

COLLABORATE

www.proponent-group.com

Growing the Game, Growing Your Business: Registration Now Open for 2014 Summit

This year's summit theme: *Growing the Game, Growing Your Business* November 2-4 at Heathrow C.C. near Orlando, Florida is going to be the most hands-on, practical event we've ever offered our members.

How will we do this? The biggest change will be Tuesday's Marketing Workshop. On that day, we're going to have all of the participants bring their own marketing materials to the summit for review and evaluation. By the end of the day, you will have dozens of ideas to improve the marketing and promotional materials you are currently using, which in turn will drive more lesson sales. Not just general best practices, but actionable improvements designed *exactly* for your current situation. Every participant will be strongly encouraged to bring screen grabs of their website pages, email blasts, newsletters and social media to be used in hands-on reviews that day.

The day will be broken into three segments: Maximizing Your Website; Creating Emails and Collateral Materials that Really Sell and Driving Your Lesson Business with Social Media. Each segment will include a panel of top experts in that area, "before and afters" of selected examples and roundtable interaction among participants to identify ways each participant can improve their own materials to drive more business.

Along with this new Marketing Workshop, the summit will include many of our members' favorites including our Teaching Technologies and Training Aids Demo Day and more outdoor sessions to be announced in the coming weeks. We also are very pleased to announce that **Cameron McCormick**, coach to the hottest young player on the planet, 20-year-old Jordan Spieth, and truly one of the great young teachers in the game today will be one of our featured presenters. He also will help lead a Faults and Fixes session, where he will be joined by a panel of former National Teachers of the Year.

Registration is now open and we once again are offering a \$50 "early bird" discount for all members who register by July 31st. For more information on the Summit agenda and details on costs, location and hotels, see pages 6-7 of this newsletter. To register, log in to the members website and click on Summit Registration in the Members Only menu.

We promise that no other industry Summit will provide you with as many actionable ideas and concepts that will help you grow your business.



Cameron McCormick

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Member Milestones

PROPONENT GROUP NEWS

Edufii Coaching Webinar; Updating Member Mentors and New Member Website Upgrades

The Evolution of Athlete Development Webinar Coming Next Tuesday, June 10th.

Edufii will be hosting a webinar next Tuesday, June 10th at 8pm EDT. The Evolution of Athlete Development: Realtime Connected Coaching and Leveraging



Integrated Technology will include the following:

- So Many Apps, So Little Time: Learn how integrated Tech can save you one to two hours each day.
- Athletic Ownership: When Athletes are connected to who and what they need, improvement accelerates.
- Recruiting: The landscape has changed, learn how you can change with it.
- The Business of Coaching: Exchanging time for money vs. a subscription based coaching business.

You will receive emails later this week and next Tuesday with login instructions for joining the webinar live.

Would You Like to Become a Member Mentor? Your Chance to Sign Up Comes in June

Last year we launched our Member Mentors program (visit Member Mentors when logged on to the website) to make it easier for our members who are in need of assistance in a variety of topics to be able to quickly identify and contact other members who have very high levels of knowledge in that subject.

The program has been used by dozens of our members throughout the past year and our Member Mentors are currently available to help with more than 40 different topics affecting your business and teaching.

Be on the lookout in the next few days for an email with instructions on how to become a Member Mentor if you would like to volunteer to assist other members in one or more areas where you have lots of expertise.

Member Mentors

Proponent Website Upgrades: New Mobile Site and Member Landing Page Make Accessing Your Benefits Faster and Easier than Ever Before

Proponent Group is in the midst of a significant members website redesign that will make accessing your member benefits seamless, whether on your smartphone, tablet or office computer. More than half of all visits to our website are now coming from mobile sources so we've added a sleek mobile interface that allows you much easier access and navigation from smaller screens. The mobile upgrades are already complete.

We've also redesigned the members section of the website so that when you log on, the new landing page will have simple to find icons for each of our member benefits. The most used benefits will be identified with larger icons near the top of the page.

A redesigned news and events section will be found at the top of the landing page and a more streamlined main menu will be located in the left hand column. This new landing page is expected to be live within the next week.

There are also many smaller tweaks designed to make accessing all of our member materials and media easier and more reliable. If you haven't been on the website recently, take some time to check it out in the coming weeks as you'll likely be surprised at all of the information we have assembled to help you grow your business and grow your teaching skills.



When logging on to the redesigned website, you will soon find it much easier to find and access all benefits.



Now You Have **FOUR** Ways to Find Answers to All of Your Business and Career Questions

Take Advantage of All of Our Options

Contract Negotiations * Proprietary Compensation Information * Marketing Issues
Business Plans * Job Search Assistance * Public Relations * General Career Advice
Management Action Plans * Resume Review * Website Design * Logo Design
Teaching Building Design and Construction * Social Media Marketing * Instruction Trends

Our Unique Members-only Website

Access to more than 100 presentations from the top industry experts and world-class instructors whenever you need it, only on our members-only website. Plus, more than a dozen business templates and guides ready for downloading at any time.

Our Member Mentors

Tap into the combined knowledge of nearly 100 of our members who have offered to assist fellow members by sharing their expertise in dozens of relevant topics. Just find your topic of interest and contact those listed for advice to tap into our membership's shared wisdom.

Our Private Facebook Group

Ask our Private Facebook group of more than 325 Proponent members your questions and you'll get answers from your peers across North America.

Our One-on-One Consulting

Call our office anytime you need help with a career or business-related issue. We talk with half-a-dozen members or more each day and provide recommendations and advice in dozens of areas that can affect your bottom line.

Log on to www.proponent-group.com or call 407-878-1235.

Start with Content – Leave Social Media for Later

By Ian James, CEO, RetailTribes

Content is king. I will paraphrase that: Content rules. It's a truth I am completely convinced of. You can rent every billboard along the highway but if what you present doesn't catch the driver's eye and call him to action, you've squandered your investment. You can buy the most expensive advertising slots on TV, but the commercial you air better make a strong statement.

A quick analogy: When a golf instructor is on the lesson tee, the guidance he or she gives must be technically correct, certainly, but it also has to be communicated in a manner that the student can understand, then act upon. Yes. The content of your communication as a coach is what counts.

The digital world is no different. I'm often asked about Facebook vs Twitter; email vs social; website vs blog. I don't care what medium you use, but I do care about what you say in whatever media you select.

