

THE NETWORK

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GBN's PGA Show Week Offers More Education, Networking and Sharing

It's the only week of the year when the majority of GBN members are all in the same location, so we'll take advantage of this fact with a full week of education, networking and sharing. Jump-starting the week, all three GBN Divisions will host their annual meetings during the upcoming PGA Show week in Orlando beginning on Tuesday, January 24th's **Head Professional Division Annual Meeting** in Room W224, better known as the GBN Clubhouse during show week, in the convention center from 3:00-5:00pm immediately followed by our **GBN PGA Show Kick-off Cocktail Party**. All GBN members are invited to attend the cocktail party.

Wednesday, January 25th features the **Assistant Golf Professional Division Annual Meeting** from 8:00-10:00am in Room W224 followed by the **Instructor Division Annual Meeting** from 10:30-12:30pm.

As the PGA Show officially kicks off on Thursday, January 26th, GBN will offer a full day of education seminars open to all GBN members in Room W109 (behind the PGA Education rooms on the lower

level). The line-up and starting times include:

- 9am **Brian Manzella**: New Ideas on The Release
- 10am **Charlie King**: How to Earn Six Figures In Any Economy
- 11am **Jeff Boulton/Jeff Ritter**: Branding Yourself for Financial Success
- 2pm **Todd Sones**: Using and Fitting the Belly Putter
- 3pm **Lou Guzzi/Brian Mogg**: How to Create Professional Quality Video Tips
- 4pm **Gale Peterson**: How to Conduct World-Class Clinics
- 5pm **Peter Sanders**: 4 Mistakes Instructors Make When Analyzing Golf Statistics

On Thursday and Friday the GBN Clubhouse will be open from 7:30am-6:00pm. Highlights each day include Breakfast service from 7:30-8:30am (must sign-up in advance) At 7:50am each morning **Green Grass One** will make a presentation for all of our members who are involved in the retail side of the industry. Lunch will be served each day beginning at Noon (members must sign-up in advance)

During lunch we will host a panel discussion each day. Thursday's panel will focus on Retailing in Today's Private Club Market. Panelists will include: **Marty Hackel**, Golf Digest; **Leigha Main**, Green Grass One and **Doug Steffen**, Baltusrol GC.

Friday's panel discussion covering What's Next in Instruction will include the last four PGA National Teachers of the Year: **Todd Anderson**, Sea Island Learning Center; **Mike Bender**, Mike Bender Golf Academy; **Martin Hall**, Ibis C.C.; and **Mike Malaska**, Nicklaus Golf Academies.

Both days will conclude in the **GBN Clubhouse with a cash bar** from 4:30-6:00pm.



PGA

2012 MERCHANDISE SHOW

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Instructor Division Ramping Up Marketing Help for Members

Full Calendar of Events For GBN Members

Tuesday, January 24th

3:00-5:00pm **Head Professional Division Annual Meeting** in Room W224 Orange County Convention Center

5:00-6:00pm Kick-off Cocktail Party in Room W224 (all GBN members are invited)

Wednesday, January 25th

8:00-10:00 am **Assistant Golf Professional Division Annual Meeting** in Room W224

10:30-12:30pm **Instructor Division Annual Meeting** in Room W224

Thursday, January 26th

7:30am-6:00pm GBN Clubhouse open (Room W224)

7:30-8:30am Breakfast served (must sign-up in advance)

7:50-8:20am **Green Grass One** retail presentation

Noon Lunch Served (must sign-up in advance)

12:30-1:15pm Panel Discussion: Retailing in Today's Private Club Market. Panel includes: **Marty Hackel**, Golf Digest; **Leigha Main**, Green Grass One; **Doug Steffen**, Baltusrol GC and **Cameron Weibe**, Everglades Club.

4:30-6:00pm Cash bar in the GBN Clubhouse Room W224

Thursday seminars open to all GBN members Room W109 (behind the PGA Education rooms)

9am-9:50 **Brian Manzella**: New Ideas on The Release

10am-10:50 **Charlie King**: How to Earn Six Figures In Any Economy

11am-11:50 **Jeff Boulton/Jeff Ritter of Square It Up**: Branding Yourself for Financial Success

2pm-2:50 **Todd Sones**: Using and Fitting the Belly Putter

3pm-3:50 **Lou Guzzi and Brian Mogg**: How to Create Professional Quality Video Tips

4pm-4:50 **Gale Peterson**: How to Conduct World-Class Clinics

5pm-5:50 **Peter Sanders**: Four Mistakes Instructors Make When Analyzing Golf Statistics

Friday, January 27th

7:30am-6:00pm GBN Clubhouse open (Room W224)

7:30-8:30am Breakfast served (must sign-up in advance)

7:50-8:20am **Green Grass One** retail presentation

Noon Lunch Served (must sign-up in advance)

12:30-1:15pm Panel Discussion: What's Next in Instruction. Panel of the last four PGA National Teachers of the Year including **Todd Anderson**, Sea Island Learning Center; **Mike Bender**, Mike Bender Golf Academy; **Martin Hall**, Ibis C.C.; and **Mike Malaska**, Nicklaus Golf Academies.

4:30-6:00pm Cash bar in the GBN Clubhouse Room W224

Saturday, January 28th

8:30am-Noon GBN Clubhouse open (Room W224)

Register Today to Attend Your GBN Annual Meeting
 Log in, click on the Educational Events menu and go to your division's registration form.

WHAT I'M HEARING

Increasing the Value of Your Membership

By Bob Mulcahy, CEO, Golf Business Network

As we begin a new year, I would like to begin by thanking each of you for your steadfast support. A unique community has been created and there is no question that everyone takes something a little different from their membership. However, there is one unwavering ingredient—you are willing to share information to help improve your operations and your careers.

Empowered by this resource we can now stand together as a much stronger entity. It's clear that the marketplace remains at a crossroads. Rounds and core golfers have been declining each year, however, we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel as individual clubs and instructors are succeeding.

