



Extreme Golf Course Recession Busters

Your Quick Start Guide
to Fighting Back

By

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Why This Recession Might Be The Best Time Ever For Your Golf Business

Factual Analysis of Where We Are Now, What Golfers Are Thinking, What You Should Be Doing and Reasons Why This Can Be the Opportunity of a Lifetime for Proactive Golf Entrepreneur

Several months ago I played golf with a guy who's an acquaintance. Nice guy, good golfer, owner of a small business. I hadn't run into him for several months and since this was the middle of golf season, the question for him was "Where have you been? I haven't seen you on the golf course". His response was he's not playing much golf because times are bad with his business. He works primarily with home builders, specializing in an area that they typically subcontract. He can also provide his services to individual homeowners, but that's not the biggest part of his business. His is a small family business with 3 or 4 employees.

We rode together in the cart and to make a little conversation, I pressed him on what he was seeing out there. "Nobody's buying anything, never seen it this bad, just hope it gets better." So, I asked what he was doing about marketing. He said, "**John, in times like this it doesn't do any good to market. You just have to hunker down and wait this thing out**".

This is a prevailing sentiment with many small business owners and officers of larger companies these days. The big question for

everyone seems to be when this will all come back. In the meantime, we watch the Dow Jones, listen to the mainstream media, decide if the stimulus plan is working and look for grains of hope in the reports. Cutback on everything you can until things turn around is a common recession response strategy. Certainly in the golf business we're seeing this as golf courses cut back on maintenance, staff, buying new equipment and just trying to get by with less.

Lots of People Want You To Think It's Really Bad

Unfortunately, there are people out there who are invested in you thinking this situation is really worse than it is. Why do I say this? Well, there are a number of political factions and policies that are fed by your misery. The more that you feel bad about what is happening the more necessary it is for them to step in to help. Taking over major parts of our economy and passing more government run programs only works when they can tell us this is the only option to get us back on track. And, there is a faction that thinks this "American Way" stuff is just plain wrong. The media likes to sensationalize these situations also. For whatever reason, they think these crises will make us read their drivel and watch their news reports. The stories of how some miserable, irresponsible person was rescued by some inefficient hand-out program are the ones they like to tell.

The big companies have a similar mentality. They don't want to get on the wrong side of the political thing, so they really are afraid to confront Washington and the ridiculous policies that any sensible

business person or economist knows can't work. And, they are afraid to be different. What would happen if they went against the grain and actually tried to sell something or expand in these times? What if they failed? Or, what if they made a lot of money? Wouldn't that be just unseemly when everyone else was suffering so much? We'd need a special tax for any companies that dared to be profitable and aggressive in these times, wouldn't we?

So, the stories of people who just fight through this mess and make it work aren't told. Yet, there are many of you who don't expect anyone to fix this for you. The guys out there who have just kind of ignored this whole thing must be evil capitalists. And, it's hard, really hard in these times to go against the grain.

**HOPE IS NOT
A STRATEGY!**

This Report Is for Those Who Are Down in The Dumps

I've been an entrepreneur and company executive for most of my adult life, so I've gone through tough times. I know about feeling helpless and not sure what to do about a situation I've gotten myself into. I also know that "gotten myself into" is the operative phrase. I'm not into victim hood or denying the personal accountability in these things.

But, I also know its tough when all you hear is bad news and nobody seems to be giving you good reasons to think optimistically. So, this report will explore what's really happening here and how people who might be your customers are thinking. I will give you some strategies

to be proactive about, instead of just sitting on your hands like my golf buddy who sees nothing to do but wait.

This Report Is Also for Those of You Who Already Know You Can Beat This Thing

Why do you need this report if you are already taking care of business and doing OK right now? Well, I know that you could have some doubts. You might be thinking when will this thing really hit me? Or thinking “I’ve seen some really good businesses struggle mightily and I might be next”. Or you might be like me and getting sick and tired of hearing all this negative stuff.

Well, this report will help affirm some of the things you already know. Good business is good business. Marketing is the lifeblood in any economy. This will help you understand what is really happening and give you some more bullets and ideas to help you thrive. Besides, one of the most important things in any business is maintaining a good attitude for you, the owner, for your golfing customers and for your staff. There is reason for optimism and this will give you more food for the fodder.

Why This Report, Right Now?

