



# Proponent Group

The Premier Network of Golf Instructors

PROONENT GROUP NEWSLETTER

MAY 2017

## SPECIAL REPORT: A "Value Story"

# WHAT IS INSTRUCTION WORTH? (AND WHAT'S ONE GOOD TEACHER WORTH?)

By David Gould, Staff Editor

Over its 10-year existence, Proponent Group has sketched out a particular vision of golf in the years to come. It's based on teaching and coaching as the undisputed drivers of industry success and long-term growth of the game.

If Proponent ruled the world, top-quality instruction and golfer-engaging programs for improvement would be valued most highly and compensated most richly. Although managers who keep things humming on the operations side would receive due credit, the Pied Piper effect that comes from golfers acquiring new skills and shooting lower scores would get top billing.



Proponent members like Erika Larkin have the ability to improve lives and improve the bottom line.

But that wouldn't be the end of the Proponent quest. We'd still be fixated on each individual member and his or her need for rewarding, gainful and secure employment. Obviously, those are two separate propositions, in which:

- 1) Instruction is recognized as the industry's rising tide, and
- 2) Each Proponent member is in position to be lifted by that tide.

Many highly accomplished Proponent  
*(Continued on page 11)*

# INSIDE THE ISSUE

- 2 NEWS: Priority on Clubfitting Helps Golfers and Builds Your Bottom Line
- 3 NEWS: Better Nutrition Means Better Golf for Your Students
- 4 NEWS: Academy/Multi-teacher Operations Survey Results
- 6 STATE OF INSTRUCTION: It's All About Proving Your Worth
- 8 FINANCIAL LITERACY: Why a Roth IRA Can be a Superior Investment
- 12 SPECIAL REPORT: A Value Story that Needs to Be Told
- 18 RETAILTRIBE ON MARKETING: Managing Communities is the Job at Hand
- 23 MEMBER MILESTONES: New Members, Huffman's New Book and Stats You Should Know

## PACKEE'S MOVE TO NORTHMOOR CC TURNS OUT TO BE A 'GREAT FIT'

With its classic Donald Ross golf course, graceful clubhouse and loyal membership (even a lengthy waiting list), Northmoor Country Club was nonetheless missing something. Adam Rosuck, head professional at this 100-year-old enclave in the Chicago suburb of Highland Park, had been saying as much to Proponent Group member **Brett Packee** for a couple of years. Packee's advanced teaching and clubfitting skills were needed at the club, to complement the tireless efforts of a golf staff that had plenty to do just executing their core golf-operations duties.

In late 2015, Packee came aboard as director of instruction. As these photos show, he brought not just his well-established teaching chops but a robust clubfitting operation as well. Rosuck and his assistants had worked the hardgoods side of their merchandising operation energetically, but once Packee arrived members knew that a full-on specialist was in their midst. In his one full season, club sales ramped up by 30 percent. Brett sold over 50 sets and earned a marginal profit on that revenue, but mainly profited by the \$160-per-hour fee he charges for fitting—same as his coaching rate.

"I love to teach and I've developed my craft—for 17 years on my own I always had a full book of business," says Packee. "But the fitting aspect is in my DNA and members here really respond to how it can help their ball flight and their golf games."

Not just Northmoor people, either—members of many an elite Chicago club have visited his tee station for equipment help. "It could be tricky with the members of the other clubs who come here," says Packee, "but Adam and I handle it with as much professional courtesy as possible."

When a Northmoor member who figures they just want clubfitting gets to experience Packee's expertise in shafts, lofts, lie angles and head design, do they subsequently book golf lessons with him? "Well, yes," says Packee. "That happens pretty much every time." — *David Gould*



## WHAT OUR MEMBERS ARE WATCHING

### MOST VIEWED PROPONENT VIDEOS THIS MONTH

One of the most popular benefits on our member website is the Webinar/Video Archive, loaded up with presentations from Proponent events over the past 10 years. Check out the top speakers in the industry... sharing their insights to help you improve.