You heard correctly: All is not doom and gloom. There are many Golf Professionals and Instructors who are achieving success. Essentially they have found a way to control their own destiny by finding ways to create positive energy. These individuals have embraced the need to be proactive with new ideas and are utilizing technology to their advantage.

Therefore, the theme for this year's Member Initiative is "Securing Your Future." The program will have a slightly different focus for each GBN Member classification.

Head Golf Professionals – Increasing Your Value at the Club and Building a Five-Year Master Plan.

Instructors – Creating a Five Year Business and Marketing Plan to Grow your Brand and Increase Your Bottom Line.

Assistant Professionals and Associate Instructors – Building a Career Plan

- One year plan
- Three year plan
- Five year career decisions

Over the course of the year the company will be creating and distributing templates that will assist you in accomplishing these objectives. These will be introduced during regional events and monthly webinars.

In tandem with this Initiative, we will focus throughout 2012 on increasing the value of your annual membership. This will be accomplished through the following avenues:

- Monitoring technology and utilizing methods that enables us to effectively communicate, with you our members.
- Creating strategic partnerships that increase your value at the club and to your students. Our new strategic partnerships with Green Grass One and Co-Video will provide many valuable benefits to members.
- Growing our networking events on a regional basis. At the PGA Show we will be releasing a comprehensive year-long schedule of events.
- Cultivating valuable industry information to make better decisions.

Stay tuned for more information that will be distributed at the upcoming Annual Meetings during the 2012 PGA Show week. I look forward to seeing everyone in Orlando.

GBN's Platinum Corporate Partners



MERCHANDISING AND OPERATIONS SURVEY RESULTS

GBN Member Data Shows Positive Trends

Over the last couple of months, the company conducted two comprehensive surveys that reveal very useful information we can use to gain insight into the current state—and future direction—of our industry.

Member rounds of golf. This is a bellwether statistic each year. The new set of results shows how fragmented and weather-dependent the participation levels have become.

23% report member rounds were equal to 2010 numbers.

43% are experiencing an increase in member rounds.

34% are down versus last year.

Golf Data Tech indicates that rounds through June for private clubs are down 0.1%.

Retail golf sales. These numbers are quite positive and reflect the skillful handling of the merchandising challenge by GBN members.

55% are ahead of last year in sales.

30% report sales equal to last year.

15% were down versus last year.

Electronic Member communications. This question measured the frequency with which our Golf Professionals are communicating with their members about the retail golf shop.

16% a couple of times annually

35% 1 – 2 times each month

24% 3 – 4 times each month

14% 5 – 6 times each month

Gross Profit Margins. Checking prior-year results, we find that margins are trending upward.

5% achieve gross margin of 15% or less

13% achieve between 16% to 20%

18% achieve between 21% to 25%

31% achieve between 26% to 30%

13% achieve between 30% to 35%

11% achieve between 36% to 40%

9% achieve over 41%

New member recruitment. – The survey shows results that represent some positive news and trends that may be emerging.

35% same as last year.

52% are ahead of last year.

13% are less than last year.

Current member attrition. The data you provide shows a stabilization in attrition patterns.

61% same as last year.

27% less than last year.

12% greater than last year.

Full Time Instructor Revenues. It is highly encouraging to see what was achieved in terms of revenue from teaching.

72% have experienced an increase over last year.

9% are approximately the same as last year.

19% are less than last year.

Instruction activities driving revenue increases:

67% cited adult private lessons

50% saw increase in junior private lessons

21% is attributed to growth in junior camps

These are some positive trends and represent how our members have been leaders in adjusting to the changes in the marketplace and stabilizing their positions. We continue to run our operations on a fine line, which the weather and economy can adversely impact at any time.

It is important to remember that the more we do for your members and/or your students, the more expecta-



More than 70% of our members report increased lesson sales in 2011.

GREEN GRASS ONE ON RETAIL PROMOTIONS

You Don't Have to Spend a Lot of Money for These Promotions to Drive More Sales

The 2012 calendar year is upon us bringing with it a new retail season. For some of us we're in quiet time of year, perhaps closed for the year and taking some well deserved time off. For others in the southern states January brings with it a busy month for retail sales.

The New Year should be a time to reflect on retail successes as well as areas where you may have fallen. Mostly, it's a time to plan new programs and promotional efforts for the upcoming year.

The best retail promotions and programs are well thought out and planned in advance. The good news is that they are often low-cost and can drive great sales impact if executed fully.

Here are four ideas to consider for 2012 to drive sales in your golf shop.

What's in the Bag?

This is modeled after one of the best-read columns in Golf Digest, in which a PGA Tour player is featured with his or her golf equipment. It highlights everything from driver to golf ball and typically features some fun facts about the person as well as reasons they chose the clubs they did. Consumers who read Golf Digest have a fascination with the choices and decisions of well-known players.

We see the same to be true of member's fascination with their club professional's choices. In many cases members know what brand you're affiliated with but likely not the specifics about models and specs. The tool has proved a great conversation starter, especially with better players around your club. In many cases you are



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Professional Shop**
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**WHAT'S IN THE BAG ?
PATRICK WHITE**



PLAYER PROFILE

Name:
Patrick White
Head Professional at
Crooked Stick Golf Club

Experience:
Penn State '08

DID YOU KNOW?

- ◆ Patrick's favourite course is :
- ◆ Patrick holds one career hole in one!
- ◆ Patrick's favourite meal at the turn is a Chix salad sandwich

WHAT'S IN MY BAG		
Equipment	Brand and Model	Reason / Comments
Driver	Callaway Razr Hawk with Diamana Whiteboard	
Utility Clubs	Diablo Edge Tour 2H and 3H	
Irons	Razr Forged with KBS Shaft (4-PW)	
Wedges	X-Forged 60 degree, Jaws 52 and 56 degree	
Putter	Black Series #5	
Ball	Callaway Tour IS	
Shoes	Chev Bucher	
Glove	Callaway Tour	
Bag	Callaway Tour	
Other Goodies	Ranger Finder, Advil, Band-Aids, Lucky Quarter	





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Professional Shop**
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**What's In My
Closet ?**





Patterns and prints always make the cut!
(Callaway Holly Skort)



This long sleeve is going to be great to layer in the early spring and late fall.
(Fairway & Greene)



Though I prefer not to play in the rain, this softshell keeps me dry and warm. It's so nice to have outerwear in fashion colours!
(Abacus)



These spikeless shoes are both fashionable AND functional!
(Callaway Solaire)



I love the detailing on this sleeveless - super feminine!
(Annika)



I love a golf dress, excited to have this one in a print for 2012.
(Greg Norman Canton Dress)

Golfers have a fascination with what better players and the professionals are using and wearing on the course. Use this information to drive sales.

best player at the club, and what you choose to play with and why is a great way to drive interest to this category of sales in your golf shop. We encourage every golf professional to fill one out, display the sheet in the golf shop and post it on your club web site if appropriate.