Just a little about me and why I’m writing this report for you right now. I have been a business owner for many years and have also worked for some big companies. I sold one of my businesses in February of

2009. After selling my business, I decided to become an Independent Business Advisor for Glazer-Kennedy Insider's Circle. I look at this as a great opportunity because I get to work with small businesses and entrepreneurs. I show them how they can market their businesses in ways they never knew were possible. I tell them they can increase sales and profits, even right now. I get to coach them and share in their successes and failures. Because I've been a golfer for years and my brother needed some help with a golf course he'd invested in, I started observing how the golf courses were doing their marketing. I also started talking to many in the golf course industry and studying what they were doing to respond to the bad economic times.

I know many of you are concerned. We all see the golf courses failing, foreclosures, land sold for development, rounds down and money much tighter. If you are part of the golf industry, you have to be wondering where this will end up.

And, as part of my role, I've seen what people in other industries are doing to market their businesses. Plus, I've got my own thoughts based on my experiences and independent study. I want to help and this is one way I can do it.

So, What's Really Happening Here?

First some random anecdotes and observations for your consideration:

- A recent concert in this area was held in a small minor league ball park. Tickets were \$68.50 per person and the event sold out with about 9,000 in attendance.
- During the 4th of July holiday there were news reports from the local fireworks stores. Many buying \$200 or \$300 of fireworks and some as much as \$3,000 for shooting stuff in the sky on one night.
- Everyone complains about gas prices and the media talks about how driving is down so much. Most every time they talk about the figure its down is less than 1%.
- Unemployment is higher over the past few years, no doubt about that. But, keep in mind that "full employment" is considered 5% unemployment and we haven't hit 10% yet (that may be the goal of some crisis opportunists). So, we're still over 90% employed and just 5% down.
- A guy I know has a very upscale quilt shop. The area I live in is known for Amish quilts anyway and they usually run \$1,000 to \$1,500. His quilts aren't Amish and they sell for \$4,000 to \$6,000. Business is off a little, but the higher selling quilts are just the same. The cheaper quilts he carries in the \$1,100 range are harder to sell right now.

What's the point? Well, this is still the strongest economy in the world and there is plenty of money moving around. Some stuff is down, like residential housing, RV sales, car sales, etc. But, other stuff is up and whole new businesses are appearing. Lower mileage cars may be

selling better. Foreclosure consulting is up. Companies cleaning out abandoned homes can't keep up. Healthcare is growing. Government is growing. (We may not like that government is growing, but you need to follow the money. I know one company who is thriving by retraining unemployed RV workers. They've gotten over \$1 million in government grants to subsidize the program.) So, there is money out there and people can, and will, still play golf. The question is who will get their money?

What Are Your Golfers Really Thinking?

I'm going to draw from talking to many of the entrepreneurs, small business owners and marketers I associate with all the time. Some are in my Mastermind and coaching groups. Others are associates and mentors I meet with to get my head straight on what is happening and what I should be telling my golf courses and other business owners.

While we all acknowledge how serious some this situation is the people I associate with and who come to me aren't into whining and wringing our hands. We're into making money, all the time.

The media acts like no one buys anything anymore. The facts are consumer spending is off less than 10% and it's mostly in the midrange markets. Necessities and affluent buying are still pretty much where they were. Actually, affluent buying is starting to tick up, which is making some of the politicians and welfare class pretty

upset. As I observe restaurants, McDonalds and Morton's are still doing pretty well at the low end and high ends of the food chain. Applebee's and similar restaurants are where the problems are. Many of the middle market type businesses were overbuilt anyway and surviving because of the great economy, with poor management. We've certainly seen this in the golf industry. We did overbuild and the lenders have now recognized that. So, the weak ones are the first to fail and some of that is necessary from time to time. Harsh and sad, but true.

So, as a golf course owner, entrepreneur, golf professional and marketer, what do we need to consider? There are two major factors when looking at any group of buyers, **Ability to Buy** and **Willingness to Buy**. Now, in most businesses we can't affect Ability to Buy, which means the strength of their balance sheet, their credit rating, number of credit cards, cash in the bank, etc. (There are some instances where we can provide financing or payment terms that may help make the sale, but usually you don't want to be dealing with people who really aren't able to buy.) Willingness to Buy is another matter and it's mostly psychological. Marketers do all their best work here and that's where we need to focus. Willingness to Buy is affected by how they are sold, and we can still do a great job of selling if we believe in our marketing system, message, services and products. We can affect the psyche of our golfing customers.