If you can indulge me, I need to briefly rant against the frauds who give talks or write articles insisting you use Facebook, or Twitter, or invest in blogs, or constantly seek a better website. These people are selling technology. As golf instructors you know better than anyone that a new driver doesn't turn an average golfer into a good golfer.

I attended a PGA-endorsed presentation at the recent Merchandise Show given by two consultants who extolled the virtues of a business Facebook page and Facebook advertising. Guess what these consultants are geared up to do? For a fee, they can design you a Facebook business page, train you how to add pizzazz to your page, then teach you how to pay Facebook money to make sure all your fans receive your posts. That makes it sound like the value lies in having this page. It's not. It's in what you say—either on that page or somewhere else.

I met with the CEO of a firm called Members First a few years ago. His company builds great websites for country clubs. Guess what his biggest frustration was. None of his over 300 customers ever add meaningful content to their websites. He shakes his head to see this. Without regular updates, what's left online is an expensive electronic brochure.

Now along come the so-called "search consultants." Their message is strident. It comes down to this: "Your website isn't optimized." And yes, for a fee they can push you up the search rankings. They can even spend some of your money on Google ads to

bring more golfers to view the site. Now, praise the heavens, a crowd can find you. Even someone from Siberia or Senegal can find you. It's a global world. Everyone's listening now. So what have you got to say? The answer, in the case of those country clubs with fancy static websites, is very little.

Become a short game wizard

Golfers who are in single figures need to become wizards of the short game to protect pars and to set up and take birdie opportunities.

If we can get your average score from 40 yards in to less than 3, close to 2.5, then you will probably take another 3 or 4 shots off your handicap.

In fact, I'd be interested to discover what your score would be, if I played your ball from 100 yards in.

So, for \$600 paid up-front or \$180 a month for 4 months, I'm going to try and take at least 4 shots off your handicap by making you a short game wizard.

Interested? Scroll down to learn more or you can take the decision now, and [contact me](#), and we can start turning your Wedge and Putter into magic wands.



Have you noticed how the short game always seems to be out front?



Included in the Program

- ▶ Short game handicap assessment
- ▶ Technique evaluation
- ▶ Personal development program
- ▶ One on one coaching
- ▶ Accompanied golf and a **FREE** 100 yard challenge
- ▶ Supervised practice with **FREE** range balls
- ▶ Practice program
- ▶ Progress log and regular evaluation
- ▶ **FREE** equipment assessment

Control of distance on Pitch shots

Most better players get the ball down the right line with their Pitch shots, but improved scoring happens when the ball is on the right distance.

Getting up and down from around the green

Using chip, short pitch and lob shots from all around the green, including that horrible fluffy greenside rough, to hit it close.

Bunker rescues

Better players would prefer the sand in many cases. We want you to be as comfortable from the greenside bunker as well as confident with 30 and 40 yard longer bunker shots.

Making you a master of the 15-foot zone

Watch the TV and you'll see the Professionals sinking Putt after Putt in the 15-foot zone. In fact, they'll sink 80% of flat putts inside 10 feet. That means more birdie opportunities drop.

Challenge yourself to improve this season. If you're a single figure golfer, then let's start a journey to better golf by making you a wizard of the short game. Who knows how low you could go?

This program is the most fun you could have for \$600 or just \$180 a month.



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Don't be too specific in your content. It doesn't matter how many lessons are included. What matters most is the measurable result the golfer can expect.

There is a world of golfers, even in Senegal or Siberia, who want to listen to golf instructors. Remember: We golfers who play the game want to get better at it. You welcome that. You as the teacher want us to spend time and invest money on instruction. But where does it all start?

Not with the medium, be it digital or old-fashioned. You're focused on content, and here are three content types you should produce on a regular basis.

Visual success stories

When you've created an improvement for a golfer, take their "before" swing and put it alongside their new swing. You probably have video software that does this as part of your coaching suite. Use that. If not then use a photograph or photographs.

Describe the swing change or changes in a non-technical way. Avoid complexity. Resist the urge to show how much you know about the swing. Include an explanation of the physical result. "John is now hitting his tee shots straighter, even with a slight draw, and is at least 20 yards longer."

This content type should be the foundation of your marketing. The most important thing it does is tell your reader that you improve golfers—very often golfers just like them. Defining the result gives them a sense of the scale of improvement possible. The use of a real person with real result builds trust.

Give us advice on practice

Give us measurable drills that we can go and do ourselves. Give us a benchmark to aim for with each drill or practice routine. If we're short of that benchmark, then we know we probably need to come and see you.

Dave Pelz is the master of this technique. And most of his drills are amazingly simple. He has one for a bunker where you don't even hit a ball. What this drill will do for

most golfers though is clearly highlight for them that they need help.

You don't have to create videos each time. In fact with many drills the fact that they can be printed or viewed as a static screen on a mobile device, provides the golfer with the chance to carry your content with them onto the range.

Keep creating results-led improvement programs

Don't sit with just a lessons page on a website that rarely changes. Who wants to read a list of rates per 45 minutes? Each month make at least one offer. For July it might be: "I'm looking for five golfers who want to become short-game wizards. If you've mastered the short-game fundamentals, but want to know that from 40 yards, in almost any situation, you're going to give yourself a good chance of getting up and down, then this program is for you."

Of course you're going to have to include price and what the program will include, but avoid being specific in your content. It doesn't matter how many one-on-one lessons there are. What matters most is the measurable result the golfer can expect.

The three content types above don't include online coaching. Which is interesting because most coaches feel their content needs to be dominated by video of them providing detailed swing insights. "Here's how to make sure you square the putter at impact".

I know that most experts advise you to create these videos, so I feel a little unsure about my advice. I would recommend that any content you provide specifically ought to raise the questions in the viewer or reader's mind, that only you can answer on the practice tee. I'm not sure you want them running off after watching your video and trying to put into practice your advice on their own.

What I am sure of is what I said at the top: Content is King, and skilled coaches are sitting on a gold mine of content that every golf facility needs to create more golf.

