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FROM THE CEO  
**VANTAGE  
POINT**

BY JAY KAREN  
CEO  
NGCOA  
JAY@NGCOA.ORG

## Do you know what customers want?

I just finished reading an article in the Wall Street Journal about the movie theater business and the challenges theater owners face to stay alive. No surprise here, they have been seriously disrupted by streaming entertainment services, such as Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, etc.

Traditional movie theaters have been closing down around America, and yet entertainment and movie consumption has been on the rise. Like with traditional golf courses, movie theaters only survive and thrive if people show up. And that's an existential question, when consumers are getting used to everything coming to them, wherever they may be (think: DoorDash, Amazon, Netflix, etc.)

In the face of such adversity and change, the article highlights theater owners who are investing – all the time – in enhanced customer experiences. As a result, they see positive financial returns. Upgraded seating, new projection and sound technology are musts. Instead of just Milk Duds and popcorn, think quesadillas and your local IPA on the menu. Theaters are employing mobile apps for customer engagement as well.

I see a few lessons for golf course owners and operators in this story.

**1.** No matter what the macro story of supply and demand may be in our industry, a great business owner will change with the winds and find the openings to success. Did you move the check-in counter to the bar, and are you serving up local brew? Are you opting for the best-in-class golf cars with great GPS, charging stations and bluetooth speakers? Are you selling Haagen Dazs ice cream bars from the F&B cart, rather than just Snickers? Are you installing gamification and entertainment centers on the range?

**2.** Think about downsizing capacity to upgrade the experience. When theaters rip out the old seats and go for the big, comfy

ones that take up twice the space, it means they have less inventory to sell. When the busiest weeks of the year hit for theaters, imagine having 50 percent fewer seats to sell. That's a risk! But that elbow room and ability to recline is what theatergoers want. Could a golf course that goes to 12- or 15-minute tee intervals become the course of choice in the market, because of the upgraded experience? Could you begin by doing that on non-peak times at first? Movie theaters don't have the luxury of changing out seat sizes, once they are installed. But you could try it for a couple of months and gauge reaction.

**3.** Instead of standing in line, movie patrons can pre-order their tickets, food and beverage on mobile apps. That removes one of the most annoying parts of the traditional experience. What should golf courses be doing to remove any of the annoying experiences? Can your golfers interact with you via text? If I can do this with my vet and my dentist, I should be able to do this with my favorite golf courses. But lo and behold, I can't. We can do better. We have a nation of young people who would rather communicate by typing than talking. How are we moving towards them, instead of waiting for them?

What about the golfer experience at your place is significantly different than 10 years ago? If the answer is nothing or very little, it may be time to evaluate your business goals. I do realize every public golf course is capital-challenged, but I will argue that's true for any small business. There are opportunities to improve the experience without having to raise half a million to put in new seats. As the WSJ author points out, if you want to succeed, don't look to what your investors want (and that may be the person reading this) – look to what your customer wants. That's the only way forward, my friends. **FB**

**Boots Gifford**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
bgifford@ngcoa.org

**Jessica Stout**  
EDITORIAL ART DIRECTOR  
jstout@ngcoa.org

**CONTRIBUTORS**  
Steve Eubanks, David Gould,  
Scott Kauffman, Doug Mcpherson,  
Sally J. Sportsman

#### ADVERTISING STAFF

**Kelly Macpherson**  
SENIOR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE  
CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS  
kmacpherson@ngcoa.org

**Victoria Lane-Ward**  
ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE  
CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS  
vianeward@ngcoa.org

**Barbara Searle**  
CLASSIFIEDS, GOLF COURSE MARKET  
bsearle@ngcoa.org

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Golf Business®, USPS #016-601, ISSN #10995943, is published 10 times a year in January, February, March, April, May, June, July/August, September, October and November/December by the National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA), 291 Seven Farms Drive, 2nd Floor, Charleston, SC 29492, (843) 881-9956. Golf Business is distributed free to qualified subscribers and is \$49 for 1-year U.S. non-qualified. Single copy and back issue price \$10 in the U.S. and \$15 in Canada. U.S. funds only. For address changes, eight weeks' notice required. The articles and other information in this publication are advisory only and are not intended to represent the views, opinions, or endorsement of the NGCOA. ©2020, National Golf Course Owners Association. All rights reserved under International and Pan American copyright conventions. The publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited material. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. Printed in the U.S.A. Periodicals postage paid at Charleston, SC and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to Golf Business, c/o NGCOA, 291 Seven Farms Dr, Charleston SC 29464.



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**VIEWPOINT**  
**ADDRESSING  
 THE ISSUES**

**BY RONNIE MILES**  
 DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY  
 NGCOA  
 RMILES@NGCOA.ORG

## Golf industry heads to Capitol Hill

National Golf Day 2020 is just right around the corner on May 4-6 in Washington, D.C.

Led by the We Are Golf coalition, National Golf Day celebrates the golf and club industries' impact on the national economy, its charitable impact and many environmental and fitness benefits.

Founded in 2010, the We Are Golf coalition originally was made up of the PGA of America, the World Golf Foundation, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, the Club Managers Association of America and the National Golf Course Owners Association. The membership later was expanded to include the American Society of Golf Course Architects, Golf Course Builders Association of America, the Ladies Professional Golf Association, the National Club Association, the United States Golf Association, U.S. Manufacturers Council and the PGA Tour.

Through National Golf Day we have successfully increased awareness of the golf industry on Capitol Hill, in the White House and among federal agencies. We celebrate the game's nearly \$84 billion economy, nearly \$4 billion annual charitable impact and many environmental and fitness benefits. Industry leaders meet with members of Congress, the executive branch and federal agencies to discuss golf's 15,000-plus diverse businesses, two million jobs impacted, tax revenue creation and tourism value.

"National Golf Day is an opportunity to share our message with the highest elected U.S. officials," says Jay Karen, CEO of National Golf Course Owners Association and chair of the WE ARE GOLF board. "Lawmakers are able to hear first-hand

how golf benefits their respective districts, cities and states."

The three-day event will be held at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City at Reagan National Airport, kicking off May 4 with a briefing for those participating in the community project. On Tuesday, May 5, attendees will have an opportunity to get their hands dirty by participating in this year's community project event. This effort spearheaded by the GCSAA will include turf restoration and general landscape beautification projects between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument. Our goal is to leave Washington, D.C., better than we found it.

Following a busy morning outdoors, attendees will reconvene that afternoon for the kickoff event featuring a guest speaker followed by a briefing on the scheduled meetings and the golf industry issues being presented during our visits on Capitol Hill. That evening attendees are invited to a Congressional reception hosted in the Kennedy Caucus Room in the Russell Senate Office Building.

Wednesday, May 6, is our big day on the Hill. Attendees will be meeting with their respective U.S. representatives from their home districts and their state's U.S. senators. While many of these meetings will be with the official's staff, it is important to remember these are key staff members with great influence, and will carry our messages to our representatives or senators.

But the most important message we must leave behind is that golf, in its many forms, plays a critical role in the health and financial wellbeing of our communities and states.

For more information, go online to [wearegolf.org/national-golf-day](http://wearegolf.org/national-golf-day).



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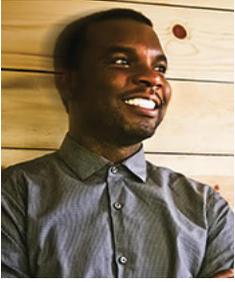
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**VIEWPOINT**  
**COALITION CONCERNS**

BY JARED WILLIAMS  
 MANAGING DIRECTOR  
 GOLF USA TEE TIME COALITION  
 JWILLIAMS@NGCOA.ORG

# Penney for your thoughts

More tee times available. For golfers and those in the business of golf these are four words that are typically met with positivity and excitement. More tee times means more business for the golf course and more opportunity for the golfer. This week's onset of daylight savings times will bring just that—more inventory.

Ironically, this also means that there is more tee time inventory available for Online Tee Time Agents (OTTAs), many of which accept barter for compensation. Barter has its well-documented drawbacks for golf courses, many which could be resolved with simple changes to business practices—taking a golf course friendly approach.

I'm reminded of a few quotes from James Cash Penney, founder of JC Penney. Much like the golf course industry, he has closed more stores than he has opened in recent years. Much of that was due to the influx of internet retail outlets. The brick and mortar stores that bore much of the operational costs started getting squeezed out as customers shifted their buying power to more agile, online shopping sites.

Still, we can take note of one reason his company is still in business. JC Penney ran (and runs) its business based on principles of integrity and by employing the Golden Rule in all its dealings with customers. These are tenets of not only the game of golf, but the very way the industry conducts itself generally. In fact, this is what allows golf to be considered a gentleman's game.

JC Penney once said that "a merchant who approaches business with the idea of serving the public well has nothing to fear from the competition. Our idea was to make money and build business through serving the community with fair dealing and honest value."

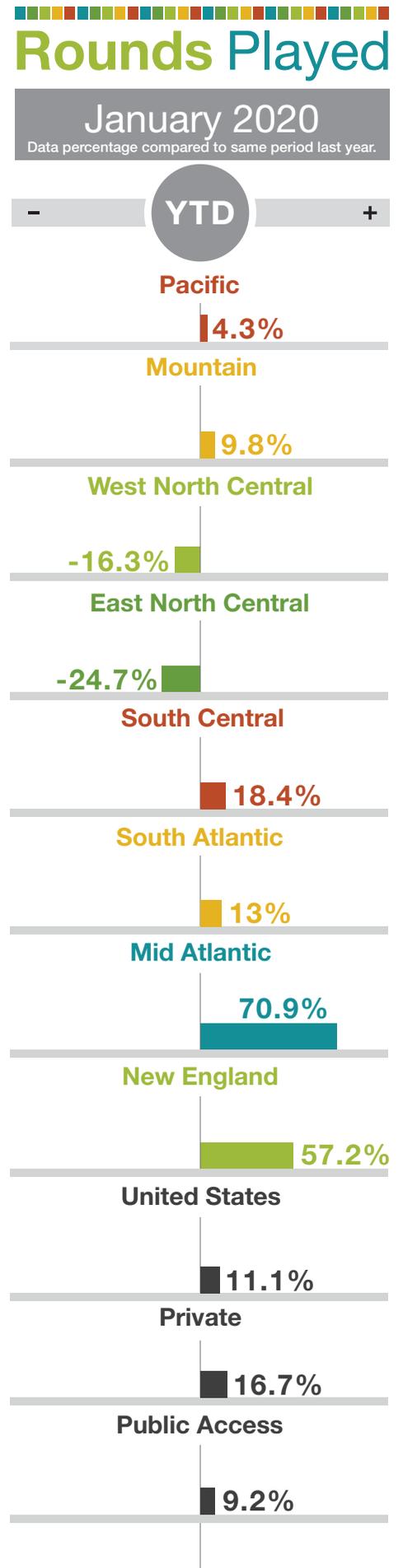
He's absolutely right. When you build your business, innovate, and grow your revenue with the focus on good business practices that go above and beyond to serve the public there is no need to worry about what your competitors are doing.