Among other psychological factors is the issue of why people buy. There are 3 simple reasons:

1. Necessity
2. A person's interests
3. Somebody sells to them.

Necessity is mostly the things we all need to live or operate our businesses. Unfortunately, most necessities, like gas to drive a car, milk, bread, etc. are sold at the lowest possible price. At least that's what the buyer is usually looking for. And, we aren't big fans of these types of businesses. Commodity pricing and competing on low price alone are a prescription for disaster. There is some money to be made, but as a long-term strategy and as a place where we, as marketers, should spend our time, there isn't much opportunity here. (If you are in a commodity, low price type business, find a way to get out, introduce new products or reinvent yourself.)

So, we can cross off marketing of true necessities, but what about a person's interests? Well, many times this is where we need to focus. And, we need to understand that one person's interest is another's necessity. As an example, smoking is not a necessity to live, but many low-income, out-of-work people smoke all the time. Eating out, hobbies, the gym, cell phones, etc. aren't true necessities, but some people think of them that way. For some, golf is a necessity. From a business perspective, you just need to understand where you fit in your prospect's hierarchy. There are many interests that people or business buyers have that you can sell to them. It's all part of getting into the heads of your customers and potential golfers. That really

never changes in any market, but the target may move a little in times of economic upheaval.

Finally, people buy because somebody sells to them!! What a novel concept. Yes, many people won't buy unless given the opportunity. So, if they don't see the ad, get the phone call, receive the postcard, go to your seminar or have a sales call, they won't buy. Or, at least they won't buy what you are trying to sell if you don't sell it. Therefore, if you subscribe to the theory that nobody's buying, so why sell, you will be out of luck. Consumption is down partially because selling is down. What an opportunity for the real marketer, who understands this. Competition has disappeared. There is less advertising and fewer sales calls. Businesses have cutback on marketing to save a few dollars, so there are great bargains in ad rates and fewer guys trying to get on the calendars of potential buyers. Another thing to consider is that many who are still trying to sell are just doing the low price thing: 2 green fees for \$25, 99 cent burgers, yearly memberships for \$200, cut all office supply prices by 20%, reduce my margin to nothing to get the sale, ... whatever.

Finally, consider that other businesses, including golf courses, have cutback in service, stopped communicating with customers, reduced number of products carried, have fewer in-house experts, etc. In some cases, they have cut to the bone in attempts to survive, but some golf courses are really not offering a great golf experience. If this is your competition, this is great for you.

Top Ten Mega Marketing Mistakes That Golf Courses Make

I can't emphasize enough how important it is to identify mistakes, because just by knowing them and avoiding them, you can make a **HUGE** difference in the balance of your bank account or the financial results at your golf course. Now don't feel bad if you are a golf course owner or manager and can identify with most of these as I go through them. We've talked with many other golf courses and studied their advertising. Many have made the same mistakes.

#1: The first mistake is "**Being An Advertising Victim.**" And it's real easy to be an Advertising Victim. You see, some advertising sales rep or agency comes by and tells you that you need to advertise because you need to advertise. And they want to sell you "institutional" advertising instead of "**direct response**" advertising. They want you to "get the name out" for your golf course or increase "awareness". Maybe they even tell you that you need to brand your golf course. The fact is it's very doubtful that you can afford this type of advertising. You see companies like Titliest, Nike, or Coca Cola use this type of advertising. This is advertising where you can't measure your results. They tell you that when some golfer wants to play golf or have an outing, they will think of your course. If you fall victim to this - YOU'LL GO BROKE. The only companies that can afford this type of advertising are the Coca Cola's or Nike's of the world. What you want to do and **ONLY** do is emotional **direct**

response advertising. That's advertising where every dollar you spend is measurable and accountable.

#2: The next mistake is **“Lack Of An Iron Clad System For Building Their Customer Database.”** How many times does someone come hit balls on your range, golf on your course, buy something from your pro shop or play in an outing and you are not able to continue to communicate with him because you do NOT know how to contact him? The real **VALUE** in **ANY** business is in the customer base. It is no different in the golf business. It is 10 times easier to get existing golfers to return than it is to get new ONES. Plus, returning golfers will become your best customers. What would happen to your golf course if you had to constantly rely on selling new golfers instead of existing ones? So why do so many golf courses not collect the necessary information to allow them to continue to market to their most valuable asset—THEIR GOLFING CUSTOMERS?