Let RetailTribe Make 2014 Your Best Year Ever

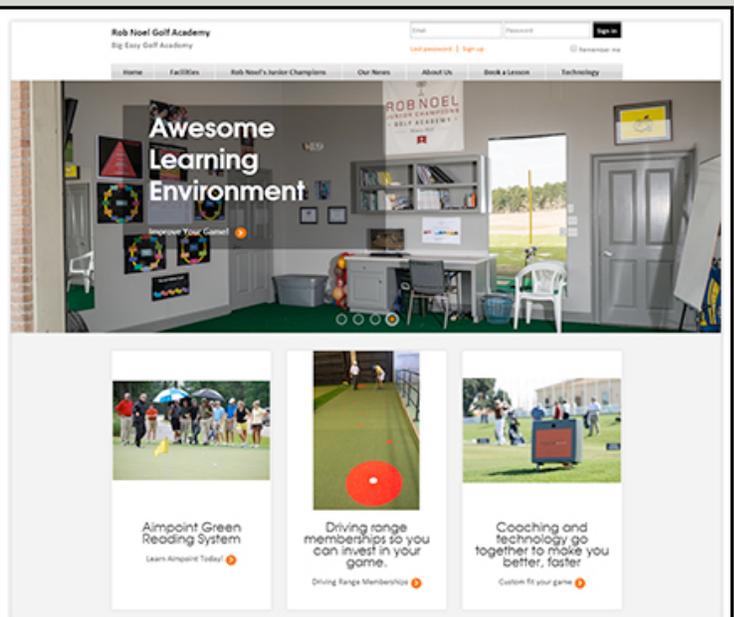


"I cannot believe the results that RetailTribe has achieved for me, my business and my golf club. Shop sales are through the roof and I have more coaching demand than I can manage. Every PGA Professional, golf club or instructor should be using RetailTribe."

-Monte Meyer, PGA Professional, South Hills G.C.

You'll be surprised at how easy we can make effective marketing for you. Just give us 20 minutes and we'll show you how we can make an impact for you.

Contact Ian James at IanJames@retailtribe.com or 972-743-0038 or visit us at www.retailtribe.com.





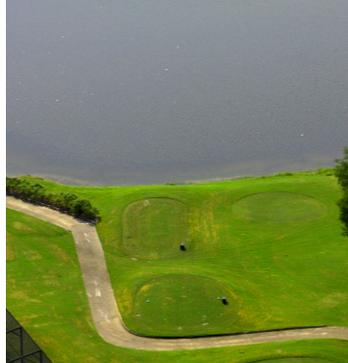
Summit 2014

Growing the Game, Growing Your Business

When Golfers Improve, The Industry Grows –
It's Time to Teach, Promote and Profit

November 2-4, 2014 (Sunday - Tuesday)
Lake Mary, Florida

Registration is Now Open!



zeroRESTRICTION





2014 Summit Line-up

Sunday, November 2

- 11:00am Registration Opens
- 1:00pm Optional Golf at Heathrow C.C.
- 6:30pm Opening Night Dinner at Heathrow C.C.

Monday, November 3

- 7:00am Breakfast Buffet
- 8:00am Addressing the Industry's Disconnect Regarding the Value of Instruction (Lorin Anderson)
- 8:30-10:00am The Journey to High Performance (Cameron McCormick)
- 10:00am Break
- 10:30-11:30am Panel Discussion: Protecting Your Business (Topics will include: Employment Contracts, Managing your Manager and Moving to a New Facility)
- 11:30am Lunch Buffet
- Outdoor Session at the Mike Bender Golf Academy**
- 12:30-2:30pm (To Be Announced)
- 2:30-3:30pm Faults and Fixes Panel: Looking for a Fix? Ask Our Panel for Their Favorites

- 3:30pm Teaching Tech and Training Aids Demo Day
- 5:45pm Cocktails and dinner at Heathrow C.C.

Tuesday, November 4

- 7:00am Breakfast Buffet
- Hands On Marketing Workshop Day**
- NOTE: Participants are strongly encouraged to bring hardcopies of your website pages, email blasts, newsletters, and social media pages for hands-on review and discussion.**
- 8:00am Workshop Goals for the Day
- 8:15am Maximizing Your Website Panel Discussion, Reviews and Roundtable
- 10:00am Break
- 10:30am Creating Emails and Collateral Materials that Really Sell Your Services Panel Discussion, Reviews and Roundtable
- 12:15am Lunch Buffet
- 1:15pm Driving Your Lesson Business with Social Media Panel Discussion, Reviews and Roundtable.
- 3:00pm Summit Ends

Summit Details and Registration Information

Host Site: Heathrow C.C. in Lake Mary, FL is located 45 minutes from Orlando International Airport at I-4 Exit 98.

PGA/LPGA Education Credits: Agenda will be submitted to the PGA and LPGA for continuing education for association members. Approximately 13 hours of education will be included in the summit.

Lodging: Proponent has negotiated summit rates at the Hampton Inn and Suites - Lake Mary (407-995-9000) for \$99 per night. The Courtyard Marriott - Heathrow (407-444-1000) for \$89 and the Hyatt Place - Lake Mary for \$109 (407-995-5555). Many other hotel chains

including Marriott, Westin, Hilton Garden Suites and Residence Inn also are located within three miles of Heathrow C.C. Contact your preferred hotel directly to book a room.

Meals: Six meals from Sunday dinner through Tuesday lunch are included in the summit fee.

Cost: Our Early Bird Special is only \$425 for our full and International members. Associate members are welcome to attend for \$475. **Summit rates increase \$50 on August 1st.** NOTE: Optional golf Sunday afternoon at Heathrow C.C. is an additional \$50 (tee times are limited and will be filled first-come, first-served).

Your Next Career Move: Strategy Plus Energy = the Right Formula

By David Gould, Staff Editor

A decade or so ago, any teaching professional moving up the career ladder had a shot at landing what you might call a cookie-cutter job. The course-building boom had not yet ended and a lot of frankly cookie-cutter golf facilities were opening. They were top-quality construction jobs and many had aesthetic appeal, but these new golf properties—many relying on the “country club for a day” concept—were becoming indistinguishable from each other. Still, they needed staff, so out would come the help-wanted notices for teaching professionals.

At that time, the job description of a staff instructor was highly predictable and the interaction between coach and golfer was not yet

viewed as a key catalyst for the facility’s health. In other words, the tight connection between a golfer getting coached and spending discretionary dollars (and time) at the course was not yet made. Stats to back that up are now emerging on a macro level. Question for today’s job candidate: Can you produce evidence that your students are above-average spenders and state this in your resume and cover letter? If not there is every reason to begin looking at

Question for today’s job candidate: Can you produce evidence that your students are above-average spenders and state this in your resume and cover letter?

your database of clients, studying their habits, scouting out these hard-data correlations and setting it all down in black and white.