But what we've seen consistently in the tee time segment of the golf industry is that, OTTAs compete for golf course's business based on their respective business model and business practices. This is why competition has been healthy and necessary.

Mergers to monopoly are not always deemed illegal based on a company simply having an overwhelming market share in a particular segment of the industry. Think about what your options are if you want to have satellite radio in your automobile. Sirius XM has what can only be described as a monopoly on satellite radio in North America, and there are no signs of blossoming competition. EnLink's, the blossoming competitor with a parallel offering and business model has now been acquired by NBC Sports Group. Combined, GolfNow and EZLinks' market share of golf management software and distribution is estimated to be at least 70% and possibly upwards of 90%.

What causes the most concern is when market dominance enhances an already established pattern of behavior that is not in the best interest of the companies' customers. My concern is that the GolfNow's merger with EZLinks is not in the best interest of the golf course or the golfer, the two customer-bases it serves.

If you have any specific ideas on what a successful challenge of the GolfNow/EZLinks merger might look like, from a course owner/operators' perspective, please share your thoughts ([jwilliams@tee-timecoalition.org](mailto:jwilliams@tee-timecoalition.org)).





**NAME:** Stacey Hobbs

**TITLE:** Owner

**COURSE:** The Golf Club at Summerbrooke

**LOCATION:** Tallahassee, FL

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# INNOVATION INSIGHTS

LEADING TECHNOLOGY NEWS

BY SCOTT KAUFFMAN

## Turf vehicles on auto-pilot highlight at GIS

For more than 20 years, the Toro Co. has been working on advancing its proprietary GPS-based technology so a variety of turf vehicles can one day be truly autonomous. The fruits of Toro's innovative pursuits are finally starting to mature from a marketing perspective, and they were in high fashion at this year's Golf Industry Show in Orlando.

Indeed, occupying their usual high-profile convention floor footprint with the company's fire-red logo visible from much of the convention center's cavernous space, two Toro vehicles grabbing a lot of attention from course managers and superintendents this year were the newly released Multi Pro 5800 sprayer with GeoLink AS (autosteer) and the company's latest autonomous mower.

These vehicles introduced at this year's conference and show are the product of a new suite of autonomous technologies called GeoLink Solutions after decades of research and development driven by "significant customer input," according to Toro. Toro goes on to say the Bloomington, Minnesota-based company has "taken an intentional approach with the goal of developing the right products, at the right time, for the right purpose."

With technologies becoming better, faster and more affordable, not to mention greater acceptance towards autonomous solutions from turf managers, the timing couldn't be better. At least for the new Multi Pro 5800, which features a 300-gallon dedicated spray that "takes efficiency to new heights."

Powered by Toro's GeoLink AS technology platform released last year, the new sprayer delivers precision coverage of chemical applications, "virtually eliminating the risk of overlap spraying or missing target areas," according to Toro. The company



Toro vehicles grabbing a lot of attention from course managers and superintendents this year were the newly released Multi Pro 5800 sprayer with GeoLink AS (autosteer) and the company's latest autonomous mower.

further adds the GeoLink AS system also ensures the machine follows optimal travel routes stored in the system – contours included – and fully utilizes all of the nozzles on the spray boom for a "faster, more efficient spray process."

Moreover, the autosteer feature makes it "easy for operators of different skill levels to use the vehicle," while stored data about contoured travel routes, as well as straight line passes, enhances efficiency and productivity gains on any target area, no matter the shape.

According to Toro Senior Marketing Manager Josh Tubbs, the cost of integrating the GeoLink auto-steer technology to the sprayer is about \$4,000 to \$5,000.

Though the new Multi Pro 5800 sprayer is certainly getting the attention of superintendents, the real market makers are the concept autonomous greens and fairway mowers Toro had on display. The Reelmaster and Greensmaster concept units have

been tested at some select courses but Tubbs did not have a date when they will officially be available for sale.

Some of the innovative features demonstrated by Toro are built-in detection capability that ensures avoidance of obstacles and the ability to store and select a variety of defined mowing boundaries and patterns that the concept mowers can utilize autonomously – despite poor visibility/conditions and during the cleanup pass. The future of this autonomous next level concept mower, Tubbs points out, is where you become "the mower's co-worker." Imagine the mower autonomously mowing a fairway, Tubbs adds, "while you're nearby cleaning your bunkers."

When asked about the demand and interest for these new concept autonomous mowers, Tubbs says, "Willingness from the consumers (to use these) are starting to align with the advancements in our technology." 



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# THE START

NEWS & VIEWS TO PROPEL YOUR BUSINESS



## Setting an Alternative Table

'Pop-Ups' Among Offerings for Golfers and Families

By Sally J. Sportsman

What's old is new again. Reminiscent of ice cream trucks and hot dog stands of years gone by, "pop-ups," relative newcomers to the dining experience at many public, private and resort golf facilities, offer a contrast to traditional clubhouse dining. They are part of a growing trend on the part of club owners to add dining experiences with a more casual feel for the enjoyment of members and guests.

At Arrowhead Country Club, a private facility in Glendale, Arizona, near Phoenix, a myriad of dining and banquet venues is available. Recently members, families and guests have discovered another magnet that keeps them returning to the club instead of seeking restaurants in the city: food trucks.

"We started bringing in food trucks last fall," says Scott Richmond, general manager of Arrowhead, "just to get our name out

General Manager, Scott Richmond introduced food trucks to keep members coming back for an alternative style of dining.

© Photos by Amanda Karis Photography

more in the community and differentiate ourselves. It's a way for friends of members to get interested in joining, see that we are an interactive club and get over the notion that country clubs are just for golfers."

Arrowhead features a circular driveway in front of the clubhouse with an expanse of green lawn surrounding it. Every third month on a Saturday evening, food trucks line the circle. The events are advertised both to members and the public and planned so they don't conflict with weddings and other happenings at the club. A crowd of 600-700 people has attended each food truck night so far, staying an average of almost two hours.

"Food truck nights attract people who have never been here or even heard of us," Richmond says. "It helps us with new member recruitment."

Live bands play sing-along music, with dancing and face painting going on. Families with children – lots of children, according to Richmond – attend each time. Typically, 10 to 14 trucks participate, each with a different kind of food: burgers and fries, fish and chips, chicken on a stick, desserts.



© Photos courtesy of Los Robles Greens Golf Course

***"Food truck nights attract people who have never been here or even heard of us."***

**– Scott Richmond, Arrowhead Country Club**

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Los Robles takes a different approach to drawing in clientele. Memberships to their quarterly wine club include a five course dinner and wine education.

## **“We would like to get 100 or even 200 members in our wine club.”**

**– Jack Swisher**

Themed trucks offer Hawaiian or Mexican food. The clubhouse restaurant is closed during food truck nights, but the club runs a cash bar outside. People pay only for food or drink; there is no admission fee.

Food truck nights, according to Richmond, add value to membership and keep fun things happening at the club so members feel connected. Attendance has risen at each of the last three events, he says, as has revenue.

The club does not charge a truck fee. A local company is hired to organize the vendors and promote the events on social media platforms. That company provides all the set up and clean up. All the club needs to do is set up the outdoor bar and staff it with three bartenders for five hours.

Food truck nights are not intended to produce a significant financial windfall, according to Chris Crocker, chief marketing officer of Arcis Golf, which manages Arrowhead. “Rather, it’s about what experience

we can bring forward to members and the community?”

Los Robles Greens Golf Course, a municipal facility in Thousand Oaks, California, also has a successful food truck program, with five events annually. What’s also taking hold at this daily-fee course is a wine club, which was started in August of last year and already has a membership of 50. The wine club dinners, for which members pay a fee, feature wine from all over the world. A five-course Italian dinner, for example, might include five different wines. The dinners also include wine education sessions.

“Our idea was to encourage golfers to play and then enjoy a dining experience other than what usually draws them here,” says Jack Swisher, PGA, general manager of Los Robles. “Not one wine club member has cancelled.”

There is a \$39 quarterly fee to join the wine club, which includes two bottles of wine each quarter, retrieved at “pick-up

parties” held on a Sunday afternoon. Everyone gets the same two bottles, but optional purchases of other wines are available at the parties, held at The Gardens of Los Robles, an outdoor event facility built in 2013. There are appetizers and a tasting of six wines. A wine distributor provides two pourers to serve the samples and answer questions. Wine club members receive 15 percent off the retail price of each bottle purchased. Los Robles gets a cut of all proceeds.

“We would like to get 100 or even 200 members in our wine club,” Swisher says.

Five-course beer dinners, open to the public, also are held at Los Robles periodically. The themed menus depend on the local brewery being featured.

“Beer dinners drive a different clientele to our facility,” says Swisher. “We are attracting new customers to Los Robles in a variety of ways.” **FB**

*Sally J. Sportsman is an Orlando, Florida-based freelance golf writer.*



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# ShopTalk

## Hidden Boutique A Big Hit At Holly Ridge

BY STEVE EUBANKS

Size can be a problem, especially when you're crowding an hour's worth of players into a golf shop designed for one foursome at a time. That was what Joe O'Connor discovered in his first year as the owner of Holly Ridge Golf Course in Sandwich, Massachusetts. His golf shop was too small for the crowds. As a result, retail sales, especially in ladies' goods, suffered.

"When we get busy, a lot of women don't feel comfortable shopping," O'Connor said. "That's when I had the idea. I knew I had a little extra space in the ladies' room. So, I put a few sale items on display in there."

The small retail area in the restroom was quickly dubbed the Bathroom Boutique. And it was an instant hit.

"The first day I put between 12 and 20 pieces in the ladies' room and put them on sale," O'Connor said. "I sold six of them the first day. In the last three seasons, it has grown substantially. We've discovered that ladies are a lot more comfortable shopping in the ladies' room than they are in the golf shop. We sell about 90 percent of the shoes on the season, in large part because of the ladies' room."

Hats were another hot item. By adding a hat rack O'Connor allowed women to try on a new hat and immediately look at themselves in a mirror. "We sold through all our hats at retail," he said.

"Everyone, including my wife, thought I was crazy," O'Connor said. "But none of us



Left and below: Joe O'Connor receiving the Bright Ideas award at the Golf Business Conference in Orlando. Above: The boutique setup in the ladies room which generated 90 percent of seasonal shoe sales.



can believe how much we've sold out of our Bathroom Boutique."

Maybe not quite everyone thought O'Connor was crazy. At the Bright Ideas Showcase at the Golf Business Conference in Orlando in January, the Bathroom Boutique was voted overwhelmingly the

showcase winner by the conference attendees. The win brought O'Connor not just bragging rights but a free golf trip for two to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. **FB**

Steve Eubanks is an Atlanta-based freelance writer and New York Times bestselling author.