I recommend that you obtain the name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and complete purchase history on all your golfing customers. Eventually you can even have information such as preferred equipment, times of day to golf, leagues, handicap, whether their spouse golfs, etc. You can gradually build a huge database and have targeted ways to communicate with them throughout the year, even during off-season. This can make you almost immune to downturns and give you a tremendous competitive advantage over competing golf courses.

#3: How many of you “Lack Diversification In Your Marketing”?

If golf courses even advertise or market, typically they just do a few listings in golfing guides or travel publications. Maybe they are on the Internet. If they have a database, they may send some emails out. But very few really use the full range of options. Email marketing is fine and you should do it, but you should consider direct mail with special offers and postcards. In this day and age, you need to consider social media marketing like Facebook, Linked In and Twitter. Voice broadcasting and telemarketing are other options. Interactive web sites are great ideas. If you want to really rev up your marketing, you need to become a multimedia player to make sure your messages are getting through. Not everyone will respond to any one type of marketing, so get familiar with all your options.

#4: We already talked about marketing to your existing golfer database. **What is the second easiest customer to sell?** Well the answer is a referral. Unfortunately, most golf courses live with the myth that if they have a great course and treat the golfer right they will automatically recommend your course to others. **WRONG!** The **“Lack Of A Referral Program”** is a HUGE marketing mistake. The last thing that anyone is thinking when they are done with their rounds is – “whom can I send to these nice people so that spend money at this course?” It’s not because they don’t want to. It’s because we are all too busy to be thinking about it. That’s why you need to have a “Golfer Rewards Referral System” in place, which will

give your customers an incentive to bring more golfers with them or tell other golfers to come to your golf course.

#5: If a referral golfer is the second easiest customer to sell, then who do you think is the third easiest customer to sell? The answer is “lost customers.” Again, most businesses, including golf courses, totally ignore the customers that have NOT been using their services for a period of time, when in fact, these people are infinitely easier to sell than new customers - if you know how. Therefore, this mega marketing mistake is the “**Lack Of A Lost Golfer Reactivation Program.**” You need methods to automatically identify when a golfer or other customer has become “lost” and make an effort to get them back.

#6: This next mistake is a BIGGIE. It’s “**Thinking You Are Your Customer.**” I can’t tell you how many times I’ve heard golf course owners or other small businesses tell me that their customers are too sophisticated for this type of marketing or that type of advertising. This way of thinking, without testing, can be dangerous. In fact, some of most successful direct mail strategies that we teach may be considered outrageous, but they work...with all kinds of golfers, even the most sophisticated or affluent. There are many proven direct response techniques which I teach in my Marketing System, many of which may seem unconventional. But what is particularly important to note is the fact that just because you might not respond to something, it doesn’t mean your golfing customers won’t and you need to be open to and test new ideas.

#7 & 8: The next two marketing mistakes actually go together, hand-in-hand. They are “**Working ‘In’ Your Business Instead Of ‘On’ Your Business**” and “**Not Realizing The Overall Importance Of Marketing.**” They address one of the biggest problems that I hear from golf professionals or golf course owners all the time, which is - I’M TOO BUSY. I’m too busy to do any marketing because I’m the best salesperson and I need to be available all the time to my golfers. Or, I need to shop the market. Or, I need to be in the shop or on the range. Or, worse yet, I need to parent my staff. The problem is you are working “in” your business instead of “on” your business. If there is one thing that you should write down and post as a constant reminder, it is this:

‘STOP SEEING YOURSELF AS A SELLER OF ROUNDS OF GOLF, LESSONS OR GOLF MERCHANDISE, BUT AS A MARKETER OF A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL GOLF BUSINESS’

The marketer of *ANY* business will be the one who achieves total financial freedom. The real money is in the marketing, not in actually doing all the tasks within the business. Setting aside time to work “on” your golf business instead of “in” your golf business will become the most profitable time that you spend during your entrepreneurial and golf management career. And by all means, make the time to

learn marketing. Become a student of marketing and learn how to implement. Spend time here and you will start to see real results.