*In April, these were the 10 most watched videos on the Proponent website:*

- 1.) **Mark Sheftic** - Teaching with Boditrack
- 2.) **Brendan Ryan** - How to Structure Effective Practice
- 3.) **Cameron McCormick** - The Journey to High Performance
- 4.) **Bryan Hepler** - Tathata Golf Movement Training
- 5.) **Mike Malaska** - The Invisible Swing
- 6.) **Nick Clearwater** - The SwingTRU Motion Study: How Big Data is Improving Golf Instruction
- 7.) **Dr. Robert Neal and Layne Savoie** - Short Game: What the Experts Do
- 8.) **Kevin Weeks** - How I Teach Putting
- 9.) **Iain Highfield** - What a Junior Golfer Needs to Evolve as a Player and Person
- 10.) **Ryan Dailey and Matt Reagan** - Setting the Standard: The Future of Golf and Your Coaching Business

## BETTER NUTRITION MEANS BETTER GOLF:

# MAINTAIN OPTIMUM ENERGY LEVELS AND PREVENT DEHYDRATION

By Gerry Mullally

Walking 18 holes over a four-hour period on an average summer day (70° F) burns between 1,500 and 2,000 calories of energy depending on the length and terrain of the course. This is considered moderate exercise. As calories are burned the body requires energy replacement, otherwise fatigue sets in.

Fortunately, our bodies have energy sources stored, for use in such situations. Therefore our additional energy needs are relatively small. This is where nutrition plays its role. The important feature of a golfer's supplemental energy requirement is its *energy profile*. Golf requires constant, sustained energy, no highs or lows—a steady energy profile that ideally is the same from the first tee to the 18th green. Nutrition's role in this case isn't about feeding, it's about maintenance of energy levels. This can be achieved by the right combination of ingredients.

The maintenance process, as you might expect, is about intermittent intake. Best results are obtained by consuming a small amount of nutrients periodically, beginning with warmup and continuing throughout most of the round. There is no sense in waiting until the final third of the round before recharging your lost energy levels.

So what are the ideal products to provide optimum on-course nutrition? The list will come as no surprise—peanut butter on whole grains (skip the jelly), nuts, fruits, sunflower seeds, dark chocolate. Ideally the golfer would consume a combination of all of the above, meanwhile avoiding all salty, fatty and high-sugar snacks, as these eventually result in lethargy and impaired performance. The disciplined player who brings prepared nutrition to the course should have no difficulty controlling energy levels. And, as we know, many players arrive at the course with packaged bars and trail mixes. It is important that they understand the ingredient profile of these products. They should be

looking for a balanced mix of protein, slow-release carbohydrates and fiber.

Most nutrition bars and energy bars do not provide the sustained energy profile necessary for optimum golf. Many claim, through packaging images or statements, to provide important nutritional benefits—these suggestions are misleading at best.

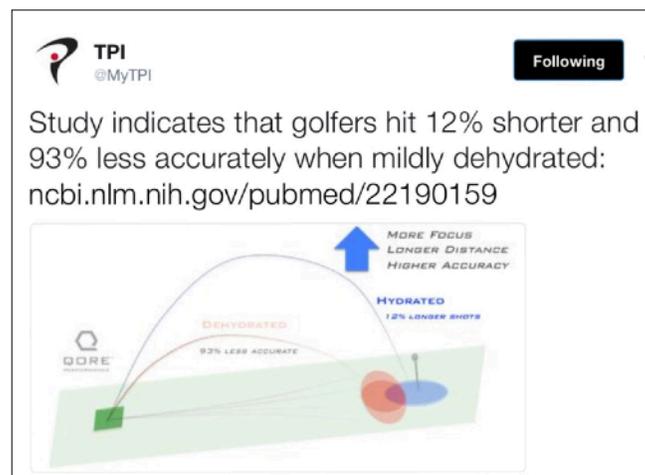
Dehydration is the number one reason why golfers lose energy and lose focus on the course. Dehydration occurs when more fluids are being lost than consumed. Over 70 percent of the population are chronically dehydrated. If you are thirsty you are already dehydrated. Studies by the National Center for Biotechnology have shown that golfers suffering from mild dehydration lose 12 percent distance on their shots and their accuracy declines by 93 percent.

No golfer can afford to get dehydrated. The general rule of thumb for fluid consumption has been calculated by taking a person's weight in pounds and dividing that number in half—the number that results is the number of fluid ounces they need to consume daily. This would mean a young man or woman of 120 pounds would need to consume a minimum of 60 ounces of fluids each day or the equivalent of approximately

four half-liter bottles. In warmer weather fluid intake needs to be greater and when you're sweating strongly not only fluids but salts need to be replaced. To consume adequate fluid levels when playing golf, it is a good idea to incorporate fluid consumption as part of the pre-shot routine. This enables you to stay hydrated and consume the high levels of fluid necessary without becoming overwhelmed by the volume.