# 2020 Golf Industry Calendar

**MAY 5-6**

**National Golf Day**  
Washington, D.C.

[wearegolf.org/national-golf-day](http://wearegolf.org/national-golf-day)

**MAY 22-25**

**Patriot Golf Day | Folds of Honor**  
Golf courses nationwide

[foldsofhonor.org/patriotgolfday](http://foldsofhonor.org/patriotgolfday)

**JUNE 2**

**Women's Golf Day 2020**  
Golf courses nationwide

[womensgolfday.com/register](http://womensgolfday.com/register)

**JULY 21-22**

**MCOR20**

Charleston, South Carolina

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**AUGUST 18-19**

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**SEPTEMBER 30-  
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## Something to talk about

If you missed this feature from the March 2020 issue of Golf Business magazine, check online at [golfbusiness.com](http://golfbusiness.com) to learn the NGCOA's Beware of Barter report. The report is garnering interest from across the golf industry. The March cover story explains many of the high points of the 60-plus page report. You can also download the full report here: [ngcoa.org/BewareOfBarter](http://ngcoa.org/BewareOfBarter)



## On the Air

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## National Golf Day 2020

Industry leaders will gather in Washington, D.C., May 5-6 to meet with members of Congress, the executive branch and federal agencies. For a schedule of the events, go online to [wearegolf.org/national-golf-day](http://wearegolf.org/national-golf-day)



**What's Cooking**  
BY STEVE EUBANKS

Tommi Villers uses the TurboChef Sota will help Diamond Woods become more efficient in preparing their current menu as well as being able to offer a wider range of food options.

## Diamond Woods Embraces A New Fast-Food Technology

**W**hen Diamond Woods Golf Course in Monroe, Oregon, lost its pro shop manager of 20 years and deli manager of 15 years last fall, Liz Doyle, the marketing manager at The Inn at Diamond Woods, saw an opportunity to remedy what had become a sore spot in the operation.

“There was a lot of food waste and a lot of labor waste in our deli,” Doyle said. “Even though we’d tried changing the menus and a number of other things, nothing seemed to work. We decided we had to recreate our profit centers.”

The first step was to visit successful businesses serving similar products. Liz and the staff started at Starbucks. “They don’t do anything by accident at Starbucks,” she

said. “And they maximize efficiencies. So, we went in for coffee and breakfast and watched what they were able to do and how they were able to do it.”

What they saw was new countertop cooking technology – TurboChef Sota and other brands of infrared and high-speed convection cooking machinery – that was turning frozen and pre-made products into quality meals in a matter of seconds.

“We found out that Subway and a lot of other big chains are using this technology to get product out quickly while still keeping it tasty,” Doyle said. “So, we bought an overstock (TurboChef Sota) from Subway.

“It’s going to allow us to make good food quickly and cut way down on waste. And it’s going to save us a ton on labor because we’re about to go to \$15 an hour

**“There was a lot of food waste and a lot of labor waste in our deli. Even though we’d tried changing the menus and a number of other things, nothing seemed to work.”**

**- LIZ DOYLE**

minimum wage (in Oregon). So, it’s going to be a big benefit in keeping our labor costs down.”

*Steve Eubanks is an Atlanta-based freelance writer and New York Times bestselling author.*

***“It literally takes them 90 minutes to go around and play. So, it’s very social and a lot of fun.”***

**– MELANIE HALPERT**



Younger families are moving to the area, and their retired parents are following, making for a diverse age range and member base.

© Photos by Amanda Karis Photography

## ***Timing is Everything***

**DC Ranch Making Golf ‘Fast and Fun’**

**By Scott Kauffman**



**The Country Club at DC Ranch, a member-owned private club in Scottsdale, Arizona, is another group of course owners doing their part to help make the game quicker and more enjoyable for golfers of all ages and proficiency levels.**

In other words, DC Ranch is the latest golf property to add a new, alternative short course to its mix of

golf and country club amenities.

For years, the golf industry has talked about the need to build more short golf layouts and satisfy members/guests struggling to find 4 or 5 hours to play a traditional 18-hole round in what seems to be an ever-increasing time-crunched world. But, while the number is slowly growing, only a few property owners have actually been able to deliver on that call to action.

At DC Ranch, the answer to golfers' time-starved



Known as the Horseshoe, this course only takes 90 minutes to complete. It's attracting golfers of all ages and skill levels.



struggles is a new 9-hole course called The Horseshoe – an ode to the upscale club's one-time ranching roots where cowboys and cattle ranchers once roamed. Now, members get to meander through a more refined “ranch” layout that features holes

ranging from 54 to 104 yards with the same TifEagle Bermudagrass bunker-protected greens as the club's main 18-hole course recently redesigned by PGA Tour star Tom Lehman and longtime design partner John Fought.

Wendell Pickett of Scottsdale-based land planning and landscape design firm, Greey Pickett, was the lead architect responsible for designing the Horseshoe and helping make golf “fast and fun,” as DC Ranch likes to describe the new 9-hole experience. It's

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actually the second unique short course Pickett helped design and build in the golf-saturated Phoenix-Scottsdale market after working on the master-planned community of Wickenburg Ranch with design partner Bill Brownlee.

Like DC Ranch, Wickenburg also features a traditional 18-hole par-71 layout, Big Wick, and a 9-hole par-3 companion course, Li'l Wick, where golfers can play an entertaining round ranging from 663 yards to 1,240 yards in flip flops and relaxed dress code. While DC Ranch might have a little more dress decorum at the Horseshoe, members are having just as much fun playing the course.

“The members are loving it and having so much fun,” says longtime membership and marketing director Melanie Halpert. “We have our professionals playing it. Or members with very low handicaps who are just going out there playing with their wives or playing with their kids and just having a good time. ... You see juniors and ladies. ... It literally takes them 90 minutes to go around and play. So, it’s very social and a lot of fun.”

DC Ranch member golfers are even “dressing down” on occasion to enjoy their

new short course. For example, the club hosted a festive ugly holiday sweater party on the Horseshoe soon after it opened, where everyone “just started on a hole with two clubs and a drink in another hand and had a great time,” Halpert added.

Meanwhile, to further enhance the overall golf experience at DC Ranch, the club added an 8,500-square-foot practice putting green at the Practice Park along with more tee spaces and a larger short-game area with two chipping greens and greenside bunkers. Additionally, the club recently added Gold Tees on its main 18-hole course that play to a yardage of 3,969 yards – 1,100 yards shorter than the red tees and approximately 3,000 yards shorter than the black tees.

All of these new golf amenities are on top of \$8.5 million in newly added clubhouse and sports/lifestyle-related amenities last year, including a new indoor-outdoor casual dining concept, two kid’s clubhouses, a new resort pool and two large event lawns.

In many respects, the wealth of new amenities at DC Ranch is a reflection of what has become one of the most diverse private club memberships in a city loaded with private clubs that typically cater to

retirees or Baby Boomers close to retiring. Now, thanks in part to DC Ranch’s excellent location in the heart of Scottsdale’s schools and shopping districts minutes from the city’s main highway artery, the club is increasingly multi-generational in makeup with some 650 youth members under the age of 24 (average age is 12).

“It used to be the parents for example would be in their 60s, move out to North Scottsdale and they’re going to retire,” says Halpert, who started working for DC Ranch two years after it opened in 2000. “But now we’re seeing the young family moving out here and it’s the parents following.

“I have members who I work with on a daily basis who joined DC Ranch specifically because they know their kids and grandchildren are going to feel comfortable here. There’s something for every generation. And this 9-hole course is perfect for our members.”

Indeed, “golf will always be king” at DC Ranch, according to Halpert. Turns out, the club now has a new prince on the premises. **FB**

*Scott Kauffman is a golf business writer and the managing director of Aloha Media Group.*



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# Boyne's new promotion targets younger members

By Scott Kauffman

For more than 70 years, Northern Michigan-based Boyne Resorts has been one of the biggest family-owned golf course and ski resort groups in the country. Indeed, ever since the late Everett Kircher opened Boyne Mountain ski resort in the winter of 1948-49, the family empire has grown to 10 championship courses in Northern Michigan alone, with six of them laid out across the company's two signature golf/ski properties, Boyne Mountain and Boyne Highlands.

For more measures of success, Boyne Resorts expanded the Boyne brand beyond its Northern Michigan borders to other parts of the country, with ownership and/or operational interests now spanning 11 resort properties, 13 courses and nine ski areas from Maine to Montana to British Columbia, Canada.

While the growth is significant to say the least, all of these Boyne barometers are not "good" enough for Everett Kircher's son, Stephen Kircher, who assumed the company's reins after his father died in 2002. In the words of Kircher, a fan of the 2001 best-selling book by Jim Collins, "Good to Great: Why some Companies Make the Leap. ... and Others Don't," the company president/CEO is now striving to make Boyne Resorts, "great."

At least that was part of the message at last June's annual meeting of shareholders, business partners, lenders and company executives in the family-owned business, according to a story published by Crain's Detroit Business. And one of the more exciting developments for Kircher as he strives to make Boyne Resorts even "greater" is the latest private placement of \$60 million worth of senior secured notes that will help the company retire some high-interest debt and fund future capital expenditures.

"I've been talking to the team about the journey we've been on, and this is an exciting step on our journey to become a great company," Kircher told Crain's following news of the \$60 million offering. "(The



The prospective membership opportunities being offered are tied to Bay Harbor Golf Club and Country Club of Boyne. Photo courtesy Boyne Resorts

author) Collins talks about creating more oxygen. This is a big set of oxygen tanks that allows us to move forward with great flexibility. It will allow us to deploy capital over the next two to three years on high-impact initiatives."

Kircher said the latest offering will not be used for acquisitions, unlike the previous \$400 million placement Boyne issued in March 2018 to help acquire seven resorts and tourist attractions the company was previously managing outside of Michigan.

"We will focus on organic growth," Kircher was quoted as saying, whose 11,000-plus company employees helped generate \$400 million in revenue last year. For instance, one of the ambitious new areas of organic growth is renovating Boyne Highlands resort, which features four 18-hole courses and a 9-hole executive layout, including the family's first course designed by Robert Trent Jones Sr., in 1966.

Another major effort to stimulate Boyne's business organically in the coming year(s) are two new private club "prospect" membership packages, giving golfers and families exclusive opportunities to enjoy the company's trio of Northern Michigan resort destinations and 10 courses, all of which are within an 18-mile radius.

The prospective membership opportunities being offered are tied to Bay Harbor Golf Club and Country Club of Boyne. The

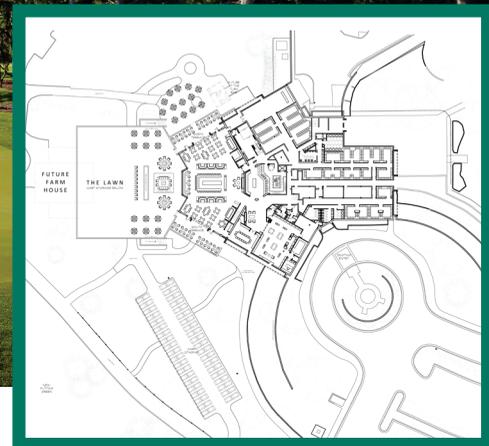
special memberships are priced from \$3,000 to \$4,000 for singles and couples, and provide privileges to all 13 Boyne golf facilities, access to amenities and members for the current golf season (May 1-Oct. 20).