#9: The next marketing mistake is “**Lack of ‘Shameless’ Self Promotion.**” One thing that I have discovered in speaking to hundreds of business owners, golf professionals and entrepreneurs is that everyone thinks their particular business is different. Well you’re probably right. Every one of you has something different or special about your golf course. But the mistake you are making is keeping it a secret. Make yourself available to the media and look for opportunities to be in public...tradeshows, fundraisers, community organizations, business groups, etc. You all have a great opportunity to promote yourselves and your golf business. One simple way you can do it for the cost of a “first class” stamp - just 44 cents. That’s right - learn how to write a simple 1-page press release and send it out in a #10 envelope. Your local papers and media are hungry for your story. But they can’t run it unless you give it to them. Making the mistake that they will seek you out is simply - a mistake. In fact, over 80% of all local news stories are a result of a simple press release.

#10: Finally, BIG MEGA MARKETING MISTAKE #10 - “**Too Infrequent Contact With Present Customers.**” Now, I just told you that referrals and lost customers are the 2nd and 3rd easiest customers to get, but if you haven’t already guessed, your present customers are the first. The best way to accomplish this is to simply increase the frequency of your contacts with them. It is amazing to me how many businesses think they can mail or call their customers

too frequently. Golfers, in particular are avid about the game, even those who aren't accomplished golfers. Many will just eat up anything you send them. You can contact them too frequently, but you are probably not even close. Here are the facts of a survey conducted by DIRECT Magazine in 1999(this is for all businesses, not just golf courses):

“The proper frequency to contact your customers is every 20-days.”

Perhaps even worse, the survey showed that for every month that you do not contact your customers, you lose your relationship with 10% of them. So if you wait 10-months, you might as well be mailing to the phone book.

And, let's think about the seasonal golf business. If you don't communicate with your database during the off-season, they may forget about you or next season they may try a new golf course and form new golfing habits. Keep them engaged and build a relationship all year long. When the season begins have them chomping at the bit to get to your course and keep them there all season long.

So what does this mean for your golf business? Weekly emails with great offers? Monthly direct mail newsletters? Birthday cards? Special post card offers? Invitations to special events? You need to plan this out and find what works for you. But, you really can't over-

communicate with your golfing customers. There's magic in increased frequency.



**THE PRICE OF DOING NOTHING
IS VERY EXPENSIVE**

How To Develop A Golf Course Marketing SYSTEM That Consistently Generates a Flood of Golfers

Observation from years of golfing and working directly with a number of golf courses on their marketing and advertising: **Very few golf courses have a real marketing strategy or system that is working all the time for them.**

Ours is a great industry, offering the golfing public much enjoyment, competition, the experience of the outdoors, socializing and so much more. It's a great game and most of our courses provide a great value and service to our golfers. But, the economy is tough, too many courses have been built, golf participation by younger people may be waning and other forces like Tiger's problems are causing all of us to fight for all the rounds of golf we can.

So, many golf courses have decided they need to market and advertise in hopes of creating the proverbial line of golfers on the first tee, all day, every day. Isn't it great when "demand" exceeds "supply"? It doesn't happen by accident, but how to do it?

But if you look around at all the golf course owners and golf management professionals you know – probably yourself included – you will see people trying to achieve success by repeating accidents. By random acts of marketing, getting erratic results, full golf course

one day, no tee times the next. Being able to somehow find or attract several ideal new golfers, events and outings this week, but having your time wasted on strategies with spotty results or intended for the wrong audience. To escape this, you must have:

Reliable,

Predictable,

Consistent

SYSTEMS

That

Affordably and
Efficiently

Provide
Abundant
Quantities of
Quality

Prospects, Golfers,
Students, Outings,
Events and Members

Key word: SYSTEM. By definition, a system is organized, reliable and consistent and therefore capable of delivering consistently predictable results. This means you are NOT advertising or doing prospecting work wondering what the results may be; you know in advance as if psychic. That means you go to bed EVERY night KNOWING, within a small range of variance, what tomorrow will bring. Further, a system works for you. It is designed to replace a certain amount of manual

labor. This should be your purpose for your marketing strategy... to develop a system or systems that produce for you all the time

So, as a reference tool, let me give you a couple quick checklists...