Taking the next career step will often mean demonstrating mastery of the teaching sector’s many knowledge areas. (See Sidebar article on the “Certification Game.”) You are trying to show potential employers, investors and partners that your skills and acuity are a provable source of business development for the facility. Today it’s all about coaching-not-teaching, career management, how students are the

best golf customers and how to build your personal brand. That’s a lot to keep in mind as you study the possibilities and ponder your next career move—but still the timing holds much promise.

That’s because the teaching-coaching-training segment of the golf industry is brimming with energy, innovation, technology and smart, creative practitioners. The tail is wagging the dog, with golfers needing shorter, more varied golf experiences that seem—and truly are—more life-enhancing. The golf professional who is used to digging into the player’s game, their swing technique, the fitting of their gear and their psychological makeup is the one with whom they spend those compressed-time-frame visits. That makes the

The One-Two Punch of Resume and Cover Letter

Think of a resume as fairly universal and a cover letter as very personal. The cover letter should match the resume in fonts and paper stock but it’s a different tool in the job-seeker’s toolbox. Although you will tweak the resume for this job or that, it’s seen as a definitive description of who and what you are as a professional. The cover letter is specific, personal and as much as possible represents research you’ve done into the potential employer’s needs. “If you do your research properly on a job opportunity,” says Proponent Group president Lorin Anderson, “you will know the problem

that facility needs to solve and you will find a way to present your skill set as the ultimate problem-solver in this instance.”

Keeping your resume succinct is tricky, based on the one-page versus two-page question. Go onto a second page if your work history simply will not fit one sheet. Honesty and accuracy are a high priority in resume writing. Experts emphasize the need for accuracy (avoid stretching the truth) but also for a tone and feel that mixes a small dose of your personality among the straight, professional language.

Making the resume attractive means using fonts, spacing and symbols to create a fairly easy read.

Cramming text on a page to make certain you “don’t leave anything out” is a shaky concept if the result is a dense, crowded page that repels the eye. A data point such as where you went to high school can be skipped—it takes up space and seldom means anything to a prospective employer. You should be careful of worn-out phrases like “challenging, rewarding career.” They tend to show up constantly, to the point of losing all meaning. Also, if you are unable to save your resume as a PDF file, be careful with special formatting, graphics and unusual fonts. How the document opens after you’ve sent it electronically is pretty much up for grabs, if it’s not a PDF.

—D.G.

coach a critical touch point for enthusiasm about the club or academy.

So, the next career move you make comes in this context. In recent consultations with members, Proponent Group's Anderson has been laying out five basic trends:

1) Director of Instruction positions are being filled in a manner similar to the way head-professional positions have long been. There is a more stringent vetting process than ever before.

2) Many positions are not posted. You need a strong professional network and visibility in the market—first to get notification of an opening, and eventually to make the list of viable candidates.

3) As the long lists and short lists get assembled for an open position, you need to try and Skype your way to the front of the line. The Skype or FaceTime interview is a money-saver and a timesaver for people hiring and you need to become comfortable and skilled in these interactions—which takes practice.

4) Measure your successes. Track everything that translates to a value for the people in charge at your golf facility. Data now rules the world.

5) Use the resources of Proponent Group to help create the rungs of that career ladder. There is value for you in the Member Mentors resource, as well as in the tools contained under the Members Only heading of The Job Search.

As has been noted previously, the Proponent Group ratio of employees to self-employed is fairly even at 52 to 48 percent. That's based on the large statistical sample represented by our 2014 Compensation Survey. Are you best off still looking for employment in a traditional setting like a club? If not, should you be trying to strike out on your own as an independent entrepreneur?

Part of the process as you decide what to do next is understanding your own makeup and how you are "put together." Personality tests that reveal how entrepreneurial you are by nature can be found online in many versions. One you might test-drive is now posted at Forbes.com, adapted from the talked-about new book, "Instinct," by marketing guru Thomas Harrison. Possibly you would come to this crossroads believing that entrepreneurs are born, not made. Harrison won't totally disagree, but he contends that many of us fail to recognize our business-starting streak and skills, even though we may be well equipped in this area.

Remember also: In the world of golf instruction or golf academies, you move pretty quickly from the entrepreneur role into the role of the day-to-day manager. So, your appetite for risk is a factor in any entrepreneurial effort, but a rational, comprehensive planning process can help you manage risk quite effectively.

In presenting your qualifications for basically any staff position at an academy or golf club, make certain you cover the following areas of achievement:

That's because the teaching-coaching-training segment of the golf industry is brimming with energy, innovation, technology and smart, creative practitioners.

- Ability to manage an instructional program
- The variety of instructional programs you can offer
- Your instructional philosophy
- Notable instructors worked for and continuing education during your career

- Junior golf programs—numbers and outcomes
- Ability to interact professionally with club staff and the membership
- Ability to attract and manage corporate events

Finally, it may sound odd, but you don't hurt yourself or your chances one bit by expecting good things to happen thanks to timing and a bit of luck.

The Certification Game

If you attend a military convocation, you may be fascinated by the stripes, bars and medals on each officer's uniform. At a scout jamboree, you might look to see who has the most badges and which ones they've earned. When it's time to check out a golf instructor's credentials, the current trend is to look at their certifications. From TPI to Trackman, from Plane Truth to AimPoint, the specialized training you can take and the stamps of approval you can earn from these special programs are many. You need a strategy for understanding which of these special areas of training you wish to "get a badge" in, and why. Then you need to be able to explain why you value some highly and others not so much. One sound approach is to take the chart below