Basically, it's a way for prospects to test drive the membership at greatly reduced fees, and more importantly, if they like the membership, Boyne is allowing "younger prospects" aged 27-44 to join the club the following year with a discounted "application fee" that can be paid out over 2- and 5-year periods along with discounted annual dues structure.

The flexible application fee payment plans have been particularly successful the past couple years in attracting a number of new single members, typically younger males looking to squeeze in golf "whenever they want, wherever they want."

"It's important to make (future memberships) affordable for these younger people and families in particular, and not something out of reach," Keriann Lonnee, director of membership, adds. "For some, private golf club memberships have a reputation to be unattainable. ... Once these prospects join and see all of the value and lifestyle offered by Boyne, 27-39, it makes it so affordable it's almost hard to pass up." **FB**

Scott Kauffman is a golf business writer and the managing director of Aloha Media Group.



# Des Moines club designs more year-round options

By Scott Kauffman

There's a buzz in Des Moines these days. And it has nothing to do with any political hangover from this year's interesting Iowa caucus.

The buzz is on the west side of town, where perhaps one of America's best-kept private club success stories, Des Moines Golf and Country Club, continues to thrive well into its second centennial of life. For instance, the club has approximately 750 full golf members today and a 15-year wait list of prospects interested in gaining access to the club's two Pete Dye-designed courses, known for hosting the 2017 Solheim Cup and the 2008 U.S. Senior Open that attracted 252,800 attendees, an attendance record that still stands today.

Overall, the club has some 1,550 total active members that enjoy a wealth of first-class sports amenities built in 2004, including an Olympic-size pool, large wading pool with an interactive splash-ground for kids, and eight asphaltic PlexiPave courts and four clay courts for the club's avid 300 tennis-playing families, (four of the PlexiPave are lighted for twilight and late-evening use, while the clay courts are covered for winter play, giving members the city's only year-round tennis experience).

With a growing city perfectly situated between Ames and Iowa City along I-35, attracting several large new corporate residents with names like Facebook, Google and soon-to-be Apple, Des Moines Golf and

Country Club appears to be positioned for nothing but greater growth in the years to come. That's one reason the club's membership is considering a facilities master plan that will now transform the 50-year-old clubhouse and make it even more attractive and functional for today's club member seeking expanded casual dining experiences both indoors and out.

As the master-plan overview describes it, "a lot has changed about clubs in 50 years (and not just architecture)." Today, it is as much about "experience than amenities."

The club was introduced to the proposed \$10-plus million phased-in master plan at a town hall meeting last October. According to longtime general manager Jim Cutter, the reception was loud and clear.

"From the people who attended, what we heard most was, 'do more; do it sooner,'" says Cutter, who is retiring from the club May 31 after 20 years. To be sure, the various dining elements that will be introduced in the reimagined clubhouse are top priorities – for both staff and members.

"No. 1, we're going to end up with a better functioning (main) kitchen," Cutter points out. "Fifty years ago when you came out to the club for dinner, you went upstairs, which is the big kitchen, and you put on a jacket and tie. Now, it's all about much more casual dining (introduced downstairs at the clubhouse around 2008), and the three-man kitchen we have on the lower

level is doing 200 covers a night. That's something we're going to change."

Another exciting proposal being planned is connecting the pro shop to the main clubhouse, which sets the stage to repurpose that area for golf simulators – giving the club a "year-round buzz," and revenue all winter long. The planned new venue will be called Dye's Den and feature its own bar, five simulators and restrooms.

"Being here in Des Moines, we lose December through February and half of March, so to be able to come into the club and play year-round, this is very intriguing for the membership," Cutter says. "From what I understand, these simulators today allow you to kick a soccer ball, play tennis, and do a number of different things other than just golf. We're very excited about it."

And Cutter believes it can have the same kind of positive impact on Des Moines Golf and Country Club's future growth as the tennis complex did in 2004, when the club put four courts under domes for year-round play and immediately filled up the social member category.

"At the end of the day, I just think the club's going to get stronger and there will be more desire to be here," Cutter says. "Year round entertainment's very appealing." **FB**

Scott Kauffman is a golf business writer and the managing director of Aloha Media Group.

Des Moines Golf and Country Club plans for new additions to better serve its increasing number of members.



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# ***Continuing a Legacy***

**Friel Golf Management Defied Family-Business Odds**

**By Steve Eubanks**



In 1961 Phil Friel purchased enough land in Hudson, New Hampshire, to start a golf course. His wife's maiden name was Green, and they decided to call the course Green Meadows.

**F**amily businesses rarely stay under family control for more than a generation, maybe two.

There are still Fords at the Ford Motor Co., but it's a far cry from the halcyon days of Henry and Henry II. Chick-Fil-A has its third generation of the Cathy family in management, but governance and legacy are becoming more difficult as the family

tree expands. Pick an industry: there are no Macys at Macy's, no duPonts at DuPont, no Firestones running Firestone (which is, in fact, owned by Bridgestone, a Japanese conglomerate). The Murdochs still control NewsCorp, but it's a much different company now that Rupert has semi-retired and it will likely change even more after his passing. In golf, the Solheims still make all the decisions at Ping, but how that will work a generation from now remains open-ended

## MULTIPLES

So, it's a marvel of the golf course ownership business that the children of Phil J. Friel Jr. not only continued in their father's footsteps, but that two decades after the patriarch's passing, Phil's grandchildren are servicing the golf population of New England with the same zeal that marked their grandfather's time in the game.

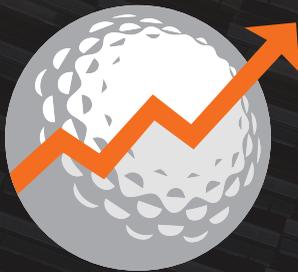
Phil Friel, who passed away in 2000, was ahead of his time. A caddie at Woburn Country Club in Massachusetts who worked his way up to head golf professional, Friel went on to be the head pro at Bellevue Country Club in Melrose, Massachusetts, and Nashua Country Club in Nashua, New Hampshire. He was a good enough player during that time to win the New England PGA Championship as well as the New Hampshire and Massachusetts opens.

But Friel longed for something more. After long discussions about financing with one of his members at Nashua, Phil bought enough property in Hudson, New Hampshire, to build his own public golf course in



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1961. It was a pioneering move at the time. Golf was still a country club sport for the captains of industry and well-heeled upper managers of the industrial Northeast. Friel saw a niche and capitalized on it.

Two generations later, Friel Golf Management is thriving in that same niche market.

“My mother’s maiden name was Green, so that’s how Green Meadows got its name,” said David Friel of the first course his father built in Hudson. The one course, which Phil designed and built, expanded to 36 holes with David and his brothers working alongside their father. The company eventually expanded to 15 courses throughout New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

“In the late ’70s, we really started to grow,” David said. “We had a friend who owned Cape Cod Country Club and wanted to retire, so we bought that. Then we took over a course in New London, New Hampshire, that had been donated to Colby-Sawyer College. They were losing money, so we got a good deal and bought that.”

On it went until Phil passed away at the turn of the millennium. That’s when things could have gone off the rails. Governance and transition among family members is always sticky. In the case of the Friels, Phil’s children divided up the courses and operated separate businesses in distinct markets. At first glance this would appear to be a divided house collapsing. But even though New Hampshire is known more for snow skiing and water sports on Lake Winnepesaukee than golf, both separate operations work quite well.

“My brothers took the properties up (in the) north (part of New Hampshire) and I

have the courses in the south,” David said. “The only property we still have together is the original, Green Meadow, which was too valuable to split up.”

The current iteration of Friel Golf Management includes the Overlook Golf Club in Hollis, New Hampshire, which David designed and built in 1988, Cape Cod Country Club, Green Meadow and a large grass driving range in Hudson with a half-mile-long grass tee.

“The short version is, our courses are less than an hour from Logan Airport (Boston), so a great deal of our business comes from Massachusetts,” David said. “Where the courses up north might do 18- to 20,000 rounds because of the short season and the markets you’re drawing from, down here courses can do 30- to 35,000 rounds. Before the oversupply bubble that led to the big downturn in the business around 2008, we had courses doing 45,000 rounds.”

Now, David is content to do what his father did, run a boutique golf management business with his own son and daughter.

“In the summertime, we have a couple of hundred employees,” David said. “We’re affordable public golf, the kind of place where you enjoy your round and then have hotdogs, hamburgers and Bud Light. That’s our thing. A lot of people drive an hour because it’s good golf. We always pride ourselves on our course conditions. We’ve always been friendly and nice to people and we’re affordably priced. That’s allowed us to build a loyal following. We’re very happy where we are.” **FB**

*Steve Eubanks is an Atlanta-based freelance writer and New York Times bestselling author.*

## MULTIPLES

**“In the late ’70s, we really started to grow. We had a friend who owned Cape Cod Country Club and wanted to retire so we bought that.”**

– David Friel

Above: Club dining area at Green Meadows Country Club. Below: Ryan Friel and Elizabeth Friel O'Brien Accepting an award for their driving range at the World Cup Golf Center, PGA Show in Orlando 2020.





Steve Willy, left, and Whitney Crouse (right) are the founding partners of Bobby Jones Links. Dr. Bob Jones IV (center) is chairman of Jonesheirs Inc.

# A Name Is More Than Just A Name

By Steve Eubanks

In January 2019, for the Golf Business cover story, the transition of Mosaic Clubs and Resorts into a new company known as Bobby Jones Links was profiled – a change that founder and CEO Whitney Crouse said would not only help with marketing but also include a new operational ethos within the company. Working with the Jones family, Crouse rebranded his company around the legacy of the legendary champion, changing all the logos to include Jones’s likeness and spending substantial dollars getting the word out.

The founders insisted that there was much more to this than a name change. As Crouse described it, “This is about embracing what Bobby Jones stood for, not just in how he conducted himself on the course but in how he lived his life and conducted business away from golf.”

Skeptics didn’t roll their eyes in public, but that was certainly the kind of thing almost all companies say during a rebranding.

More than a new name. More than a new face. It’s about the future. We’re understanding our past while keeping our focus on the future. Yada, yada, yada.

So, one year into the rebranding, how did the change work out for the folks at Bobby Jones Links?

“We added seven new clubs and have several more in the pipeline,” Crouse said, touting a level of success that not even he could have imagined. “It was a game-changer, really. Instant credibility. It added a cache that got us in the door. Now, obviously, we’ve had to perform; we’ve had to live up to our commitments and meet the expectations that we’ve set with the brand and everything that goes with it. But that was always going to be the case. We were always confident that we could deliver. It was just a matter of getting the right (name) connection.”