There have been famous cases of championships lost or almost lost due to dehydration, most famously Ken Venturi in the 1964 U.S. Open at Congressional and Peter Jacobsen at the U.S. Senior Open in 2013. Mild dehydration will ruin a good round while severe dehydration can be fatal. Our

(Continued on next page)



bodies are 70 percent water and our brains 85 percent water. When you pause to consider those percentages, it's easy to get that optimal functioning calls for proper hydration. If water is not adequate to keep a player hydrated, diluting a sports drink such as Gatorade with two parts water is a good alternative.



A good guideline for fluid consumption for juniors when playing is to have them drink an 8-ounce bottle every three holes—for adults it's an 8-ounce bottle every other hole. Coaches should be telling players to drink a glass of water first thing upon getting out of bed in the morning. Most people are dehydrated first thing in the morning.

For the most part coaches can only encourage players to eat better and drink more fluids. They can recommend to players and parents to limit the consumption of processed foods and sugar based beverages in general and completely avoid them when playing. There are some glaring indicators that poor nutrition is impairing performance. Players who are continually fading over the last six holes are often lacking energy because they are not eating adequately. They need to find products they enjoy that provide sustained energy, otherwise they will not embrace the process.

Players who regularly start slow in a morning round not only need to pay attention to the pre-round foods they are eating, they also need to pay attention to when they are eating. Often, they are eating too close to the round and not

consuming adequate amounts of sustained energy products. Picking up donuts en route to the course for an early tee time might be convenient and tasty but they are poison for the serious golfer (culprits being fried fat and sugar). Ideally a meal should be consumed two hours before tee time. Players also need to be sure to have consumed adequate amounts of fluid before playing.

If players have a late tee time they need to avoid all fatty and high-sugar products before playing. Unfortunately, too many clubs still offer only hamburgers, hot dogs and fried items or pizza at lunch. These products all result in lethargy and fatigue. Encourage your players to seek out lean meats, eggs, whole grains, fruits and vegetables, meanwhile avoiding sugar beverages and fruit juices. Encourage your clubs to make healthy food options available. Healthy eating is a beneficial discipline that extends well beyond golf. The influence of a coach or mentor encouraging healthy eating can become a life-changing experience on and off the course. Nutrition is a vital ingredient in performance and one of the easier adjustments a player can make in order to perform at their best.

*Gery Mullally, a food scientist and lifelong golfer, is creator of **PAR BAR**, a healthy nutrition bar for golfers providing optimal energy and focus. **PAR BAR** is an official partner of Proponent Group. Learn more at [parbargolf.com](http://parbargolf.com). **PG***

## Multi-Teacher Operations Survey Results Now Available

For the first time in five years, we have completed a full survey of our Academy/Multi-Teacher operations to gauge how the bigger teaching brands are doing on a variety of fronts. Our 2017 version is now complete and the full results are available for download in the Surveys menu on the members' website.

For Academies who completed the survey, contact our office if you'd like a customized set of comps.

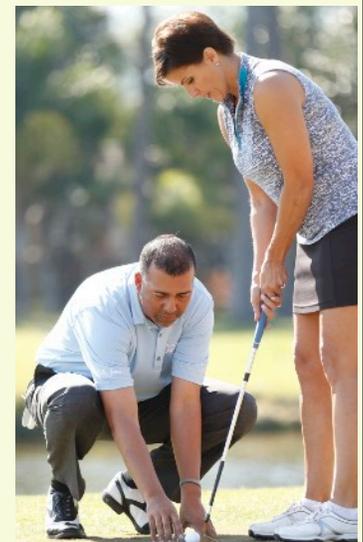
Among the highlights from this year's survey, we asked what their challenges are for growing revenues at this time. The top response was: Generating corporate business. They also said that their most significant management challenge at this time is: Effectively marketing to new customers.

The average gross revenues were **\$403,400** with a range from **\$100,000** to **\$2,500,000**. The hourly lesson rate of the highest priced instructor averaged **\$174** per hour, up from **\$149** in the 2012 study. Hourly lesson rate

for the lowest priced instructor was **\$113**, up from **\$106** in the 2012 survey.