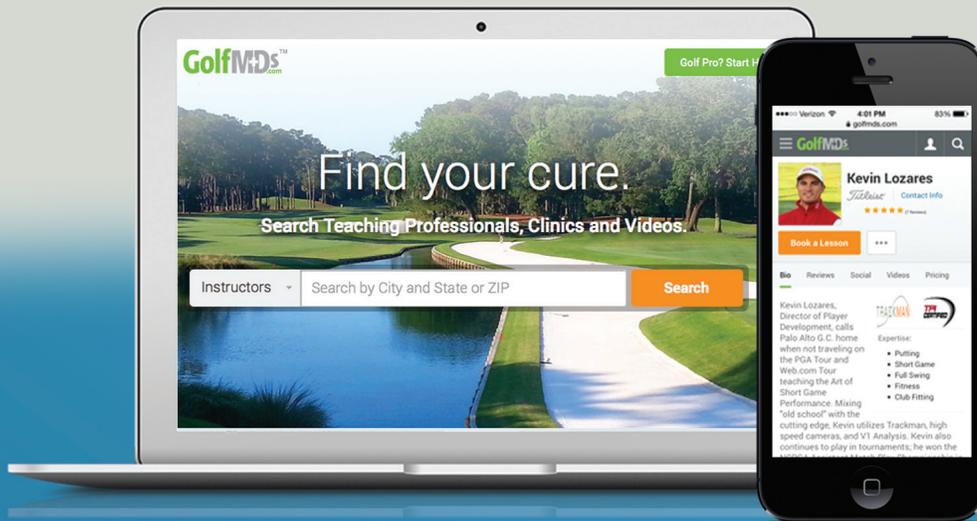


... and concentrate on gaining mastery of each, with or without a certification, meanwhile deciding if you feel a certification in that specialty really matters to your performance and career advancement. If it does, set a schedule for when and how you will attain the certification. If you're involved in a job interview in the meantime, explain your thinking and share your plans. --- D.G.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: GOLFMDS



Re-Introducing The Power of Instruction.



At GolfMDS.com, it is our mission that all players discover the benefits of quality instruction. Join the web's fastest growing Pro Search platform and market your brand to more golfers in your area.

All members of the Proponent Group has been provided a free Pro Account on the GolfMDS Instructor Search and Marketing platform. Each account currently displays a generic bio, which includes only your name and facility location. Please click the link in the email you received on Monday June 2nd to customize your profile, upload your photo and verify that all of the information regarding your business is up-to-date.

-Lorin Anderson

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

Growing Your Teaching and Coaching Expertise



By Lorin Anderson, President

A couple of weeks ago, Dr. Paul Schempp offered our members a webinar on *The Keys to Developing Expert Teaching Skills*. As the director of the only Sport Instruction Research Lab in the country, he is uniquely qualified in this area. By the way, if you haven't yet watched it, I suggest you check it out on the members website in the

videos/webinars archive under the Career Issues menu.

Dr. Schempp's webinar reminded me of the conversations he and I had about developing teaching skills. I was managing GOLF Magazine's Top 100 program at the time and Dr. Schempp was our lead consultant. He helped us develop a questionnaire that was instrumental in identifying high quality candidates. Nearly 20 years later, the magazine still uses many of those questions to evaluate the hundreds of applications that come in.

Golf Magazine is currently accepting self-nominations for its 2015-16 list of America's Top 100 Teachers. Deadline is June 27. Email david_denunzio@golf.com for a copy of the application. As you complete the application you may be wondering why certain questions are being asked. So let me provide the thinking behind the questionnaire and what Dr. Schempp's research has revealed about the keys to becoming an expert golf instructor.

First and foremost, great teachers are always learning. It's a never ending process that includes lots of continuing education. Have you attended a summit in the past year? Have you gone to section instruction seminars? Did you recently add a new certification? Have you visited and

shadowed another teacher instructing? When was the last time you bought an instruction book or video? When was the last time you read a book about coaching another sport? Or a book about psychology, fitness, or motor skill acquisition? When was the last time you watched other teachers' methodologies on YouTube? The list can go on and on. The best teachers are continually monitoring and participating in all of the above avenues for sharpening their teaching and coaching skills.

You will see multiple questions asking about your continuing education and the answers to these questions were always weighted heavily when I was at the magazine.

Another critical point is that great teachers usually are actively involved in shaping the industry's future. We always monitored the teachers who were on their section education committees, who presented at various industry events and who authored instruction-related media. Teachers with fresh, interesting ideas usually bubble up to the surface and are asked to speak and publish.

If you've been resisting the opportunity to be more involved in impacting the industry, shed your inhibition. It's important that all credible voices be heard and participate. Fortunately, most Proponent Group members are already actively participating in these big discussions, which is part of the reason so many of you have been recognized among the game's finest coaches.

Finally, great teachers take responsibility for their students' successes and failures. If you're still blaming the student when they "don't get it," you aren't an expert instructor yet. But if you continue to learn and you engage with your industry peers – as Dr. Schempp suggests – you'll get there sooner rather than later.

Proponent Group Partners



BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Down the Road from Amen Corner, a Super-Academy Open to all Proponent Members?

By David Gould, Staff Editor

A golf academy project in the making—on a site less than nine miles from Augusta National Golf Club—holds promise for Proponent Group members looking to broaden their future activities and opportunities. Don Peterson, a Proponent member who operates a suburban Atlanta teaching practice called the Swing Factory, is the key player. After a long period of planning and discussions, Peterson is about to turn the corner with a multi-phase project that would capitalize on demand for corporate entertainment during Masters Week.

In brief, the “Augusta Golf Expo” is a yearly event Peterson would build his business around. It has the look of the Demo Day before the PGA Merchandise Show and a business plan that shows very large positive cash flow from Masters Week alone. In fact that revenue stream shapes up as large enough to support a grand-scale golf-training “campus” with a constantly revolving “faculty” of instructors, hopefully made up of Proponent Group members.

“There are modest houses across the street from Augusta National that represent multi-million-dollar investments—each house,” says Peterson, age 57 and a former Walt Disney staff professional. “They are locked and empty 51 weeks a year, producing a robust ROI off one week’s use. The money spent during that seven-day period is phenomenal and growing—and there is no high-end, high-concept golf-and-entertainment experience in or around the town—that’s where this project comes in.”

Orange County National Golf Club’s 360-degree range west of Orlando is the model for the core amenity in Peterson’s envisioned complex, which would include a 40,000-square-foot indoor teaching and entertainment building, plus villa-style housing along the Savannah River, which this site borders. Peterson holds a lease in perpetuity on 120 acres of the 900-acre property currently

operating as Mason’s Master Turf & Pinestraw Plantation, a gardening-landscaping supply and nursery on Sand Bar Ferry Road in Beech Island, S.C.