First, to dissect the definition:

Affordability: your marketing systems must deliver profitable results. You have to know what a golfer, outing organizer or member is worth to you and then decide what you are reasonably willing to invest to acquire one. Then build systems that work within that limit. There's no free lunch, so if a golfer is worth \$1,000.00 and you're willing to spend \$10.00, you're a fool, and you might as well exit now; that's not how you build any business and achieve financial success. On the other hand, this is about putting a stop to waste. *(One of my roles is a Certified No BS Business Advisor for Glazer Kennedy Insider's Circle. At some point, I'd recommend getting and reading, Dan Kennedy's book NO BS GUIDE TO RUTHLESS MANAGEMENT OF PEOPLE AND PROFITS, his chapter on "Numbers", which goes into great depth about 'customer value' and other metrics your accountant doesn't use but you should. The book is available at www.nobsbooks.com or at Amazon.)*

Efficiency: your systems must be "targeted", to reach only those people most likely to buy; High Probability Prospects. Without this shift in thinking, you'll never achieve consistent affordability. Beyond

that, a huge benefit of getting your Golf Course Marketing Systems working for you is Time Efficiency. The more of the work that leads up to selling and developing a golfer/member you can put on auto-pilot and have done for you by media (letters, web sites, etc.), the more of your time gets invested only in the highest value functions, so you make more money from less time.

Quantity/Quality: whatever your income goal, it dictates a certain quantity of lead, prospect and customer flow, which requires a certain amount of investment. You should know those numbers as they presently work for your golf course. Now, by improving the “quality” of both the prospects selected and reached and the communication with them, you can change those numbers for the better....getting more from less. By the way, not only should you invest to get a new golfer, but invest to keep a golfer. If a member is spending \$3,000 to \$5,000 per year (obviously much more at upscale private clubs) isn't it worth it to spend a few hundred per year communicating with him or maybe even giving him some unexpected freebies?

Next...what are the key elements of a golf course marketing system?.....

1: A selected group of prospects (sometimes referred to as a “farm”, “farm area” or “target market”). Note: What you need to do is analyze your golfer database. Who are your best customers? Do you even have a list? Now identify a geographic area and characteristics that you want to go after (this is the “farm”). There can be different

“farms” for various areas of your business... league members, weekend golfers, businesses, event planners, tourists, etc. Start to think about these groups and how you might slice and dice them to market to them as niches.

2: Appropriate media for best reaching those prospects. For some it might be direct-mail, and for some a big postcard; for others a personal letter in an envelope; etc., or it might be e-mail; it might be advertising in some newspaper, journal or magazine; it might be Val-Pak. (Many golf courses have fallen in love with email marketing. It's great, but that's not the only solution.)

There is no good or bad media per se. The question is always: how can we best cut through clutter and gain the attention of these particular prospects? And, almost always, you want to avoid “one shot” marketing in favor of a sequence, often using more than one media. You need to stay in front of your prospects and current customers on a regular basis and catch their attention by multiple means.

3: A compelling message of strong interest to your chosen prospects. Get away from big, broad, sloppy, one size fits all marketing messages that could apply to any golf course....and stop talking so much about your golf course, your staff, your facilities... talk about THEIR interests, desires, fears and frustrations. What is that they really want? What is inside their heads?

4: An “irresistible offer”. In getting new prospects to step forward, indicate interest, give you permission and invitation to sell to them, this is often done by creating and offering something they consider to be “irresistible”. And, the offer will be different for different audiences. For example:

- For prospective new golfers in your “farm” it might be a free round of golf with a cart.
- For new students for your golf academy, it might be a free DVD from your teaching pro on his 7 Secrets to The Short Game.
- For the corporate sales guy, it might be a Free Downloadable report on the 10 Mistakes Businesses Make When Planning their Golf Outing.
- For the bride it could be a Wedding Planning Checklist.
- For the parent of a young golfer it might be an invitation to a meeting where you will discuss the reasons the great game of golf can teach great life lessons.

The point here is to get them to indicate some level of interest so you and they can start to develop a relationship.

5: A means of response and “capture”. Interested, ‘high probability prospects’ need easy, non-threatening ways to respond – you may use your regular phone number, also a free recorded message line, a web site, a fax-back form, a reply card, coupons; different options for different situations. If driving people to a web site to obtain the information you offer, be sure it “captures” as much of

the person's contact information as possible (ideally their home mailing address, so you can send things to them).

6: Multi-step, short-term follow-up. The information should carry with it a second "irresistible offer" – tied to whatever next step you want the prospect to take, such as calling to schedule a tee time or coming into the pro shop or visiting the range. Then a series of follow-up "touches" by mail, e-mail, fax, phone, etc. are tied to the expiring deadline of that offer. This can use a "First Notice; Second Notice; Third Notice" structure which continues to get attention and increases response over a "one shot" offer and mailing.