**Forty-seven** percent reported paying rent/lease for their facility privileges. Average monthly payments rose to **\$2,429** from **\$1,924** in 2012.

A very positive trend was seen in database growth with the average email database for our multi-teacher facilities growing from **2,659** to **5,108**, or a **92 percent** increase over the past five years.





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# PROVING YOUR WORTH TO YOUR FACILITY



By **Lorin Anderson**, President

As you saw on page one of this newsletter we are redoubling our efforts to help you protect your position and maximize your earnings. We know that facility ownership and management and/or other golf staff will tend to downplay the value of a high-quality instruction program. To overcome this elephant-in-the-room issue we've been working on

our own research, piggybacking on industry research such as the great work being done by Ian James at RetailTribe, and building tools for you to use to more clearly show your true value to all of your constituencies.

Ian and I both speak to a lot of course owners and when you talk to them about the value great instruction programming brings to their bottom line, they generally shrug their shoulders and make a comment that they really don't think it moves the needle. That is simply wrong. I'll use my wife as an example. When she was at a private club in New York, every year she would typically have at least one of her non-member students decide to join the club after spending time there with her. When each of these students joined, they paid a \$75,000 initiation fee (non-refundable), \$12,000 annual dues, \$3,000 annual minimum and an additional spend of around \$3,000 a year. Typically members stay at the club for about seven years so the lifetime value of each of her students who joined the club was somewhere around \$200,000. That didn't include the 30 or more sets of clubs she sold each year (more than the rest of the golf staff combined), the increased play by her students who were getting better and enjoying the game more, and the new golfers she created with her very effective beginner

programming. In her years at that particular club she contributed literally millions of dollars in revenues from her teaching and her engagement with the membership.

Her thank-you from the club was to be told by the GM and a new head professional that they didn't think they needed a director of instruction anymore and that they would like her to work in the golf shop answering the phone 20 hours a week when the next season started. Beyond clueless.

This incident is one of the main reasons I started Proponent Group. I was tired of watching teachers do their jobs very well and hone their craft to a high level, only to be kicked to the curb because of a lack of understanding on the part of ownership. And, no, her case is not some isolated incident. I've had similar situations reported to me through the years by dozens of Proponent members.

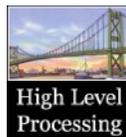
While there is no guarantee that you can avert a similar situation, at least arm yourself with as much credible and accurate data as possible by tracking the lifetime value (and current spending) of every student in your stable (see **Economic Impact Calculator** sidebar on page 16.)

Also, if you haven't already done so, go to the members' website and download the **Monthly Reporting** and **Annual Reporting** forms from the Business Templates section.

Then download **The Business Value of Golf Instruction Report** to brush up on the data on the increased spending and play of golfers who are engaged in improving their games.

While we have a long way to go in documenting a teacher's value, we're beginning to see progress when facility management has the opportunity to review the data. Given that nearly half of all golf courses and clubs lost money last year, managers desperately want to know where they can build revenue and out-perform their competition. Quality instruction programs are a no-brainer. **PG**