What's in My Closet?

Capitalizing on the success of the what's-in-the-bag concept we built a hybrid called What's in my Closet? Members have great interest in what the golf professionals and merchandisers in their golf shop are wearing.

In many cases the brands you personally wear most end up being the best sellers in your shop. The perception is that you have a world of options available to you, what you choose to wear and why is another layer of expertise you can add to the sales process and it adds a sense of confidence to the members' purchase that they have chosen something trendy.

We encourage you to have every member of your team fill out their own personal What's in my Closet? List with their favorite items for 2012. Again, consider displaying them on the pro shop section of your club web site or using them as content for an article in your club newsletter.

Fashion Launch Letters for Men's and Ladies Apparel

Fashion Launch Letters for men and women have become our favorite spring promotion for many reasons. We've been extremely pleased with the low cost (in money and time) required to implement them, as well as the sales lift we typically see as a result. The idea was inspired by a specialty ladies wear retailer who sends out a quarterly fashion newsletter to her customer base.

I have always loved hearing the buyer's interpretation about trends as well as what she's carrying for the season. The promotion was directly the result of declining sales at our annual spring fashion show. The combination of reduced sales and the cost and effort required to run the show caused us to seek a different solution for a spring apparel promotion.

Our early-season Launch Letters helped address a number of issues:

- We could send it to the entire database of women members, not just the 75 (of a ladies membership of closer to 150) who attended the fashion show.
- We could send it at the right time of the year, to be in their hands just before the Masters. That meant the

Insert
Club Logo
Here

The Golf Shop

Your Golf & Country Club

Dear Ladies of (Club Name),

Welcome back!! We realize you have choices for both your golf and retail needs, we genuinely appreciate every time you choose us. The golf shop staff is committed to consistently delivering the highest quality golf shop services!

Golf has continued to grow and change, in no more obvious a way than in golf fashion and product for women. We are proud of our facility, our golf professionals, the wide variety of services and clinics tailored to our membership, and our ever growing ladies apparel and footwear department.

Ladies golf apparel and footwear continues to innovate, excite and reflect many of the trends we enjoy in mainstream fashion. In spring 2012 watch for fabrics and prints with almost every color under the rainbow represented. Pinks are back and shades of blue from soft sky blue to aqua turquoise are looking fresh! A must have item to add to your wardrobe this season is a printed. Prints will be feminine and sleek looking great on everyone.

To finish off your dress, be sure to add a spikeless golf shoe. These shoes are light, comfortable and less expensive - which means you can justify purchasing multiple colors' to match every dress! Be sure to get a pair (or two!) this spring!

Here's what's new and continuing for 2012:

- Expanded ladies sizing to include plus sizes. 2-22 and XS-3XL
- Timely deliveries of new fashion arrivals
- Timely markdowns
- No charge, hassle free special ordering
- Complimentary gift wrapping and shipping anywhere in North America

We appreciate that you have many choices for your golf apparel and gift giving needs, and we hope you continue to think of us. We have enclosed a \$20 gift certificate for you to use on your first purchase of the 2011 season—let yourself have as much fun shopping for golf apparel as you do working on your game!

Good Golfing,

The entire (Insert Club Name) Professional Shop Staff

We are a proud member of the Green Grass One network of over 400 premier independent professional shops in North America. Our membership in this network provides us with access to industry-leading products, pricing and services of Canada's largest independent golf retail group.

Insert
Club Logo
Here

The Golf Shop

Your Golf & Country Club

Dear Men of (Club Name),

Welcome back! We realize you have choices for your golf and retail needs, we genuinely appreciate each and every time you choose us. The golf shop staff is committed to consistently delivering the highest quality pro shop services!

We are proud of our golf facility, our golf professionals and the wide variety of services and products tailored to our membership. We strive to selectively choose the very best brands in each price point across equipment, shoes and especially apparel.

In 2012 fashion, specifically men's fashion in golf, is going to be about celebrating textures, fabrics and prints with almost every colour under the rainbow represented. Prints and plaid bottoms range from the loud and wild (orange plaid) to the subtle and sophisticated (grey pinstripe). Knits are the way to keep warm in 2012 from crew necks to v-necks and cardigans. Be sure to add some to your wardrobe in 2012. Last, but certainly not in fashion 'least', the spikeless golf shoe. It's not just golf fashion but mainstream as well. Be sure to get a pair this spring!

Here's what's new and continuing for 2012:

- Timely deliveries of new fashion arrivals
- Timely markdowns
- No charge, hassle free special ordering
- Expanded sizing to included size 5-XXXL in many items
- Complimentary gift wrapping and shipping anywhere in North America

We appreciate that you have many choices for your golf apparel and gift giving needs, and we hope you continue to think of us. We have enclosed a \$20 gift certificate for you to use on your next purchase. We look forward to seeing you soon!

Good Golfing,

The entire (Insert Club Name) Professional Shop Staff

We are a proud member of the Green Grass One network of over 400 premier independent professional shops in North America. Our membership in this network provides us with access to industry-leading products, pricing and services of Canada's largest independent golf retail group.

Fashion Launch Letters cost minimal time and money and generally offer a very high rate of return when timed to the beginning of the season.

ladies who were in the area could start ordering right away and those still in the south could get the benefit when they returned.

