Staffing Considerations

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Introduction

In order for any player development program to succeed, everyone at the facility must be willing to play a role in growing the game. From the person who answers the phone call from a potential new golfer; to the general manager who sees opportunity to fill in off-peak times on the tee sheet with new golfers; to the instructor giving lessons and building customer loyalty. Undoubtedly, the player development programs that receive assistance from every level at the facility enjoy the most success.

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Education

The first and probably most important step to running a successful player development program is educating the staff.

- Start by educating the general manager or owner of the facility. Tell “The story” of why a player development program will benefit the facility. Discover what their growth initiatives are for the facility. Are the goals: more rounds, increase of membership, increase in food and beverage sales, increase in merchandise sales, etc…? Show them how a player development program can help attain those goals.
- Once buy-in is created from the general manager/golf course owner, you will need to create buy-in at all other levels. With the decision maker on board now, it will be easier. For example:
  - Show the Food and Beverage manager that by hosting weekly and monthly events for newcomers, food and beverage sales will grow.
  - Show the Merchandise Manager, that having a player development program that attracts non-golfers, golfers coming back into the game, and occasional golfers; with little, out-dated, or no equipment at all, substantial amounts of merchandise and equipment can be sold.
The tougher coworker to generate buy-in from is the front-line coworker who just doesn’t see what benefit a player development program will bring to them personally. The “What’s in it for me?” question may pop up. You can’t just say, “It’s your job!” Try that and see how they answer the phone next time someone calls for you to book a lesson!

Stephen Covey, in his best-selling book, “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,” mentions the importance of depositing into people’s “emotional bank accounts” before withdrawing from them. The more deposits of kindness, honesty, compliments, courtesy and trust that are deposited into someone’s “emotional bank account,” the higher the relationship goes. Through time, the emotional reserve that gets built up with that person is so high that it is easy to communicate and get support.

But if the “emotional bank account” is empty from showing discourtesy, betraying trust, ignoring, disrespecting, etc., then when mistakes happen or requests are made of that individual, the “emotional account” becomes overdrawn. If that happens, even something as minor as trying to get a coworker to answer the phones the way you would like them to will not happen.

Think of the consequences to you and your program. If this individual, is the first person that a potential client of yours makes contact with, your lesson business will suffer greatly. Good news! It’s never too late to start making “deposits!”

Training

After everyone at your facility has been educated and understands the importance of having a player development program, the training process should begin. Here are some techniques to consider:

- It’s best if training can be conducted with everyone present versus one-on-one training. Buy some pizzas and drinks one night and have everyone attend.
- Always start and end your training at the designated times. You will lose your audience’s interest level and commitment if you go past the time the meeting was supposed to end.
- Make training fun and interactive. Don’t just make it a download session. This keeps interest level high with the opportunity to pick up some new ideas.
- Concerns and challenges may arise. Determine in advance how you will handle these challenges. Keep the meeting focused on the training and if
time permits, address the challenges afterwards. Don’t just ignore the challenges. It’s important that everyone is heard and shown that you care.

- Give handouts if possible. If you are training front-line coworkers on how you want the phone to be answered, prepare a script along with a cheat sheet or FAQ page so that they have the information at their fingertips. Make it as easy as possible for them.

- Put your coworkers through a player development class. If they experience what the guest experiences with your class, not only will they be more knowledgeable to answer questions, but you’ve just created sales people that will help you sell your programs.

- Hold a training session with the teaching staff at your facility. Conduct role playing exercises by having instructors give each other lessons. The instructor playing the role of the student, uses clubs that are opposite of what he or she hits with. This is a great exercise to remind everyone of what it feels like to be a beginner, as well as a great learning experience for the teacher working with a new golfer. Identify the emotions that everyone went through during the role playing experience. Create best practices that address the emotions that students may go through when taking lessons.

Staffing

With the education and training conducted, next, identify who is willing to help with the program. Consider some of the following key roles of staff.

- **Golf Course Owner/Operator** – This person should assist in getting the rest of the team on board. Should see to it that your program is included in any marketing efforts for the facility. List the program on course collateral such as cart signs, scorecards, tee signs or bench advertisements, etc.….  

- **Designated PGA or LPGA Professional** – If you cannot fully dedicate yourself to the program, find a professional who can. Choose someone with good people skills, communication skills and teaching skills. Someone who demonstrates good leadership qualities. Someone who is not afraid to go offsite and market the program, building community and corporate relationships.

- **Program Administrator** – This may be you or the instructor that you chose to champion the program. Perhaps it warrants giving someone at the site additional payroll hours for helping out with the administrative duties. This role could include checking the web site for signups, making sure student payments are received and processed, posting and maintaining schedules on-line, conducting follow-up reporting, and managing the student database.

- **Marketing** – Really everyone at your site should be involved with marketing and selling your program. However, you may choose someone from your staff that shows great enthusiasm about the program, has an outgoing personality, and is a great communicator. Requirements of this position could
include: following up with requests for brochures, flyers, and other information about the program; making sure the on-site collateral is current and stocked and marketing to previous students. Perhaps incentives or commissions could be given for sales made.

- **Volunteers** – Volunteers can provide great assistance in helping you grow your program. From mentoring new golfers by assisting them on the golf course, to helping out at large clinics and orientations. There are many opportunities for volunteers to help out.

PGA apprentices, PGA Life Members, college students on golf teams, past and present students that have or are going through your program, golf course rangers, marshals or ambassadors; all are potential volunteers.

One important note: before asking for help, check with your facility’s or company’s policy regarding the use of volunteers. Clear any volunteers with your facility manager before having them help. In certain states there may be insurance issues that need to be cleared or company policies that identify what a volunteer can or cannot do. Play it safe. Don’t take any chances.

**Conclusion**

Additional resources can be found in the “**Resource Center**” under “**Program Tool Kit**” that are downloadable and can be used for training or as guidelines for you and your staff. *Build your team and it will build your business!*

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