This is considered by some to be the most valuable un-built property in greater Augusta, or so Peterson has been told by advisors and potential investors he has met with. Its owner, now in his 80s, was an original sod vendor to the famous home club for the Masters Tournament, dating back so far that he remembers when the club was too cash-poor to pay its bills without aging invoices for as long as a year. A light-footprint land use with a connection to the region’s only claim to fame is the sod-farm owner’s preference for the legacy property—thus his readiness to set up generous lease terms with Peterson.

It is Peterson’s hope that by next April a working range plus an exhibit of the project’s later phases will be available for visiting groups to use and see. Though he will be managing partner and an owner of the academy campus, Peterson does not intend to reside in Augusta or make the Beech Island property a headquarters for his own coaching and teaching activities. Instead, a permanent support staff of administrators and junior instructors would man the operation, with Proponent Group members flying or driving in to conduct one- or two-week sessions, either with students they bring in or with paying groups that have been lined up in advance.



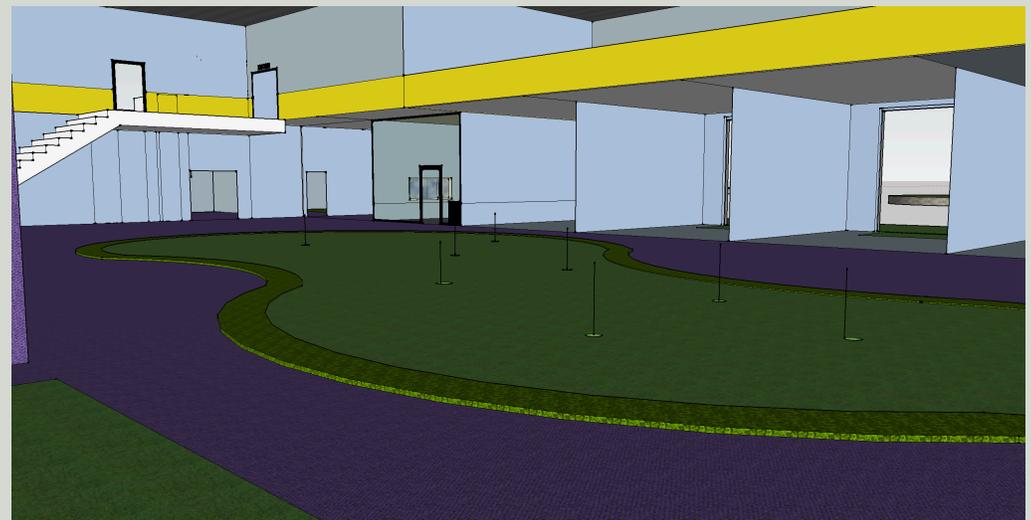
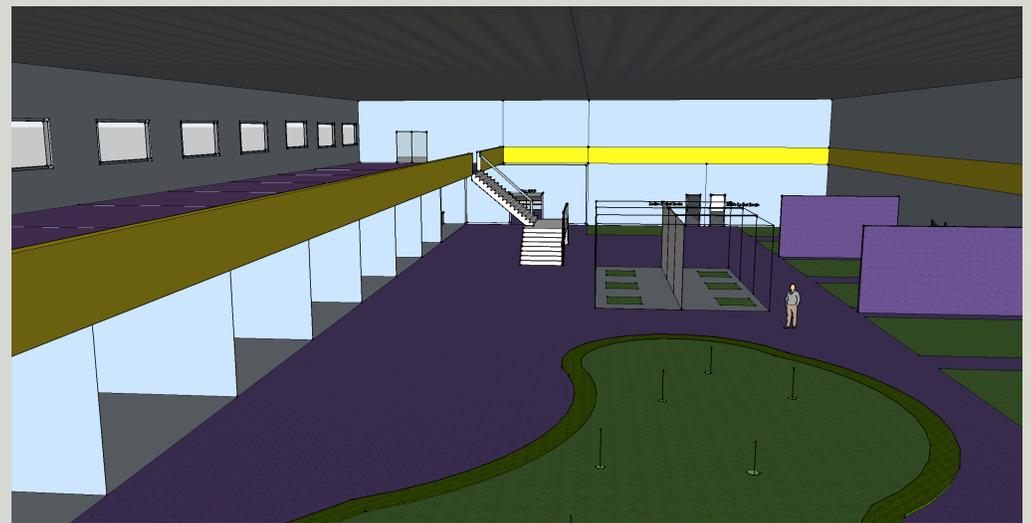
The main building would house Masters week entertaining then convert to a teaching facility the rest of the year.

“As golf coaching becomes more specialized, the visiting-professional roster could obviously take on a specific area that changes week to week,” says Peterson. It’s also possible that a video production facility of broadcast quality could be put together, so that the rotating cast of instructors could be part of a video programming concept that leveraged the combined marketability of those who set up shop to coach.

One of golf’s most respected greens shapers and the developer of a proprietary 3D green-scanning technology, Scott Pool, is a working partner on the project whose expertise will be evident in the ground features of the outdoor practice complex. Expertise on the design of facilities and activity programming will, it is hoped, come from the collaboration of Proponent members.

“On the front side, I am looking for ideas as to how the final academy and studio should be designed,” Peterson says. “Anybody who puts forth an effort to give me an idea, obviously they would be among the early invitees to come here and teach. I expect the groups that come for Masters week to be a strong feeder program for visitation during the year.” For the brand value of the Proponent Group, itself, this proposed project has potential value to boost recognition—that would reflect back on individual members.