- We got a chance to talk about all the great things the golf shop was doing in terms of services and the brands we would be carrying.
- Conducting this promotion was low-cost both in dollars and in time/effort.

Sales lift from the launch letter exceeded the last several years of fashion shows and thus it became our go-to spring apparel promotion. The following year we added a men's version to accomplish many of the same goals for men's apparel, typically the biggest category in sales.

5 Reasons to Love My Club

A slight twist on something great someone else is doing can be just the thing to drive energy and sales into your golf shop. The idea of 5 Reasons to Love My Club was adapted from a Christmas e-marketing piece from a Men and women's specialty retailer the GG1 retail team frequents. The eblast was simple and it effectively highlighted what this retailer did to set their store apart.

Promotions are generally about a specific brand or specific category—this one appealed to us because it was all about promoting yourself and your own retail business.

Ideas like complimentary gift-wrapping, gift shipping and tailoring could all be examples of what makes your shop special and distinguishes you from the competition.

We encourage everyone to take a moment and itemize these steps for their shop and then make promoting yourself and your

services as important as promoting the merchandise.

We hope one or all of these promotional or programming examples are helpful to you as you plan your sell-through for the 2012 retail year. If you'd like any of these retail templates to customize for your shop don't hesitate to be in touch with leigha@greengrassone.com or megan@greengrassone.com.

FIVE

reasons to love your club:

SIZE SELECTION

we carry sizes 2-22, xs-xxl for ladies, and 32-42, s-xxl for men

COMPLIMENTARY TAILORING

for a perfect fit every time!

SPECIAL ORDERS ON THE HOUSE

if we don't have it in stock, we'll bring it in especially for you!

WE GIFT WRAP GRATIS!

all year long, we'll make your parcels pretty

DELIVERY TO ANY DOOR

happy to deliver or ship gifts to their end destination

Professional Shop

Telephone: (123) 456-7890

Remind your members that you provide the highest level of services which makes their shopping easier.

RETAILING IDEAS FROM GREEN GRASS ONE

Competing as a Green Grass Shop

How Can Golf Shops Better Compete in the Changing Golf Retail Market?

The golf retail market is changing.

The competition for consumer golf purchases is greater than ever in the golf market. Changes in consumer behavior, the competitive landscape and product supply have spawned a new golf retail market that is much more crowded and sophisticated than ever before (see sidebar on page 9 for details). All indicators continue to suggest that this is not going to change in the near future, and that on-course golf retailers must continue to focus on their core business in order to win their share of consumer purchases.

How can green grass golf shops compete? It's a matter of selecting and executing the correct approach. Golf shops, like other retailers, need to carefully select their approach to the market. In general, retailers can choose one of three competitive strategies for their business — product leadership, operational excellence or customer intimacy (shown above) [Tracey & Wiersema, *The Discipline of Market Leaders*, 1995].

Although each strategy has its merits, a retailer must select and commit to a specific focus in order to become a market leader (see Table 1 on next page).

Many retailers are too often tempted not to focus on a particular strategy and tend to strive to be “good at all three strategies.” This mixed-strategy approach will almost always result in losing share to another more focused competitor who is aggressively targeting specific customers. The best possible outcome for a retailer is to excel in one specific strategy, and be satisfactory in the other two.

Based on the current competitive landscape in the golf retail market, most green grass shops would be best served by adopting a **Customer Intimacy** strategy for their retail operations. Golf Professionals and their professional staffs are in a unique position to be able to offer focused solutions to their members and guests. The needs and problems of current and potential customers

can almost always be addressed through the products and services available in the professional shop. The ability to engage repeatedly with customers who are excited about being at your location — the golf course — provides a unique advantage in the retail market.

Implementing a Customer Intimacy Strategy

There are four common characteristics that most Customer Intimacy focused retailers share. By implementing a number of golf-specific initiatives, your business will be much better prepared to compete with off-course and Internet-based retailers.



The Customer Intimacy Triangle

1. Offer a unique range of superior services to your customers

Leverage your unique advantage of having the product and service testing grounds on-site, and the golf professionals' expertise to improve the overall solution delivered.

Golf Retail Examples:

Launch monitor fitting, extensive demo programs, personal product experience, deep product knowledge, fashion and trunk shows, etc...

2. Personalize the basic service and customize product offers

Tailor solutions to better meet your customer needs and address the root cause of their problem. Do not limit golf shop sales and service to transactional interactions with customers.

Golf Retail Examples:

Garment tailoring services on all apparel sales, complimentary gift wrapping with every purchase, steam or iron a purchased shirt so that the customer can wear it immediately, personal shopper service, gift delivery, understand repeat customers preference and suggest complimentary products, etc...

3. Commit to take responsibility for achieving results

Strong retailers will take responsibility for achieving results with recommendations. Make sure that the professionals and shop staff sell products and services that

solve the customer's problem — then back that up with guarantees.

Golf Retail Examples:

Guaranteed satisfaction on all purchases and a “no hassle” refund policy, complimentary 15 minute lessons with purchase to ensure satisfaction, exchanges on recommended products if the customer is not completely satisfied, etc.

	PRODUCT LEADERSHIP	OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE	CUSTOMER INTIMACY
Key Customer Message	“Best Products”	“Best Performance and Total Cost”	“Best Service and Total Solution”
Customer Value	Offer customers the best products that are on the cutting edge of performance and technology	Offer customers the best combination of cost, quality and ease of purchase	Offer customers specific products and services tailored to meet their needs
Retail Examples	Apple store, Disney store, Harley-Davidson, Nike Town	Costco, Walmart, McDonald's	Starbucks, Nordstrom, Amazon, Four Seasons

Table 1: Overview of Competitive Retail Strategies

Monthly thank you letters and merchandise gift certificates to customers that have supported your business, offer a Golf Shop points program, issue Golf Shop Dollars, implement a cash back program to purchases over \$250, etc.