In terms of percentage growth rate, Bobby Jones Links could be the most suc-

**“It was a game-changer, really. Instant credibility. It added a cache that got us in the door.”**

– WHITNEY CROUSE

cessful rebranding in the golf management industry. And yet another victory for golf’s greatest amateur champion, almost 50 years after his death. **FB**

Steve Eubanks is an Atlanta-based freelance writer and New York Times bestselling author.



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# Fee Management Still A Big Goal For Multi-Course Owners

By Steve Eubanks

Fee management continues to be a lucrative and highly competitive piece of the golf-business puzzle as the industry enters a new decade. Companies that have traditionally built their business around club ownership are diving deep into the third-party management pool, investing time, resources and manpower into building a cash business that does not involve the assets or liabilities that come with ownership.

ClubCorp is making one of the biggest pushes. The company recently hired Greg Griffin, a golf professional and general manager with an intimate understanding of large management companies, as the director of corporate development for its ClubLife Management division. Griffin had worked at Troon Golf as well as at Golf Resources Inc., but he caught the eye of ClubCorp brass when he transitioned the Midlothian Country Club in suburban Chicago over to the ClubLife Management.

The reason for bringing Griffin on is ClubCorp's desire to increase and expand its fee-management business, particularly in the western United States.

"We are excited to welcome Greg to his new role," said Tom Bennison, ClubCorp chief development officer. "He brings a wealth of knowledge about the industry in business development, management services and operations — all of which will be very helpful in bringing the best properties to ClubLife Management."

The sales pitch for ClubLife Management is that an independently operated club can, for a fee, have the marketing, management and back-of-the-house expertise of the company that owns more private clubs than anyone else in the world. And for ClubCorp, ClubLife provides low risk cash flow while maximizing the infrastructure the company already has in place.

**"We are excited to welcome Greg to his new role. He brings a wealth of knowledge about the industry in business development."**

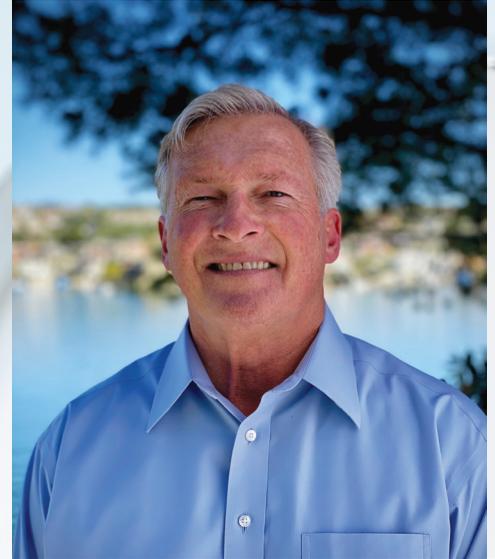
— TOM BENNISON

The downside is the potential conflict. What happens when ClubLife managed properties compete for the same potential members as ClubCorp-owned clubs? And does a club really want to open all its books to ClubLife Management if ClubCorp is looking to buy two courses on the other side of town?

Those questions are not unique to ClubCorp. But the addition of Griffin to expand the fee-management business will certainly force them to the surface.

However, according to Patty Jerde, communications manager for ClubCorp, "ClubCorp remains committed to ClubLife Management, which has strong development and management services teams in place, and continues to be dedicated to growing the division and to serving our clients." **RB**

*Steve Eubanks is an Atlanta-based freelance writer and New York Times bestselling author.*



Greg Griffin is now the director of corporate development in the ClubLife Management division.



Julia and Matt Roberts talk about their challenges with hiring laws all while maintaining quality employees at the Indian Creek Golf Club in Carrollton, Texas.

© Photos by Shane Kislack



**GOOD**  
**HELP**  
HARD TO FIND?

*Tight Labor  
Market and  
New Regulations  
Strain Courses*

*By David Gould*

When renovations to the second 18 at 36-hole Indian Creek Golf Club were completed this past winter, director of golf Julie Roberts went into hiring mode. She did so expecting a considerable challenge.

“It’s gotten harder to attract people for seasonal work, and harder to find candidates for the assistant golf professional role,” says Roberts, whose Carrollton, Texas, location puts her in competition with businesses throughout the fast-growing Dallas-Ft. Worth market. Although she didn’t mention any problem regarding availability of assistant superintendents, it’s been documented far and wide that hiring a No. 2 for course maintenance departments has been tough sledding for several years now.

Golf is a very un-automated industry – it requires human workers who can bring positive energy to their service-oriented jobs. What courses find themselves up against is a mix of low unemployment, rising minimum wages and a new federal law that makes 1.2 million more workers entitled to overtime pay any week they work more than 40 hours. In California, home to a good chunk of U.S. golf courses, a new state

law has attempted to remove the flexibility of having teaching professionals on-site as independent contractors. Keeping instructors at the course now could mean adding them to the payroll as W-2 employees.

[Editor’s Note: Industry leaders have asked for golf teaching professionals to be exempt from this new law.]

Minimum-wage bumps are the most significant labor issue faced by Kevin Higgins, general manager of daily-fee Blackledge Country Club in Hebron, Connecticut. From last year’s \$10 per hour, the state minimum wage has risen to \$11, “and it’s on its way up to \$15,” laments Higgins. “Outside services is where it hits hardest, because the high school and college kids we hire for those jobs have productivity issues in the first place. Most of them haven’t learned a work ethic when they get here, so having to pay them a big premium is shifting my approach to staffing.”

Higgins has gone on the lookout for more retirees to handle outside operations, and had little trouble finding them. In fact, Blackledge has experienced no lack of job applicants due to the tight labor market.

“In our area, retirees aren’t necessarily

65 anymore, they’re younger,” he reports.

Also working in his favor is the facility’s growing winter business, driven by simulator play and an upgraded dining and bar amenity. Activity during the snowy months has grown to where seasonal layoffs of food-and-beverage staff are no longer necessary. In general, revenue at Blackledge is strong, up 10 percent in 2019 over 2018.

“Rounds are up, outings and leagues are up, the restaurant business is excellent, so we’re pleased by the trends,” says Higgins.

This is an era when managers must “get creative and find different ways to offset rising labor costs,” says Steve Donar, general manager at Anaheim Hills Golf Course in Southern California, part of the American Golf portfolio. “We push to raise revenue, and we share turf equipment among multiple courses – things like aerifiers and sod cutters that you only use occasionally,” says Donar. Because higher wages are mandated, his course can’t realistically try to outbid other employers.

“Workers are more transient than they used to be, and not just in our industry,” says Donar. “We make a hire and we’re expecting that person’s employment to be short-term.”



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As for his state's new rule restricting use of independent contractors, Donar says he's fortunate that Anaheim Hills was not using independents when the law was enacted. Though he wasn't forced to improvise, he's no fan of the legislation. "It's a big point of controversy for courses throughout the state," Donar says. "People are trying to figure workarounds. There are lobbying efforts to try and get the rules amended."

Elsewhere in the Golden State, two-course owner Chris Bellamy has found rising minimum wages a significant obstacle to profit.

"It's a big challenge," says Bellamy, owner of La Purisima Golf Course and The Mission Club, both in Lompoc. The state's minimum wage went up to \$12 an hour at companies with 25 or fewer employees and to \$13 an hour at larger companies.

"We had to let some people go to stay at 25 workers maximum. Our maintenance crew is down from 15 people to 10 and it impacts conditioning," says Bellamy. "We're not doing as much spraying or rolling as we should be. Right now we've got enough staff to keep up with mowing and not much else."

Unlike Anaheim Hills, the two Lom-



Julie Roberts, director of golf; Amanda Watson, food & beverage staff; Jessica Oliver, director of sales and marketing; and Matt Roberts, general manager



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poc courses run by Bellamy have handled instruction through the independent-contractor approach. Practices identified by lawmakers as unfair and now prohibited by California's so-called "gig economy bill" were studiously avoided by Bellamy. "I've always encouraged lesson-taking because it's good for business," he says. "We want our teaching pros to be well compensated, which is why we don't take a cut of their lessons. They make their own schedules and they use the range for free. So, we're honoring the spirit of the law – whether we're compliant or not may be another story."

There's a hiring issue that doesn't get major attention but has lately been concerning Kirk Lee, president of the firm that operates Oasis Golf Club, a 36-hole public golf Mecca in Mesquite, Nevada. He is in a region of the U.S. where deportation of undocumented immigrants occurs commonly enough to affect the golf course maintenance labor pool.

"We hear of small raids that go unreported in the news," says Lee, whose grandfather built the golf complex. "People get rounded up and brought back across the border."

Course managers interviewed for this article repeatedly spoke of older workers – most often retirees – holding increasing appeal over teenage workers. For Darin Peart, head golf professional at Penn National Golf Club in Fayetteville, Pennsylvania, the months of May and September are too important to leave the operation vulnerable to staff shortages caused by the school calendar. Staffing with seniors is more viable in the era of the digital tee sheet, he asserts, because service needs are easier to plan.

"The days of having to send kids sprinting over to the cart barn are in the past," says Peart.

The last time minimum wages went up in Pennsylvania, the free-golf policy at Penn National was changed to require a \$9.50 cart fee for all employees choosing to ride their round. "The staff, mostly seniors, was okay with it," reports Peart. And they played just as much golf, providing a revenue offset to the wage increase.

"If we had a lot of 17-year-olds, that policy wouldn't have been effective," Peart says.

The swath of the workforce that's newly eligible for overtime pay (under the oft-amended Fair Labor Standards Act) has only enjoyed that right for a few months, therefore media reports on how it's affected employers haven't come to light yet. But if



Above: Director of Sales and Marketing Jessica Oliver and Chef Hugo Martinez Aguilar look over menus. On the opposite page: left is Matthew Jarecke, golf shop staff and at right is Doug Cameron, assistant superintendent.

***“When golf managers hire we need to be selling our culture. For applicants who are seeking a healthier work environment, golf has some nice advantages.”***

**– JULIE ROBERTS**



having to pay time-and-a-half more commonly brings you discomfort, take heart in what Julie Roberts of Indian Creek has observed about the seasonal worker of this era.

“The newer generations we employ put a priority on quality of life at work,” she finds. “Overtime pay is a factor for them, but work-life balance probably matters more. People in charge of hiring at a Marriott hotel or a chain restaurant go through the same thing we go through. You have to be responsive to the employee wanting two days off instead of one. Grinding along to get above 40 hours isn’t a motivation for them, the way it used to be.”

Adapting to this mindset can be problematic, according to Roberts, but fighting it is counter-productive. Meanwhile, the golf setting seems to fit nicely with the growing desire to avoid workplace stress.

“When golf managers hire we need to be selling our culture,” she contends. “For applicants who are seeking a healthier work environment, golf has some nice advantages.”

That sentiment is echoed by Joel Clay, whose Golden State Golf Co. manages two upscale Northern California municipal

courses, Chalk Mountain and Morro Bay. He has part-timers who have been with him for 25 years or more, and he generally avoids staff turnover problems.

