time taking input on what we might consider doing differently moving forward.

This position is one of great responsibility: to do what’s right in the long term for the brand, the company, and the people in order to take Ahead into the next chapter in our history.

PGA Magazine: What are some of the most important developments right now for the company?

Broholm: The most important development at Ahead is the continuing transition from a sole proprietorship to being a part of a much larger family of brands under New Wave Group, including, of course, our sister company Cutter

& Buck. We are almost one year into the acquisition and it has been a very smooth transition as well as one that we continue to work on in terms of operational strategies for Ahead under New Wave.

PGA Magazine: Any new directions/projects you’re spearheading for the company?

Broholm: Ahead has a very solid foundation in golf, which will continue to be our core market. In keeping golf as a priority, Scott Stone will be running our golf sales division going forward. I’ve asked Jeff Waller, a 16-year veteran of Ahead, to assume the role of new business development, assisting me in identifying new markets for growth of our brand. There are also some great opportunities and synergies with other New Wave companies, both in North America and Europe, that will help us take Ahead to the next level. Most importantly, under the creative direction of Chuck Lord, we will continue to spearhead innovative design and decoration as our top priority for all markets in which we compete.

—Lisa Goulian