Competing in the golf retail market

will be increasingly challenging in the years ahead. By selecting and implementing the correct strategy, your golf shop will maximize its chance for success. Most green grass are best served by focusing their business on providing the best total solution for their customers.

For more information on selecting and implementing the right retail strategy for your shop, contact Kevin McCafferty at Green Grass One (kevin@greengrassone.com or 1-866-303-0441).

4. Promote and encourage customer loyalty

Understand the value of repeat customers and earn loyalty by rewarding repeat business. Customers will invest time and money with your business only if they believe that their contributions will yield superior results over time.

Golf Retail Examples:

Challenges in the golf retail market — a golf shop perspective

The golf retail market is evolving to mirror mainstream retail. Many of the competitive changes that we have recently experienced in the home improvement, furniture, grocery and electronics markets are now also apparent in golf. These new challenges force existing retailers to re-think their operating strategies.

Changing Customers

Today's golf customer is much different that she/he was only 10-20 years ago. They are different because:

- They are more knowledgeable about products and technology, and don't

always feel that they require a golf professional's opinion prior to making a purchase

- They have a clear understanding of competitive prices in the golf market — i.e. consumers benchmark prices online and with big box golf retailers
- They demand better, faster service
- Direct-to-consumer advertising and marketing is attracting customers into off-course retail shops

Changing Competitors

- Off-course retailers are more sophisticated than ever and are aggressively growing market share
- Off-course retailers have a deeper product selection and brand penetration than they have had in the past
- The internet sales channel is very active with many new and used product retailers and exchanges

- Golf liquidators continue to expand and have adopted creative sales initiatives (e.g traveling hotel shows) to attract new customers

Changing Supply Market

- Product life cycles have reduced considerably — there is now an ever-increasing need for deeper product knowledge and education programs
- Products are more advanced and require more dedication to product knowledge by the retailer
- Unique special make-ups (SMUs) or exclusive SKUs are being used to promote sales in certain channels
- Most suppliers are active in both on- and off-course shops — green grass exclusivity rarely exists

ASSISTANTS CORNER

Be Honest: Do You Really Have a Career Plan?

I know that this can be a nagging question in your mind at times, but it's a critical one as the future lies out in front of you. And it's a subject to be focused on at Golf Business Network and as we move along in 2012. Our intent is to be an invaluable resource and asset for you, as you strive toward your full potential.

There are three distinct areas you ought to focus on, which are:

- Maximizing your career development
- Working towards reaching the next level
- Networking with the right people

Here's what we mean by each:

Maximizing Your Career Development

All great business people learn important lessons from other great business people. They also managed to pick up helpful concepts and traits by observing efforts and traits that weren't so successful. During your career development it is imperative to avail yourself of "best practices" from other Golf Professionals. Early in your career this means studying the other Golf Professionals you work with and as you move on in your career it is through observing other successful operations. This year, GBN will focus on bringing you access to information in the following areas that will assist you in maximizing your career opportunities.

Time management – We will survey accomplished Golf Professionals and industry leaders to gather insight into how they effectively manage their day, week, month, and year.

Management skills – You will have the benefit of educational forums that help you understand how successful leaders manage people.

Retail education – Through our newly created partnership with Green Grass One, you will be provided a steady stream of valuable retailing information.

Instruction – We will leverage a rare asset—the skills and knowledge of GBN Instructor Members—to present tools and ideas that are certain to make you a more effective golf instructor.

Golf Operations – Your fellow members in this organization represent the most proven and valuable approaches to running a golf operation. We will gather and



deliver that information in ways that you can best use it to grow as a business person.

Compensation information

– Vital to your goal-setting and career planning is data on potential earning power—that's what emerges from GBN's annual survey on compensation for golf support staff.

Working towards reaching the next level

This is an on-going process throughout your career. It begins with creating a resume that accurately portrays your career history in a concise, coherent, and meaningful manner that is the conduit to achieving that first Head Professional position. This coming year our focus will include:

Resume Refinement – Your resume is constantly evolving and changing. We will be here to service your needs and keep you abreast of potential new ways to improve your resume.

Portfolio Development – The portfolio has changed over the years. In today's marketplace it should be an insight into how your operation would be organized and how it would look to the outside world. You should be gathering information every year to add to the portfolio.

Marketing for the Job Interview – Due to contraction in the industry it has become much harder to receive an interview. We will provide regular advice and suggestions on how you can successfully market yourself to win that interview.

Succeeding in an Interview – Members will have access to real-world information on how others have succeeded in the interview process, so that you can perform at your highest when your opportunities arise.

Networking with the right people

This sounds pretty simple, but it really is an area that you need to pay close attention to every day. Developing a large network will allow you to learn more, advance sooner and stay in tune with potential opportunities outside your immediate environment.

Understanding your current skill set, expanding it and developing your personal style as a leader are the critical building blocks to long-term success. So is career planning. Golf Business Network will support and assist in both of these vital endeavors.

SEVEN QUESTIONS

GBN's Consulting Division: Quiet Engine Driving Growth

New for 2012 is "Seven Questions." It's a short, informative article in the Q & A format designed to give members important background on Golf Business Network operations. The first installment of Seven Questions turns a spotlight on GBN's consulting work, the company's participation and how it fits into the company's overall business model.

Q #1: What types of services are offered by the Consulting Division?

A: The primary service is Head Golf Professional and Director of Instruction searches. For these searches, we have the capability to offer everything from a Turnkey Search to a Contingency-Based Search to a club. Beyond the search function, the company has successfully assisted clubs in evaluating their golf operations. GBN Consulting has also worked with clubs in developing exit strategies for long-Golf Professionals.

Q #2: What is the company's role in a Turnkey Search?

A: Our primary focus is assisting the Selection Chairman and Committee in conducting a comprehensive and completely unbiased process. In my opinion, it is all about the process and a lot of time and energy is spent on keeping the committee focused on remaining objective and working in the best interest of the club. Overall, our concern is that the process leads the club to successfully recruit the ideal Golf Professional for their club.

Q #3: How do you foster that type of process and achieve those objectives?