7: "Maintenance follow-up" of unconverted leads. People who do not respond immediately – within your first few weeks of intense follow-up - may have many reasons for "maturing" into buyers more slowly. There IS value in this bank of slow-to-mature prospects. They should continue hearing from you once to several times a month.

Some Summary Thoughts about Marketing Systems:

This is a "Rome that isn't built in a day" for most golf courses, and you may be too quickly tempted to think it sounds too complicated or like too much work or not well suited to your golf course. But this is the path to liberty, so it *shouldn't* be brain-dead easy or child's play simple. By 'path to liberty' I mean that this – and only this – can transform your golf course from those random acts and erratic results

of endlessly repetitive manual labor, cold prospecting or wasteful advertising to a golf course running on a true marketing system.

To get started, just work on one area, think of it as a system and develop all the components. This report can be your checklist to get you started.

And, one very important thing I want to stress to you is that there are many vendors of components of these systems, many of which you can implement cost effectively on a “Done for You” Basis. Some can be plugged right into systems you already have. So, you don’t have to know all the technology, marketing theory, copywriting, etc. One of our areas of specialty is to search out and make available those systems for you. And, you should have the mindset that implementing these systems can relieve you of the need for being the “doer” or the expert

MY BIG BREAKTHROUGH- I FOUND ADVERTISING AND MARKETING THAT REALLY WORKS

**(Some dirty secrets the advertising agencies don't want
you to know)**

Several years ago, I responded to an ad about ways to grow my restaurant business dramatically. It really caught my attention, so I called a toll-free number and signed up to receive a free newsletter. Through this newsletter and associated marketing group, I was introduced to “direct response” advertising. It completely changed the way I look at advertising and media. It dramatically increased my sales and profits.

Here are some basic concepts of the type of advertising that I teach to my entrepreneurs and golf courses;

No BS Rules- Direct Response Marketing Is the Focus

1. There will ALWAYS be an offer or offers
2. There will always be a reason to respond right now
3. There will be clear instructions on how to respond
4. There will be tracking and measurement

5. Whatever brand-building that occurs will be a happy byproduct, not bought
6. There will be follow up
7. There will be strong sales copy, not vague hyperbole
8. In general, it will look like a “mail order ad”
9. **Results rule, period.**

Now, I told you I'd tell you some dirty little secrets that the advertising agencies don't want you to know. Look at the list above. See #4? That's the one about tracking and measurement. I actually teach people how to track the Return On Investment (ROI) from their advertising. Do the ad agencies or media sellers suggest you track the ROI on the money you spend with them? They don't want that kind of accountability. They will talk to you about drive time impressions or exposure, but real ROI? NO WAY!!

So, that's the first dirty secret, they don't want you to know if you've made any money on your ads.

The second thing they talk about is “building the brand”. Great if you've got gobs of money to invest. But, if you are like most golf courses and other small businesses, you can't afford to compete with Nike or TaylorMade. So, I teach you to forget about advertising to build your brand. Invest only in marketing that works. Don't waste it

on building your brand. (I want you to build a brand, but do it by delivering great service and customer value every day.)

The third dirty secret is that ad agencies are all about creative, good looking ads that win awards and please the customer. So, they will try to do something that makes the buyer of the ad feel good about their business. Or impresses them. Or wins an Addy Award at their local marketing meeting. But do they ever win awards for results? I haven't heard of anything like that; have you?



**"CAN SOMEBODY REMIND ME WHY WE
THOUGHT STOPPING OUR DIRECT MAIL
CAMPAIGN WAS A GOOD IDEA?"**

Direct Mail-The Golf Industry Has Forgotten About This Great Tool

What I've noticed is that many of the web site vendors, golf course Point of Sale vendors and other so-called marketing experts seem to be in love with email. And, there's no doubt that email is an important tool. Social media and text message marketing are also growing. But, the old tried and true direct mail still works. Despite what some may think about the digital age, Internet marketing and so forth, direct mail is still providing very strong results for those using it, including the few in the golf industry who are direct mail practitioners.

So, the first question in direct mail is how you get the list (remember Marketing Mistake #2: Always Build Your List). Here's are potential Sources for your direct mail projects:

1. Rent a list from a commercial list broker/vendor.
2. Turnkey List vendors.
3. Do it yourself by compiling from directories, online lists, etc. (Sneaky approach.)
4. Extract from your own house or golfer list

5. Lead Generation from advertising or via affiliates who provide the names.

6. Harvesting the best of others' lists. (From joint ventures, product distribution lists, exchanges of lists, provide free content or free gifts to others' lists, etc.)