“People like working at golf courses,” Clay says. “It’s a great place to go every day. We’re not the highest-paying employers, but the quality of the experience offsets that. When we do nice things for our employees, it goes farther than if another type of business did it.”

Among the nice things you can do for youth workers is talk constructively with them about their futures. Boston-based Southworth Development, owner-operator of six prestigious residential golf properties, has a personnel director who experienced this first-hand during high school.

“I started in the college program at Walt Disney World,” says Kelly Lum, currently Chief People Officer at Southworth. “They kept me wanting to come back because they showed me how to build up my résumé. They made an effort to help me sketch out possible career paths.”

Lum, who went on to earn a doctoral degree in organization management and leadership, concedes that an organization

like Disney is unusually well equipped to provide such support. That said, this sort of benefit doesn’t cost money out of pocket, and a small amount of it could go a long way.

“It’s part of creating an ‘employer brand’ that sets you apart,” she says. “Just as you want to establish a strong consumer brand in the minds of your customers, you really want to do the same on the staffing side.”

That means distinguishing your operation in part through a self-imposed mandate to use personal connections and accrued wisdom to offer employees, especially young ones, valuable mentoring that could help them long-term.

Everyone talks about growing the game in the sense of developing new golfers and retaining the golfers we have, but the same dynamic applies to golf’s workforce. Good people should be welcomed in with a promise of a meaningful workplace culture. The ones who show enthusiasm for this unique industry should be encouraged to make it their vocation. **FB**

*David Gould is a Massachusetts-based freelance writer and frequent contributor to Golf Business.*

## The Staffing Conundrum

### 8 Ways to Secure Top Talent Without Offering More Salary

By Jeremy Eskenazi

Hiring in North America has not been this challenging in a very long time. The employment rate is at an all-time high, and top candidates have been able to negotiate great packages for themselves as some get multiple offers. As you start looking for the next superstar to further your company's goals, deciding how hard you can compete for talent is important. While there are trends making candidate relationship building easier – such as text communication to schedule interviews or being able to offer more flexibility to the work schedule for some roles – money is still a primary driver for candidates.

An important lesson many learn is that salary has traditionally been king. And this king is powerful because it compounds year over year on your list of expenses. Not every company can spend more now, but every company wants to attract and retain the best talent for their team. This is where the candidate experience and your employer brand can be a strategic differentiator as you explore your flexibility to spend money. If we go back to cash being king for a moment, it's important to remember that people don't come to work just for money. Everyone wants to feel valued and work on interesting things for a great brand. As you think about experience, there are a few ways to minimize the amount of extra cash you need to help candidates consider your company over others.



As you approach your budget and talent needs for the next few quarters, you may find you have less flexibility to offer bigger salaries to help you win the talent war. While everything has some cost, there are alternative areas you can invest in that cost much less and will not steadily rise like a salary does. Here are eight of them that might help you:

### 1. Offering flexibility

Whether it is the start and end time of the workday, a compressed work week or the offer to work from home at times, these are all coveted offerings. If the job allows for flexibility, it's worth considering.

### 2. Covering perks

There are tons of creative offerings that matter to employees and are often available at a small cost. A few examples are: subsidies for public transit, extra uniforms included on the company, meal services at work, a monthly budget to use ride-sharing services instead of commuting, popular gym or lifestyle club memberships or discounts.

### 3. Job sharing or part-time work

Many people have their own reasons for wanting to work less than full time. Offering part time or job-sharing options where two people perform what was once a full-time job can give you more coverage in talent and attract some amazing candidates who wouldn't otherwise be interested.

### 4. Having good managers

A positive workplace culture is a competitive advantage. If you invest in managers who care about their teams and prioritize teaching and coaching employees, you will be able to attract, develop – and importantly – retain your top talent. It's been proven many times that people work for people, not companies, so make sure your managers are good listeners, care about their people and can show empathy.

### 5. Offering hiring bonus/ signing bonus

Because these are one-time costs, they don't compound like salary does. A bonus can help you counter another offer and be

equally attractive up front as many bonuses can be paid within the first three months and can have a condition of repayment if the employee leaves before a set amount of time. For hourly workers, a few hundred dollars up front can make a big difference in whether they decide if they want to join your organization.

### 6. Starting benefits earlier

The traditional model for health care benefits in Canada and the United States has been to delay offering benefits for 90 days to get through a probation period. If you can offer these from Day 1, especially in the United States where bridging health care costs can be very high, this is a great employee incentive. A company could also offer to reimburse existing health costs or pay for the previous employer's benefits until the transition occurs.

### 7. Reimbursing education costs

Another great non-compounding benefit is education subsidies. Skills change quickly and the investment in learning benefits both the employee and the company in the long term.

### 8. Having modern work tools

This one may seem obvious as computers are a standard today, but in today's bring-your-own-device era, offering a broad range to choose from or solid reimbursement plans for employees to have the latest and greatest is a draw.

Remember, money does reign as king. If you offer 30 percent less salary than your competitor, even this list will not help you win the talent war. However, if you offer 30 percent more salary, your balance sheet might start to look a little off and it will be difficult to sustain making above-market salary offers for many roles. The market is competitive and being creative with the advantages you can afford will help show candidates you care about their experience and that you understand what matters to them from a total offering perspective. 

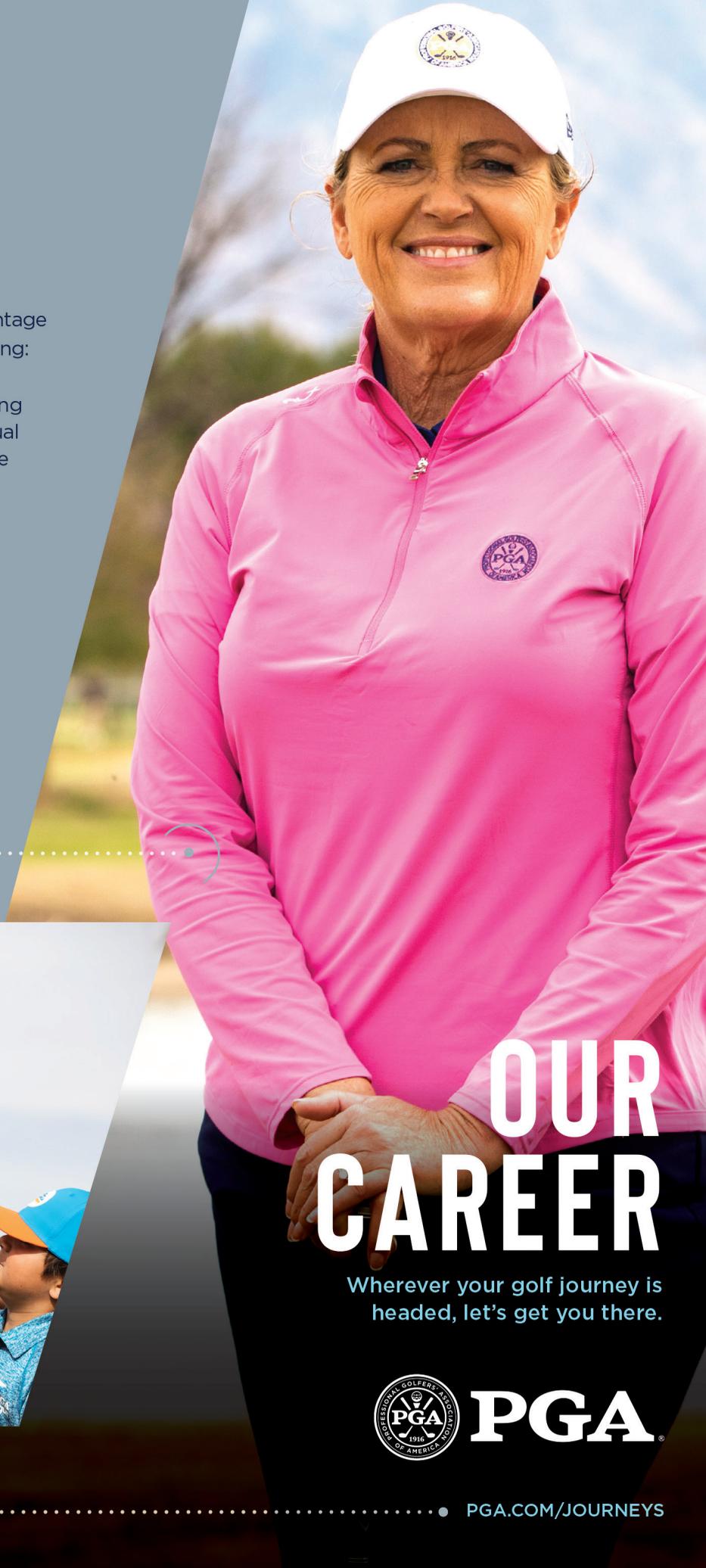
*Jeremy Eskenazi is an internationally recognized speaker, author of RecruitConsult! Leadership and founder of Riviera Advisors. For more information visit [RivieraAdvisors.com](http://RivieraAdvisors.com).*

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# The 3 Disciplines of Strategic Thinking

By Rich Horwath

**D**o you get it? Translation: Are you strategic? How often have you overheard a group talking about a leader and saying, “She/he just doesn’t get it”?

Do they say that about you?

Well, are you tactical or strategic? Does it even matter? A survey conducted with 400 talent management leaders found that the No. 1 most valued skill in leaders today is strategic thinking. Unfortunately, research with 154 companies found that only 3 out of every 10 managers are strategic.

So, yes, the ability to think strategically is essential. The real question is how can you continually hone your strategic thinking skills in order to thrive in today’s ever-changing business landscape? The fact is most managers are now required to be more successful with fewer resources. All managers have resources (time, talent and capital) to varying degrees within their organizations. So technically, all managers are strategists. The reality, however, is that not all managers are good strategists.

Herein lies the pearl of great opportunity: The more deeply you can dive into the business and resurface with strategic

insights, the more valuable you’ll become to your organization.

Strategic thinking is defined as the generation of business insights on a continual basis to achieve competitive advantage. Strategic thinking is different than strategic planning. Strategic planning is the channeling of business insights into an action plan to achieve goals and objectives. A key distinction between strategic thinking and strategic planning is that the former occurs on a regular basis, as part of our daily activities, while the latter occurs periodically (quarterly, semi-annually or annually). Strategic thinking is using a new lens to view the business. It’s not about adding more work. It’s about enhancing the view of the work and improving one’s ability to perform it.

To maximize your resources and profitably grow the business on a consistent basis, there are three disciplines of strategic thinking:

**Discipline 1: Acumen.** One of the interesting paradoxes of strategy is that in order to elevate one’s thinking to see “the big picture,” one must first dive below the

surface of the issues to uncover insight. A strategic insight is an idea that combines two or more pieces of information to create new value.

One of the reasons most people don’t enjoy strategic planning is because the plans don’t contain any new thinking. They are repeating Albert Einstein’s definition of insanity by doing the same things over and over again and expecting different results. A key premise in business is that new growth comes from new thinking. Carve out time for you and your team to sit down and strategically think about the business, using the group’s insights to identify new approaches to the business.