A: Through being upfront and clear with the committee that relevant operational information has to be gathered before any candidates can be properly evaluated. Our process starts by conducting a two-day site visit to meet with the Selection Committee Chairman, club leaders, the management team, the Professional Staff, and then the Selection Committee. A general meeting is held at the end of my site visit.

Q #4: Why at the end?

A: I was asked that very question during my consultation with the St. Louis Country Club Selection Committee. The answer was simple; I wanted to be able to evaluate the club objectively without their input coloring my judgment. The operational evaluation is critical in allowing us to build a comprehensive job description and profile for the Golf Professional to succeed. This is then very instrumental in evaluating the potential candidates to advance in the process.



Q #5: What is the company's role in determining candidates to be interviewed?

A: That is a great question and one that is very important for our members to understand. We are completely objective in this process and do not make any judgments. Rather our goal is to create a comprehensive skill set needed for the position. We provide this skill set to the committee with a corresponding evaluation form so they can rate the candidates.

Of equal importance, the committee members are provided the resumes all at one time after the resume deadline. This is done so that the committee members stay objective and do

not form pre-conceived opinions good or bad about potential candidates. We lead the committee in narrowing down the list of interviewees by making them identify their top candidates before the meeting to decide interviews.

It is imperative that people realize that the company does not promote one candidate over another; rather we simply administer the process. We have found that putting the right process in place leads to selecting the right candidates. Unfortunately in today's crowded job market often times many qualified candidates do not receive interviews.

Q #6: Do these principles carry over to the interviews?

A: Yes, our goal is to educate the committee members on the subject matters they should be probing with the candidates during the interview. In addition, each candidate that interviews is provided the necessary information to properly prepare for the interview.

Having both sides understand their roles makes for much more productive interviews. Quite often we only participate in the first couple of the interviews to assist the committee in staying on track and developing their interview style.

Q #7: What value do you gain for the GBN members through conducting these services?

A: It is quite incredible the information we learn during the search process. Just think, I am provided an avenue to understand why club leaders make decisions, how they feel and perceive the Golf Professional, and what they are looking for in their golf operation. This data is instrumental in building better services for our members to utilize at their own clubs.

In fact, I am in the process of re-tooling all of our templates based on new information I have gathered that will allow our members to better illustrate their value and communicate more effectively with their own club leaders.

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Member Q&A: “What I’ve Learned...”

Paul Ramee, Jr., Bulls Bridge Golf Club

Interview by David Gould



GBN Member Paul Ramee, Jr. is the Club Manager/Head Professional at Bull’s Bridge GC in Kent, CT.

This article continues our series featuring a variety of insights from highly respected GBN members.

This is a special installment of GBN’s monthly Q & A column, in which we turn the tables on Paul Ramée, who is not only director of golf and club manager at Bull’s Bridge Golf Club in Kent, Connecticut, but also moonlights as the interviewer and author of “What I’ve Learned.” Soon to begin his second decade at Bull’s Bridge, Paul sat down to talk about his own career and about his ongoing conversations with fellow GBN members that turn into these articles in each newsletter.

Hearing the story of how you became a golfer reminds us that not everybody comes up the traditional junior ranks. Is that a fair assessment?

Well, my father was an avid tennis player, and my parents weren’t inclined to start me out in golf. But they had the good sense to buy a house abutting a golf course, Fairmount Country Club in Chatham, New Jersey. I could walk through our back yard right onto a little loop of four holes. Tennis was the big sport back then, and my father was an accomplished player. I got tired of having tennis balls whiz by me so I got some clubs and I’d go out and play those four holes when no one was around. I figured I had my own private course.

You managed to keep from getting caught—were you a fast runner?

I tried to be discreet, and this went on for a few years. One day they figured I was spending so much time on the property I might as well join the staff. Kevin Riley, the head professional, and his assistant, Ralph Romano, offered me a job, working the range and the bag room. Of course I said yes.

Were you as good at golf as your dad was at tennis?

I played well enough to make my high school team, and it was a strong program so we were competitive and had a lot of fun. Six guys from my team went on to play college golf. I went to Seton Hall University and played on the team. When I got out in 1991 I worked at Fairmount Country Club as an Assistant and in 1993 I applied for work at Canoe Brook Country Club in Summit, New Jersey. Greg Lecker was the professional there—he had just come from Oakmont—and Greg hired me as an assistant.

That’s a very fine club to get started at.

Between Somerset Hills, Baltusrol and Canoe Brook, those were the prominent clubs in my area. So yes, it was a great place to be. My father mentioned that if I performed well at Canoe Brook that might be my entrée to Oakmont. I moved to Pittsburgh and worked for Bob Ford from 1995 through ’97, which gave me more very high-quality experience and training.

With that resume it would seem like you had what was necessary to keep moving up. What came next?

I applied for a couple head jobs and got offered a good one, at The Park Country Club of Buffalo, in the town of Williamsville, New York. It’s a club with a very traditional atmosphere. Paul Runyan won the 1934 PGA Championship there, in a playoff over Craig Wood. The golf course was designed by Colt & Alison and the clubhouse architect was Clifford Wendehack, who designed the clubhouses at Winged Foot and also at Ridgewood Country Club. I stayed there as head professional for five years.

That would take us to 2003, and the move down to Connecticut—to a club with no tradition at all.

That’s just how it was. I signed on as the head golf professional at Bull’s Bridge Golf Club in May of ’03, and by that time the three clubs where I’d previously worked had celebrated their 100th anniversaries. Bull’s Bridge had six holes open and a temporary clubhouse. I had to go out and buy my own phone, desk and chair, we had to build everything. The town wouldn’t let our

developer clear the entire site for construction, in case something happened and the job never got finished. So Tom Fazio cleared land for six holes, built them, cleared the acreage for six more, built those, then did it one last time.

Paul, along with being a member of the Golf Business Network, you’re also part of our editorial team—handling the What I’ve Learned column.