7. On site collection from incoming calls, take one displays, tee time sign-ups, business cards at trade shows, etc.

8. From paid "bird dogs" who search out leads for you.

9. From referrals.

Now another nugget about direct mail lists. What do you think is the hierarchy of lists as to their value for you as a marketer? Which lists will be most effective? Here's the list from most effective to least:

Hierarchy of mailing list value: (highest first)

1. Segmented house list, your own golfer database.

2. Unsorted or unsegmented house list

3. Responses from lead generation (i.e. expressed interest).
Using demographics, psychographics, geographics, buying behavior, etc.

4. Compiled list from various sources also using the same types of sorts as in 3. above.

5. Compiled lists using limited sorting on only a few demographics or geographics (without psychographics, buying behavior, etc.)

6. White pages (i.e. mail to the phone book).

Bonus: Special Checklist for Your Direct Mail Piece

(In this special report we only talk about some of the basics. Obviously, you will be mailing something to the list. While the list is important, it's critical that the piece is effective. We can't get into all the issues of direct response marketing here, but below I've provided a checklist I use with some of my clients and entrepreneurs to do quick analysis of any ad, sales letter, postcard, etc...)

Things to consider when reviewing an ad or sales letter

1. Does it really use a direct response approach?
2. How is the headline? Compelling, plain vanilla, me too? Does it really draw you in?
3. Testimonials? Are there any? Are they done right? (full name, city, etc.) Do they relate?
4. Features vs. benefits? (Instead of talking about features, do they tell you the benefit?)
5. Unique Selling Proposition? Is it evident? Is it clear why the product or service should be your unique choice?
6. Organization- is it logical and organized or a mish-mash?
7. Style- consistent and appropriate?
8. Offer and call to action- strong and clear how to respond?
9. Guarantee- Is there one and is it strong?
10. Format/media- aligned with audience and the media?
11. Misc. – premiums, cosmetics, etc. Are there any? Are they effective?

ACTION PLAN FOR YOUR GOLF COURSE

...STEPS TO TAKE RIGHT NOW

I know that we've discussed much in this report and I hope you've gotten some good ideas of where to go from here. Some summary ideas of next steps I'd recommend for you:

- Critically evaluate your own attitude about this situation in the golf industry. Do you really believe you can be one of the winners?
- Meet with your staff and rally them around the opportunities that still exist. Lots of money is still floating around and it is your job to grab the biggest share possible. You need to compete. Hope is not a strategy.
- Take a critical look at your marketing. Eliminate everything that is not measurable.
- Start implementing direct response marketing for all your advertising and marketing. Make your dollars work for you.
- Make sure you have critical systems to build your list, communicate with your golfers, ask for referrals, go after lost golfers, use multiple media, etc.
- Work on your marketing message. What makes your golf business truly unique? Use this unique message all the time.

Finally, realize that you are still in control of your destiny. Most golf courses will keep doing what they've always done. Marketing is truly the lifeblood of your business and you need to become an expert marketer, even if that takes you outside your comfort zone. If you are the golf course with aggressive marketing strategies, you will be one of the survivors and many of your competitors will be working for you.



- **About the Author, John S. Cohoat**

John has over 30 years experience as a business owner, executive and entrepreneur with proven expertise in marketing and business strategy. John provides entrepreneurial business coaching and consulting in success strategy, copywriting, sales, advertising and direct response marketing. John has consulted with several golf courses.

Not your typical industry insider, John challenges many myths in the advertising/marketing world. He also is expert at spotting trends and techniques in other industries which can be transferred successfully to the golf business. He heads up Golf Course Marketing Systems, bringing non-traditional, cost effective marketing strategies to our golf industry clients. If marketing has never been a strong suit for you, John will be your architect for market domination with practical tools and tips.

John is the recent author of *“No Thank You, Mr. President”*, a book about how companies in Elkhart County, Indiana are standing up and fighting in spite of the economic turmoil, without massive government bail-outs. The book profiles ten companies from Elkhart County and includes a foreword from legendary football coach Lou Holtz and a bonus chapter on responding to the recession from entrepreneurial guru, Dan Kennedy.

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