**Acumen Question: What are the key insights you’ve learned about the business and how are you using those to achieve your goals?**

**Discipline 2: Allocation.** While it’s one thing to have a neatly written strategy on paper, the truth is the actual or realized strategy of an organization is a result of the resource allocation decisions made by managers each day. Therefore, it is critical to have a firm understanding of resource allo-

cation and how to maximize its potential for your organization. With multi-billion dollar companies going through bankruptcy on a regular basis, it's obvious in today's market that having the most resources guarantees nothing. It's how we allocate resources that truly matters.

The definition of strategy begins with "The intelligent allocation of resources..." Resource allocation is at the core of strategy. Discussions of strategy boil down to how to allocate limited resources to maximize business potential. Where are you currently investing your resources – time, talent, budget – and are they focused on your goals and strategies? While everyone has a to-do list, only the best managers also have a not-to-do list. Remember that great strategy is as much about what you choose not to do as it is about what you choose to do.

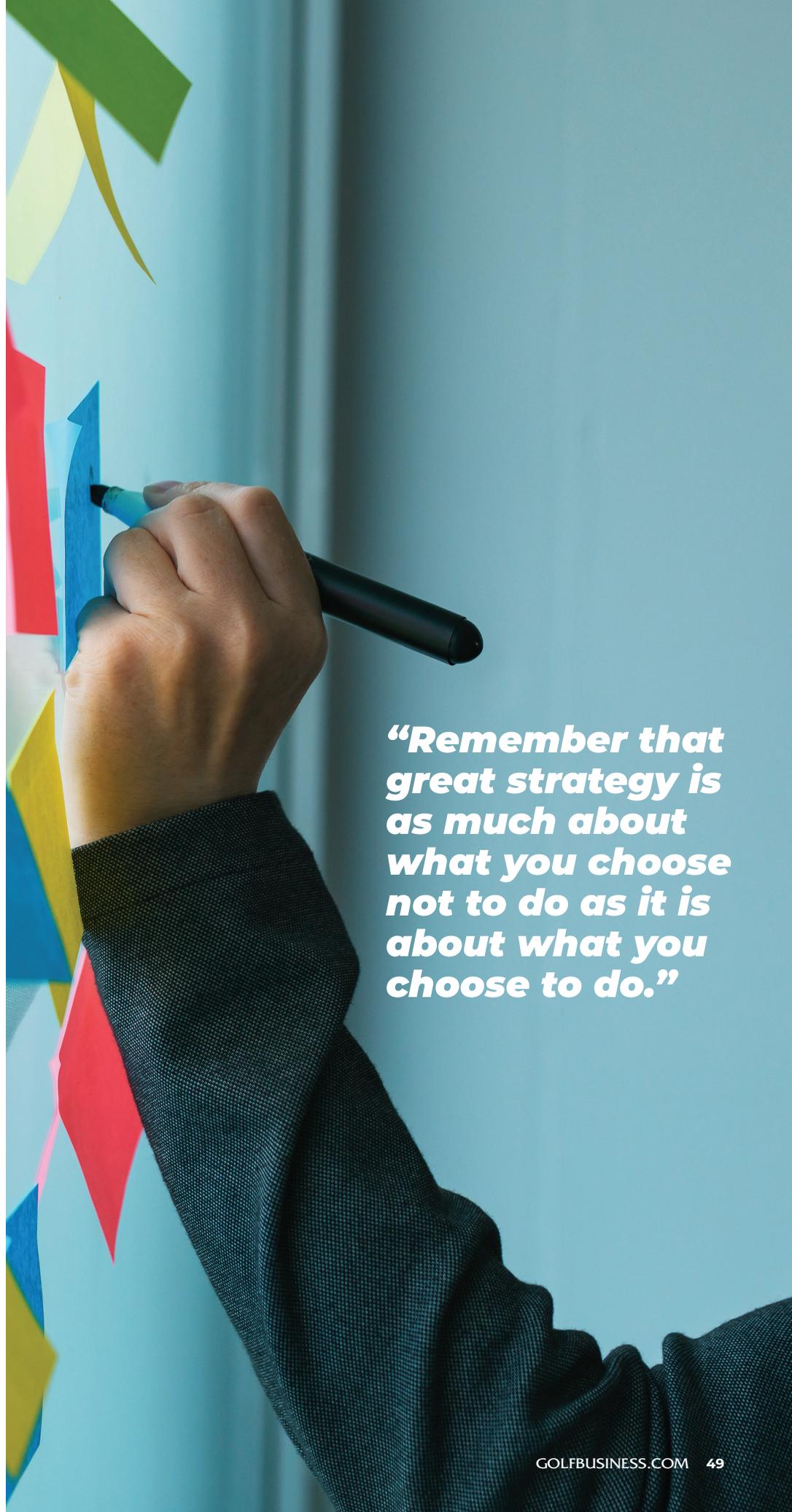
**Allocation Question: What trade-offs will I make to focus resources?**

**Discipline 3: Action.** How often has your team invested time in developing a plan for the year, only to see that plan slip by the wayside once the fire drills begin? Fire drills come in the form of customer complaints, competitor activity and internal issues that are urgent, but not important. The key is to let these fire drills flame out and stay committed to the plan you've developed by focusing on your priorities, not the flavor-of-the-month tactics.

**Action Question: What are my top 3-5 priorities and am I focused on them or fire drills?**

The most important level of strategy is not corporate, business unit or functional group – it's YOU. The individual level is where strategy is actually created. Unfortunately, 90 percent of directors and vice presidents have never had any learning and development opportunities on strategic thinking. The good news is that by developing the three disciplines of strategic thinking, you can elevate yourself from tactical to strategic. The better news is that in doing so, not only will you become more valuable to your organization, you'll separate yourself and your business from the competition. Do you get it? 🦾

*Rich Horwath is a New York Times best-selling author on strategy, including his most recent book, *StrategyMan vs. The Anti-Strategy Squad: Using Strategic Thinking to Defeat Bad Strategy and Save Your Plan*. To learn more or sign up for the free newsletter *Strategic Thinker*, visit [StrategySkills.com](http://StrategySkills.com).*



**“Remember that great strategy is as much about what you choose not to do as it is about what you choose to do.”**



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**4)** Which one best describes the nature of your organization? (select one only)

- 10  Private
- 11  Privately-Owned Daily Fee
- 12  Semi-Private
- 13  Resort
- 14  Municipal/State/County
- 16  Military
- 17  University/College
- 18  Driving Range/Practice Facility
- 20  Development Company
- 28  Golf Course Builder
- 21  Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 21  Not Applicable

**5)** Are you affiliated with a golf course management company?

01  yes 02  no

**6)** How many facilities, in total, are you personally responsible for?

80  less than 2 83  10 or more  
81  2 - 4 99  Not applicable  
82  5 - 9

**7)** What is the average greens fee for a typical round of golf at your facility? If you work at multiple facilities, please indicate the average greens fee across all facilities.

- 01  nothing/private
- 02  o less than \$25
- 03  \$25 - \$49
- 04  \$50 - \$74
- 05  \$75 - \$99
- 06  \$100 - \$149
- 07  \$150 or more
- 08  not applicable

**8)** What is the total annual budget or expenditures for which you are responsible?

- 50  less than \$99,000
- 51  \$100,000 - \$249,000
- 52  \$250,000 - \$499,000
- 53  \$500,000 - \$999,000
- 54  \$1,000,000 - \$2,499,000
- 55  \$2,500,000 or more

**9)** In which ways are you personally involved in your organization's purchasing decisions?

- 60  Determine annual budget expenditures
- 61  Authorize final purchases
- 62  Determine needs of the operation
- 63  Specify/recommend vendors or suppliers
- 64  Specify/recommend specific brands
- 65  Evaluate brands for purchase

**10)** Which products/services listed below do you specify, recommend, buy or approve the purchase? (select all that apply)

- A  Golf Cars
- B  Turf Equipment
- C  Course Design/Construction/Renovation
- D  Irrigation & Drainage
- E  Chemicals, Fertilizer & Seed
- G  Clubhouse Design/Construction/Renovation
- H  Financial Services
- T  Legal Services
- F  Course Accessories
- J  Insurance
- U  Marketing Services
- L  Pro Shop Apparel
- M  Pro Shop Equipment
- P  Food & Beverage
- R  Computers/Technology
- V  Furniture/Fixtures
- W  Human Resources/Staffing
- K  Consulting

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TORO	2-3	952.877.8613	toro.com/golf
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News from the National Golf Course Owners Association

# NGCOA In Action

**2020**

# NGCOA In Action

## INDUSTRY EVENTS



### Join us for National Golf Day's Community Service Project and Legislative Meetings May 5-6

Support your own business and the golf industry as a whole! Attend the 13th annual National Golf Day on Capitol Hill on Wednesday, May 6, 2020, with the annual Community Project scheduled for May 5. Join hundreds of golf industry leaders; learn more at [wearegolf.org/national-golf-day](http://wearegolf.org/national-golf-day) or email Ronnie Miles, NGCOA's Director of Advocacy, at [rmiles@ngcoa.org](mailto:rmiles@ngcoa.org).



### Register Your Golf Facility as an Official Patriot Golf Day Location! May 22-25

Courses across the United States are participating in Patriot Golf Day. While the official Patriot Golf Day takes place each year over Memorial Day weekend, your course can choose to host an event at a different time of year. You can register your course as an official Patriot Golf Day event (held over Memorial Day weekend) OR as a "Folds of Honor" golf event (held any other time). Learn more about Folds of Honor & Patriot Golf Day at [foldsofhonor.org/patriotgolfday](http://foldsofhonor.org/patriotgolfday).



### Register Your Golf Facility as an Official Women's Golf Day Location! June 2

Women's Golf Day (WGD) is a collaborative effort to engage, empower and support girls and women through golf. It's the fastest-growing movement in golf; in 2019 it included more than 900 events taking place in 52 countries. Please review the official Women's Golf Day location requirements and contact the organizers if you have any questions. Learn more and register your course at [womensgolfday.com/register](http://womensgolfday.com/register).

#WOMENSGOLFDAY



June 2, 2020  
[WWW.WOMENSGOLFDAY.COM](http://WWW.WOMENSGOLFDAY.COM)

## SMART BUY SPOTLIGHT



## NEW PARTNERS!



Golfpay is a direct-to-consumer communication, commerce and booking platform that allows golfers to book tee times, purchase securely, check in for their round, and communicate with your staff from anywhere, at any time, all from their mobile device. Golfpay helps grow databases and improve relationships, all while decreasing dependence on 3rd-party tee time providers. Visit [ngcoa.golfpay.co/ngcoa-members](http://ngcoa.golfpay.co/ngcoa-members) to learn more about the members-only NGCOA Smart Buy Marketplace benefit.