That’s right, and it’s something I’ve enjoyed very much. I joined the organization as a member fairly early on, and to be honest I don’t remember how I got the writing job. I guess it made sense that a member professional might be the one to do these interviews—it’s an extension of the normal thing that happens, golf professionals talking to other golf professionals, asking questions. After we take care of that, the hard part comes, writing it all down. But the guys, Lorin and Bob, gave me a lot of help. Certainly a lot of encouragement, too.

Who was your first interview?

I started off with Todd Anderson. I don’t have any journalistic training, plus Todd is so accomplished at what he does, so it was a little intimidating. I remember I couldn’t get the tape re-

“Martin Hall told me, ‘Communication surrounding an issue or a problem at a golf facility tends to resemble one of two liquids—either it’s water or it’s gasoline’.” - Paul Ramee, Jr.

order to work. I just wrote down everything he said by hand. You learn to write fast.

Todd being an instruction specialist, would it have been easier to do your first interview with a professional who was on your side of the business, in golf operations?

I didn't look at it that way. Basically I was curious to interview Todd and hear his thoughts. It almost felt like I was doing it selfishly. I wanted to understand his approach to instruction, and normally getting all that time to pick his brain might not be possible. So I just asked about all the things I wanted to know, and of course Todd was great about it.

Obviously there has been a great wealth of information shared in these columns you've put together. Anything you recall in particular?

What stands out are the moments when a golf professional talks about commitment to success under challenging circumstances, which, as everybody knows, there's been plenty of. I remember asking Dennis Satyshur how his club, Caves Valley, would be able to make it through the major difficulties that arose from the 2008 financial crisis.

Remind us what Dennis told you.

He gave a great answer, about how proactive and serious he and his board members were in their communication to the membership. They described their message as a three-legged stool. Members were asked to commit to the club—meaning, keep their memberships. Secondly, they were requested to use the club. People have choices as to where they'll spend their leisure budgets and time, so it was asked that they think of Caves Valley first. And the third message was: Make a point of bringing your friends and showing off the club to new prospects, because that's where the capital expenditure money was going to come from—initiation fees. In some ways that may all sound obvious but it was the no-nonsense way they did it that struck me.

That's a piece of advice involving communication, which you often tend to ask about.

Well, golf is so much a people business, that skill can't be underestimated. Martin Hall gave me a good analogy when I interviewed him. He said, "Communication surrounding an issue or a problem at a golf facility tends to resemble one of two liquids—either it's water or it's gasoline. In other words, you extinguish anger or you escalate it, based on what's said and when and how you say it. I remind my staff of that. Martin's message is that even a crisis can be an opportunity, although if you pour the water wisely, it will never get to that level. For example, the two-some of good players that goes off 15 minutes after a foursome of higher-handicappers would be one of those little brushfires in waiting. You have to anticipate—get in a cart and go make sure the twosome gets around them. Twosomes don't have standing, traditionally, but that's beside the point, proactively solving and anticipating problems is something we need to teach our staff.

Any conversations about business development come to mind, from the interviews?

Jon Tattersall spoke persuasively about the need to "make the pie bigger" at a golf program or an academy. I use that expression with my assistants regularly. For a small club, doing just 7,200 rounds a year, we do about \$90,000 annually in lesson revenue. That's from our efforts to grow the pie, so that staff

compensation can grow along with it. One of the new initiatives I am going to use in 2012 to incent the staff to grow the game is on April 1 to identify who, based on last year's numbers, is not playing golf here, or coming for instruction and figure out how do we get them out? I believe the answer is to quietly and respectfully promote our programs. My assistants will need to work it into their conversations with members, reminding them about clinics, tournaments, practice or lessons, because we truly do want them to play better and enjoy their golf more.

It sounds like you will make this a priority in 2012.

Absolutely, and in October of 2012 we will go back to see how much we were able to increase activity. Then it's easy for me to say to the board—look at my assistants, they generated \$40,000 in new revenue. There were seven new women in the clinics, 15 more kids in the junior camp. It's new revenue for the club and makes the staff bonus issue a better conversation.

After 10 years up in the hills of Connecticut, how would you describe your experience at Bull's Bridge?

I've said a fair amount about communication because the position I have at the club brings an interesting communication challenge. We have 160 members and 90 percent of them have a primary residence in New York City. They spend their weekends at their homes in the country. The in-person communication tends to happen Friday through Sunday. So as the week goes along I will need to use email to keep the leadership informed. We had a tough beginning. The week the developer got started selling memberships was 9/11. Our first year of operation was a disaster in terms of weather—terrible rainstorms that caused us to have to reseed a number of fairways several times. But the superintendent and I stuck with it. We showed loyalty, and in return the club has been loyal to us. They are great people, with excellent character, and those are the reasons why in my view this club has been a tremendous success story.

At the beginning, you were in charge of the golf operation, then you ended up in the club manager role. Was that something you evolved into?

It was part of the natural process of the club getting into full operation and completing its infrastructure. I received some interesting advice from John Traub, a PGA professional who is known as a great player but is equally accomplished in running an operation. I was talking about the club being new and developing itself and he advised me to step forward to take whatever responsibility needed handling. "If they'll let you run the locker room, run the locker room," John told me. "If they ask about you running food-and-beverage, run food-and-beverage. And if you don't know something, call a pro who's done it."

That was excellent insight that clearly has helped you develop your career. Were you close friends with John, or did you happen to work for him?

I played one round of golf with him, in a pro-pro event down in Florida. We weren't partners, just in the foursome together. There's a brief wait on one tee and John started asking me about my position at Bull's Bridge. That's when he gave me that advice. That's really how it's been in our profession since the beginning, I have to think. This column is a great vehicle, if I can take the liberty of saying that, but it's really just a formalized version of what's always happened—golf professionals talking to each other, asking questions, sharing information.

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INSTRUCTOR DIVISION BENEFITS

Key New 2012 GBN Benefit: Comprehensive Golf Instruction Marketing Template

By Lorin Anderson, Instructor Division Executive Director

I have the opportunity to monitor literally dozens of questions pouring in every day from golf instructors all over the world on Facebook Groups, GBN discussion boards, emails and phone calls. Sifting through all of these queries, it has become apparent that while the difficult economy hasn't kept the majority of our Instructor Division members from continuing to grow their businesses, it is clear that growing a lesson business is taking more energy and time away from the tee. In particular, successful golf instructors are spending more time nurturing their marketing and promotion skills.