“To say, ‘Designed by members of Proponent Group, the world’s leading membership association representing full-time golf coaches’—that would be an impressive calling card,” says Peterson. Based on the level of demand from paying student groups, it may well be possible for him not only to house the Proponent member in a riverfront villa for a week, but also to pay him or her a coach-in-residence fee directly. “I always wanted to have my own permanent academy in a world-class facility and I came close a couple of times,” Peterson

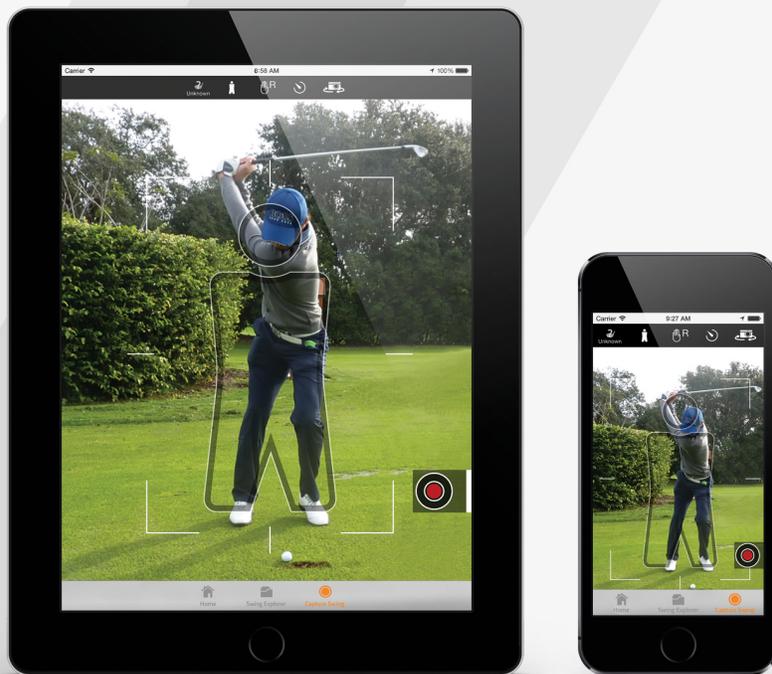


Renderings of the proposed clubhouse/teaching facility show the large scale envisioned for the project.

says. “Now it seems like it might really happen—only, it’s too big for just me and my instruction practice. It will be built to showcase a stream of the top talent, on a big and really ideal stage.”

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What I've Learned: Bill Abrams

Golf Solutions Academy, Crete, Illinois

Interview by Paul Ramee, Jr.



Having compiled a 15-year record of success with his Golf Solutions Academy at Balmoral Woods outside Chicago, Bill Abrams is busy now doing more of the same—with new twists and improvements as he goes. A Pennsylvania native, Bill aligns his basic swing concepts and style of coaching with the “Swing Connection” concepts of Jimmy Ballard, who has been a mentor to Abrams. It’s a concept and style, in Abrams’ words, that “allows the player to

make a body-friendly, athletic movement” in all their shotmaking.

The Abrams approach translated naturally to precision clubfitting as that practice was becoming developed in the 1990s. An early adaptor, Abrams found himself recommended for his fitting skills and he used the gear-performance connection to create golfer improvement and continue building his brand. He is a former PING Regional Clubfitter of the Year. Bill is also recognized as a US Kids Golf Top 50 Master Teacher and as a TPI Certified Golf Fitness Instructor.

In the fall Abrams expects to release his new eBook, “Have Fun Playing Golf,” which he touts as a “player’s guide to getting the most out of the game.”

Bill, could you talk about your early golf life and career?

Starting at age 12 I worked at a golf course in northeast Pennsylvania. It was a lot of fun for me and I stuck with it all the way through college. I took on responsibility as I went through school and got to the point where I was closing the shop. After college I sold insurance for a year and a half. I didn’t like it, so I went back to golf.

Where did you go on this second time around?

I got hired by Jay Williams at Lincolnshire Country Club and I worked there from 1991 to 1998. I was elevated to director of golf at Lincolnshire in 1995. The club was struggling and I had always enjoyed the smiles I got from people after a good lesson so I decided to move to Balmoral Woods. My intention was to be able to focus more on instruction and clubfitting.

Sounds like a move that had an element of risk to it.

It did, but starting something new is

always difficult and you have to work hard to get anything off the ground. I brought with me a strong desire to teach and fit clubs and our revenue started to increase from day one. I firmly believe clubfitting and instruction go hand in hand.

Which clubfitting systems do you use and what does your clubfitting process entail?

We use PING, Titleist and Mizuno. I also fit putters using the SeeMore putting system. Our process with a new client will begin with an interview that’s informal but gathers the relevant information. I will ask what they like about their current equipment and what they don’t like. I will check into what their goals are as they go through this fitting session. Then I check their gear one specification at a time: Lie angle, length of their clubs, shaft flex, grip size and then we fit the distance gaps between their clubs.

Explain to me some of the flaws you see in fitting and how teaching and custom fitting are linked?

The biggest flaw I see is the accuracy of the fits. If custom fits are not done by an instructor they are usually a mess. We have a motto: “No mats. No nets. No guessing.” We really rely on their divots and ball flight. We utilize a Foresight launch monitor and we use real golf balls during the fit so the data we are collecting is precise. We see plenty of clubfitting that is done with smoke and mirrors, if you will.

You recently started using Retail Tribe for business development. Without this sounding like an advertisement, can you tell us how you have benefitted?

Retail Tribe has been wonderful. We use it to keep in touch with our clients. We started last August and it has been a home run. The golfers we serve feel like we care about them and that we are not “used car salesmen.” Word-of-mouth value from our Retail Tribe work has been excellent.

We’re talking now about “outbound” digital marketing, right? In other words you send email messages rather than wait for people to find your website.

Yes, and our clients love the tips we send out. The return has been tremendous. The first week of September when people are not typically thinking about buying golf equipment we sold 6 sets of irons, 4 drivers, 2 fairway woods and 3 hybrids due to our email blasts. All at full retail. The email messages inspire people to come over and get fit. It taps into something that is in their head already in



Bill Abrams has been a pioneering leader in clubfitting and player development for many years.

most cases. They always meant to do it, but our communications inspire them to action. Their time and money are valuable to them, but the professional manner in which we now communicate with them creates a connection.

What is the outbound marketing process like? Do you utilize templates or do you create the content yourself?

We have a small staff so using Retail Tribe has allowed us to get organized. Mostly I will create our content. It's to the point where we have gone beyond most of their generic content. For example, I do not stock TaylorMade, so items that are TaylorMade items tend to get clipped out.

Do you believe there is a perception among members that the club professional is distancing himself from the club, based on not utilizing the club's email blasts and instead using the Retail Tribe platform?

I believe based on the feedback we have gotten that our emails are more professionally done than most, and that professionalism becomes the message. The people at Retail Tribe are specialists in golf retail and it has enhanced my communications.

Putters—that is kind of the final frontier in clubfitting. Talk a bit about your putter fitting.