PGE helps plan and execute more successful golf events and raise more money through technology, innovative formats and exciting fundraising contests. NGCOA golf course owner/operator members receive a 7.5% discount on golf event organization; when you sponsor golf events at your facility you'll receive a 10% discount on hole-in-one insurance. NGCOA corporate members who sponsor NGCOA golf events will also receive a 10% discount on hole-in-one insurance. Learn more at [perfectgolfevent.com](http://perfectgolfevent.com).



Golf Surprise increases your revenues by rewarding the golfer instead of discounting the golf. The platform encourages and rewards your golfers with enhanced experiences, and credits which are redeemable real-time at your facility. NGCOA members receive an 80% discount on the one-time set-up and license fee, and then pay a small fee ONLY when a golfer books and pays for a reward time. Learn more about the NGCOA offer at [surprise.golf](http://surprise.golf).

These top-tier partners offer NGCOA members outstanding discounts on services that golf courses use every day. Learn more at [ngcoa.org/smartbuy](http://ngcoa.org/smartbuy).

## COMMUNITY



### What are Other NGCOA Members Talking About on Accelerate?

Did you know there are Accelerate Members-Only Communities you can join, based on your interests, needs and engagement with NGCOA? **Visit [accelerate.ngcoa.org](https://accelerate.ngcoa.org) to read more about and add to the discussion of critical issues in golf business.**

- Accelerate (General) Community for all NGCOA members
- Supplier Community for NGCOA's Corporate Members
- Advocacy Issues & Alerts
- Golf Business RevCon/TechCon and Golf Business Conference for event attendees
- Trading Post where members can buy and sell used equipment

Here is a sample of recent discussions; reply to these, or post your own for member feedback!

#### Credit card / merchant fee reconciliation

How are other owners reconciling the merchant fees charged on the all the different credit cards out there?

#### 3rd Party Sign up program / Junior Golf

I am looking for a 3rd party company to work with where my customers can signup and pay for our Junior Program.

#### Buying Used Range Balls

Looking to purchase used range balls; anyone have any recommendations on companies they have used or reviews on golfball-monster.com?

#### Email database purchase

Has anyone had any success with purchasing a golf email database? If so, what company do you recommend?

#### Cup cutters

In an effort to do things better, quicker, faster and easier, does anyone have experience with electric cup cutters?

#### Junior League

I am starting to get some interest in having a once a week junior league; I was wondering if anyone has had success in organizing and running one of these.

#### Credit Card Surcharges

I was looking for feedback on anyone who has instituted a surcharge (of like 3%) for customers that use credit cards as opposed to Cash, Debit, or Check.

#### Need help with driving range

I need an expert (even someone from one major range companies, Range Servant, Wittik, etc..) that can evaluate our range and give up insight on how we take our range to the next level.

#### Forming relationships with other local courses

I'm looking for feedback from anyone who has successfully joined efforts with a neighboring course to provide additional opportunities for the membership.

# NGCOA In Action

START  
SAVING  
NOW

## NGCOA Smart Buy Marketplace

NGCOA members get significant **discounts, rebates and value-added packages** from hundreds of the most recognized names and reputable, industry-leading companies. Many of these companies offer exclusive deals not available anywhere else.



### Golf Cars & Utility Vehicles

Members converting from a competitor receive \$50 per-car for purchase or lease. Members renewing their fleet receive a free registration for Golf Business Conference or RevCon.



### Player Reward Program

Members receive an 80% discount on the one-time set-up and license fee.



### Human Resources & Payroll

Up to 50% on HR and payroll costs.



### Golf Simulators

5% discount off MSRP.



### Television Programming

Up to 60% savings on programming.



### 401(k) Program

Effective and competitive 401(k) plan benefit for NGCOA member courses' employees.



### Food and Beverage

Typical savings is 7% to 15% on more than 800 vendors, including Sysco, Gordon Food Service, Performance Food Group, and many others.



### Insurance

Comprehensive employee benefits (health, dental, vision, life and disability), property casualty insurance at competitive rates.



### Subscription-based Loyalty Program

Members get a 10% discount, and first rights in your area, on subscription-based loyalty programs tools, including software, sales reporting, best practices, and more



### Performance Reporting & Benchmarking

30%-50% discount on all reporting packages.



### Payment Processing

Discounted rates and special incentives on payment processing fees.



### Beverage Supplier

Rebates on various Pepsi and Gatorade fountain, bottle and can products; includes equipment and service programs.



### Alternative Golf

15% discount on lowest pricing available at FlingGolf.com.



### Golf Event Organization

Members receive a 7.5% discount golf event organization; NGCOA golf outing sponsors receive a 10% discount on hole-in-one insurance.



### Pre-Owned Turf Equipment

Discounts on tiered pricing plus 120-day extended warranty (normally 90-day).



### Customer Experience Solution

Free survey tool and 55% off Players 1st's top-tier Combined Package.



### Automotive Vehicle Manufacturer

Significant factory direct fleet discounts on 2019 GM products.



### Irrigation Solutions

1.5% rebate on Rain Bird Golf irrigation products.



### Communication, Commerce and Booking Platform

FREE 'Virtual Pro Shop' - Standard Package. Waived setup fee (\$299+ value). Waived monthly fee (est. \$1,200 annually).



### Hospitality Training and Resources

FREE access to 2 online lessons with 4 FREE lessons to come and a 20% discount on annual subscription services.



### New and Used Turf Maintenance Equipment

1% rebate on new and/or 0.5% rebate on used Toro branded turf maintenance equipment.

FIND DETAILS AND TERMS ON SAVINGS  
FROM THESE BRANDS AND MORE AT [NGCOA.ORG/SMARTBUY](http://NGCOA.ORG/SMARTBUY)



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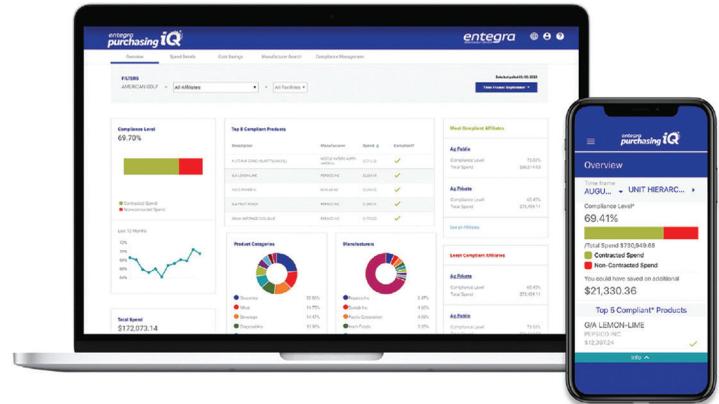
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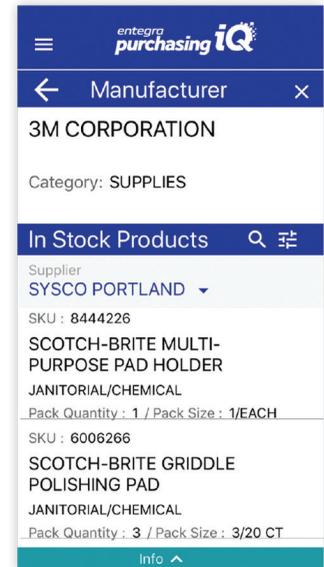
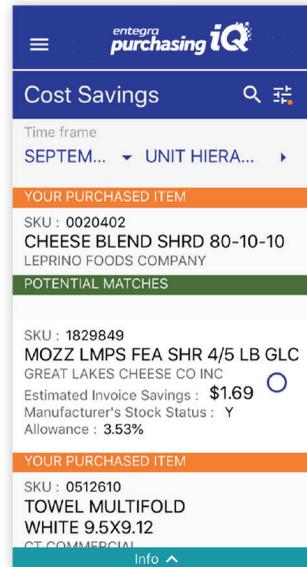
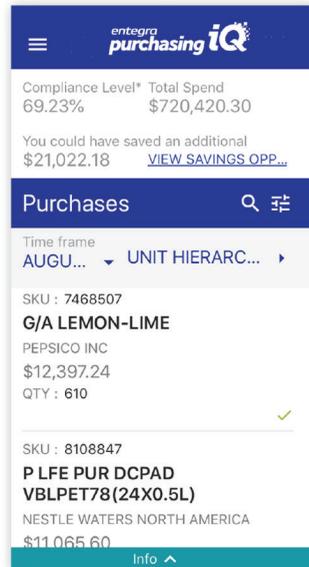
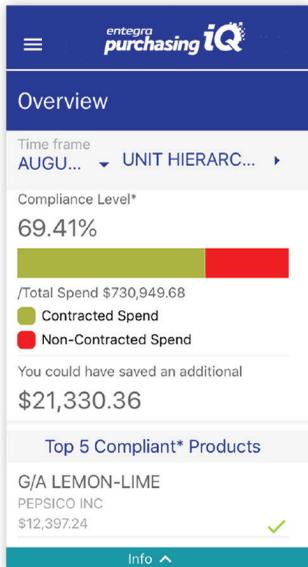
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# Coronavirus

## NGCOA COVID-19 Resource Guide



### State Level Rulings

Visit this page to see where your state government will keep you updated on proclamations and executive orders.

[ngcoa.org/info-centers/covid19/coronavirus-state-level-rulings](https://ngcoa.org/info-centers/covid19/coronavirus-state-level-rulings)

### COVID-19 Operational Protocols for Golf Courses



We've created this list of measures you can take to implement a "Park and Play" program at your course. The Park and Play program gives your golfers confidence that they can drive to your course, park their cars, get to and around the course, and back to the parking lot in as safe an environment as possible.

[ngcoa.org/making-your-course-social-distance-ready](https://ngcoa.org/making-your-course-social-distance-ready)

### World Health Organization News Releases

WHO works worldwide to promote health, keep the world safe, and serve the vulnerable. They provide news releases providing updates from around the world about Covid-19 and other health safety related topics.

[who.int/news-room/releases](https://who.int/news-room/releases)



### Marketing Ideas for a Slow Period

NGCOA has compiled marketing and customer service ideas you can implement while your clubhouse and/or golf course is slow or temporarily closed -- to maintain your relationships with your customers, and keep your golf course top-of-mind

[ngcoa.org/marketingideas](https://ngcoa.org/marketingideas)

### CDC Updates

CDC is the nation's health protection agency, working 24/7 to protect America from health and safety threats, both foreign and domestic.

[cdc.gov](https://cdc.gov)

### Economic Relief Information

Summary of COVID-19 Phase 3 Unemployment Insurance and Tax Provisions. Title II is assistance for American Workers, Families and Businesses.

[ngcoa.org/info-centers/covid19/economic-relief-information](https://ngcoa.org/info-centers/covid19/economic-relief-information)

Learn More

### Coronavirus and Your Golf Business

Education is the first line of defense in preventing exposure to and spread of COVID-19 in your workplace. NGCOA has received questions regarding COVID-19 and the impact it's having on our industry. The following questions are for general consideration.

[ngcoa.org/coronavirus](https://ngcoa.org/coronavirus)