When we launched GBN's Instructor Division nearly five years ago, I knew that I wanted to focus more attention to the business side of teaching. I saw such incredible potential for so many teachers to leverage their own charisma and talents through so many new outlets and by putting some polish on their brand and their message so that more golfers would respond.

Even with all the economic difficulties we're all working through, many major corporations are showing record or near record profits amid the recession. They are winning because they have assets they are able to leverage more effectively than their smaller competitors. I look at our GBN Instructor members and I see a similar opportunity. Most of you have more experience, more training, better facilities and more resources than most of your competitors, but not all of you are leveraging these assets to drive new revenues and grow your bottom line as much as you could.

Telling a compelling story to the golfers most likely to use your services is the lynch pin to surviving and, yes, thriving, in 2012 and beyond. No longer can you or any other teacher, sit back and wait for the phone to ring. Rounds of golf continue to trend downward and we are closing more courses than we are opening for the fifth year in a row.

You have to become more proactive and make it a staple of your daily, weekly and monthly schedule to put

a little more time, energy and resources towards building your brand through better marketing and promotion.

This is why I'm excited to announce that beginning this week, we will send our Instructor Division members a Marketing Update covering an important topic that can have a very positive effect on "telling your story" more effectively. Each week's one to two page update will be combined into one document and we will post the complete series as our GBN Instructor Marketing Template on the website.

Having consulted with so many of the game's accomplished teachers there are a couple of things that I'm keenly aware of. First, most teachers are already strapped for time to run

their business and they don't want to take on marketing projects that will take up a lot of their energy. Second, most teachers don't set aside very many resources for promoting their businesses. The average cash outlay for marketing, not including websites, was less than \$900, or well under 1% of GBN Instructor Division member's average revenues.

With these caveats in mind we'll examine all the areas where you can tell your story more effectively to more golfers without huge time or capital investments.

A sampling of topics that we will cover through our own member resources, other industry experts and experts from outside of golf include:

- How to create a better image with better photography on your website, brochures and signage.
- Identifying the real market for your services.
- Planning an annual promotions calendar.
- How to boost referrals: The most important generator of new students.
- Creating better brochures and flyers.
- Setting Lesson Rates: Do's and Don'ts
- How to drive sales through the facility newsletter.

There is no magic bullet. It will take a sustained effort on your part to upgrade your brand and identify the best outlets to spread your message to the golfers you want to target. This is the new reality if you want your instruction business to thrive and GBN will be with you every step of the way in 2012.



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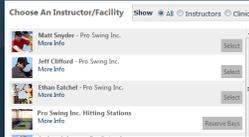
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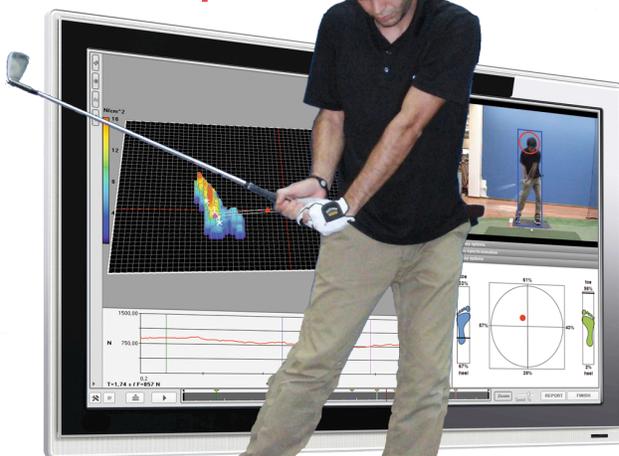
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GBN MEMBER MILESTONES

PGA Announces 2011 National Award Winners and Five GBN Members are Among Those Honored

The PGA of America's 2011 national award winners have been announced and five Golf Business Network members are among this year's honorees. They are: **Mike Malaska**, Teacher of the Year; **Bob Dolan**, Bill Strausbaugh Award, **Rick Grayson**, Junior Golf Leader; **John Hines**, Patriot Award and **Hill Herrick**, Merchandiser of the Year for Resort Facilities.

Mike Malaska, Teacher of the Year, is based at Superstition Mountain G. & C.C. in Superstition Mountain, AZ and is the Worldwide Director of Instruction for the Nicklaus Academies. Malaska has been a pioneer in the industry for more than 30 years promoting the critical importance of understanding the how the body functions during the swing and how fitness issues affect a golfer's ability to perform.



Mike Malaska

Bob Dolan, Bill Strausbaugh Award, is Head Professional at Columbia Country Club in Chevy Chase,

MD, and he actually succeeded Bill Strausbaugh when Bill retired in 1995. The Bill Strausbaugh Award was named for the pro who left an indelible mark in PGA of America history through his dedication to service, leadership and mentoring other golf Professionals. This award is very special to Dolan who has first met Strausbaugh nearly 30 years ago and has worked to emulate him ever since.

Rick Grayson, Junior Golf Leader, operates at the Rivercut Golf Course's Connie Morris golf Learning Center in Springfield, MO. He has built his career on teaching juniors and has always believed that developing tomorrow's golf leaders is his true calling. The programs he works on in Springfield reach more than 8,000 juniors every year.

John Hines, Patriot Award, is Head Golf Professional at Baiting Hollow (NY) Club and comes from a long line of military veterans (he is the son of a retired Marine) and understands the need to give back to those who have devoted their careers to protecting and preserving our freedoms. The award recognizes a professional who has given back to our nation's veterans through creative Patriot Golf Day events.

Hill Herrick, Merchandiser of the Year for Resort Facilities, is the Head Golf Professional at The Greenbriar Resort in White Sulphur Springs, WV, home to Sam Snead and a National Historic Landmark. He has been on staff at the facility for the past 27 years since being hired there as an Assistant Professional.



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