I saw a sign recently that said the lack of proper putter fitting is the reason most people will not play golf to their potential. That's worth considering. We use the Eyeline setup, the PING Eye app and the See-More putting fitting system. We start off with the golfer talking about posture, setup and aim. Then we check what we call the gait of the stroke. We may change the shaft flex, for example, if the player has a longer, slower stroke. In that situation a tighter shaft won't feel as good. If the player has a face-balanced putter, a huge gait and long stroke and you watch him hit five putts, the first four are typically going to go left because the putter has been shutting down. He is then going to correct and will blow one right.



“I saw a sign recently that said the lack of proper putter fitting is the reason most people will not play golf to their potential. That's worth considering.”
-Bill Abrams

There are common patterns of this type?

There are, yes. Not having the right fit will first mess with their aim and then their stroke. Putter fitting has had a big impact on our business, it creates lessons and also shows our expertise in the field of putting instruction and fitting.

Talk in general about social media and how you deploy it to strengthen your business.

We use Facebook and have 15,000 followers. On Twitter we have about 1,400 followers. Facebook has been great along with our YouTube videos in maintaining our relationships. Along with our website upgrade it has given us great visibility. For example, I am now doing video lessons and have reached people in Thailand who are sending video for me to analyze.

What are you doing to create golf opportunities?

We have always focused on juniors and families. I have been fortunate to be recognized by US Kids as a Top 50 Master Instructor and we were the first course in Illinois to use the US Kids Family Tees back in 2006. We have a Family Golf Night where

after 4:30, a family can come out and get one cart and play for \$22. We also have something we call “Good Evening Golf” where after 5:30, we charge \$2 a hole, as long as you play a minimum of three holes. This creates an opportunity for people to get on the course at a reasonable price. That said, when I think of the health of the sport I lean more toward retention of our current players. I read somewhere that it takes three times the effort and dollars to create a new player than to keep a current player engaged.

With clubfitting such a large part of your business, how do you stay current with all the trends?

I really work hard at both of the trade shows in Orlando and Vegas. In that regard, the Proponent Group has really been wonderful for me, in helping to keep me very current with trends in the marketplace. I do a lot of online reading and newsletter reading. Lastly, I test a lot of clubs. If a new shaft comes out, I order one and try it myself, that way I can share with the client that I have tried the club or shaft myself. If I recommend it, that recommendation has more weight behind it.

Is it a problem for you the way some of the companies come out with mid-season releases of new equipment?

Personally, I shy away from doing business with companies that have a history of unveiling equipment mid-season and as a fitter I do not have a lot of equipment in stock. Plus, I am very happy with the relationships I am currently using. For example, I have

had steady growth the last five years and PING was up 22 percent last year compared to the previous year.

You mentioned your staff is relatively small, how do you accomplish so much with so few people?

I have one assistant professional, one golf professional who is the Pro Emeritus at a club down the street and myself. We play 18,000 rounds, so we are fairly busy. We believe that while “we are not the biggest, we are always striving to be the best.”

What advice would you have for someone getting into the business right now?

I would encourage them to be diligent about everything they do and stay on top of things. I would recommend they focus on their strengths and work on their weaknesses. Lastly, be careful not to bite off too much, focus on what you are good at and do not try to be the best at too many things.

Have you read any good books lately?

I would recommend Simon Sinek, he is the author of “Start with Why.” To get a taste for what is in Sinek's book you could go view his Ted Talk on YouTube. He really focuses on the belief that inspires you to do what you do. I've found that very helpful.

MEMBER MILESTONES

Please Welcome Our May New Members

Jack E. Klein, Sheri Hayes Golf Performance Center, San Diego, CA – Associate Member

Jacque Servadio, Kern River Golf Course, Bakersfield, CA – Associate Member

New Yorker Magazine Article on the Yips Spotlights Dr. Debbie Crews

The May 26 issue of *The New Yorker* magazine contains a long feature article on the science of the yips, including many references to the work of Proponent Group member **Dr. Debbie Crews**.

The writer is David Owen, a *New Yorker* staff writer whose work also appears in *Golf Digest*. Owen previews an upcoming Mayo Clinic study to be conducted by Dr. Crews along with Charles Adler, a Mayo Clinic neurologist, using the SAM PuttLab. Among many notable findings mentioned in the article are these:



Dr. Debbie Crews

- The most accurate scientific term to use for the syndrome is “focal dystonia,” which also affects musicians, ballplayers, pool and snooker players, etc.
- The percentage of golfers who suffer some form of focal dystonia (or “the yips”) is over 20 percent.
- Putting yips were discovered in non-golfers—people who had never putted before were tested and found to suffer small-motor spasms at impact.
- Visual stimuli are highly causative—among tournament-quality blind golfers the yips are basically unheard of.
- Removing feel at impact is effective—Dr. Crews said that putting while wearing thick ski gloves dramatically reduces yipping.

Results of the upcoming focal dystonia study are likely to be part of the next World Scientific Congress of Golf, which Dr. Crews chairs.

Proponent Group Adds American Express Travelink Service to Member Benefits

Proponent Group is pleased to offer a new member



benefit and discount program that will provide you with a higher level of service and save you money on your travel expenses. We've partnered up with American Business Travel's Travelink service to provide our members with the highest level of travel booking assistance along with best-in-class air, car and hotel rates.

By direct phone or email, you will have access to Proponent Group's designated travel advisors to make your reservations. Travelink has great flexibility and can also assist you in setting up group travel when you take students on golf trips. You will have access to all airlines, hotels and rental car companies (including Southwest Airlines).

By accessing business travel pricing through American Express, you will have access to exclusive offers. Your most significant savings through this program will be for hotel, car rental and international air reservations.

All travel can be reserved and paid for with the credit card of your choice (it does not have to be an American Express card) and you will continue to earn your preferred mileage program credits as you do now.

Travelink charges \$10 for each booking for a hotel and/or auto rental and \$25 for each flight reservation. When booking a flight there is no additional fee for adding a hotel and/or auto rental reservation to the trip.

Proponent Group also earns travel credits from Travelink based on the volume of our members' bookings. These credits will lower company costs for future education events, which in turn benefits the membership.

Contact **John Higgins** at Travelink at **615-277-5174** or email him at john.higgins@travelink.com to set up your account and to ask any questions you may have about the program.

For complete details on using the Travelink program you also may visit the Member Discounts page on the members' only website.

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