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**THINK ABOUT IT: UNTAXED DISTRIBUTIONS IN RETIREMENT!**

# THE LONG-TERM SUPERIORITY OF THE ROTH IRA

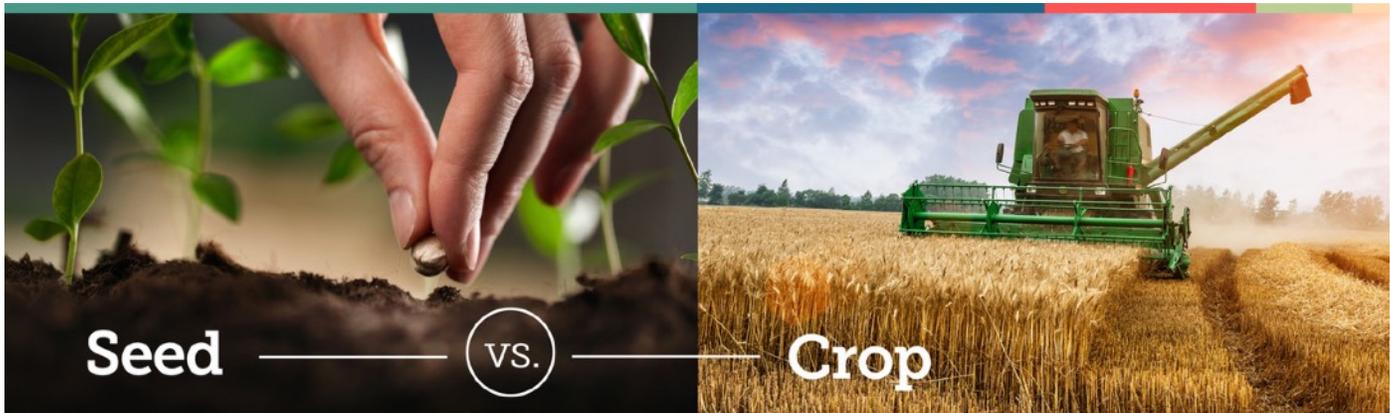
Imagine a farmer who, while preparing his fields for the upcoming season, receives a surprise visit from the local tax collector. The tax man makes an interesting offer: the farmer can choose to pay taxes based on the weight of the seeds he plants at the beginning of the season or the weight of the crop after harvest. Which should he choose?

This scenario closely matches a choice Americans face every year. Even though it's obvious that the farmer should choose to pay taxes on the seeds instead of the crop, millions of Americans continually make the wrong choice when faced with the same question as it's applied to their personal financial situation instead of a hypothetical farmer. A golf instructor who would very quickly answer "seeds" instead of "crop" might stumble if the question were instead "Roth IRA" versus "Traditional IRA." Let's fix that.

**A golf instructor who would very quickly answer "seeds" instead of "crop" might stumble if the question was instead "Roth IRA" versus "Traditional IRA." Let's fix that.**

Individual Retirement Accounts ("IRAs") are invaluable tools for helping you prepare for retirement. Traditional IRAs were created in the 1970s and allow individuals to contribute money to an account that is earmarked for retirement. These accounts have two tax benefits: the money contributed to the account is tax-deductible in the year in which the contribution is made, which means that you pay slightly less money in taxes that year. The much more

important tax benefit is that the account grows tax-deferred so that gains in the account aren't taxed in the years during which you're saving for retirement. This allows the gains to stay in the account (instead of some of the gains being siphoned off to pay taxes), which allows the account to take advantage of the power of compound interest (Note: For more on compound interest, read our "Rule of 72" article in the April newsletter). *(Continued on next page)*



## Roth IRA

- After Tax Contributions
- Tax-Deferred Growth
- Tax Free Distributions in Retirement

## Traditional IRA

- Pre-Tax Contributions
- Tax-Deferred Growth
- Distributions are Fully Taxable at Ordinary Income Rates

To illustrate the importance of this tax deferral, let's use a hypothetical thought experiment we refer to as the "million-dollar mistake."

How much money would you have if you started with a dollar and doubled it 20 times? Because of the power of compound interest, it would grow to \$1,048,576. Now, how much money would you have if the same dollar doubled the same 20 times but you had to pay 30 percent tax on the gains each time it doubled? Many people would simply figure you'd have 30 percent less money, or \$734,003. Those people obviously didn't read our April newsletter article on The Rule of 72. Since the tax is taken out each time the money doubles, the compounding effect isn't as powerful. Let's look at the numbers:

The same dollar doubled the same 20 times at a 30 percent tax rate only grows to \$40,642.31. A million dollar mistake. That's the importance of tax deferral.

We've shown that the Traditional IRA allows you to save a little money in taxes in the years in which you make contributions and that the money grows tax-deferred so you can avoid the million-dollar mistake and allow the power of compound interest to do its magic. However, as with all government programs, the Traditional IRA has a catch: when you take withdrawals in retirement, the money is fully taxable at ordinary income rates. It's at that point that the 30 percent tax would turn \$1,048,576 into \$734,003.20, assuming you withdrew all the money at once. But if you spread out your distributions over your retirement (which is the entire point of IRAs), you only get taxed on the amount you withdraw every year and you may be in a lower tax bracket in retirement than you are in your higher-earning working years. But what will the tax brackets be in retirement?

As bad as taxes seem now, our current top federal tax bracket of 39.6 percent is considerably lower than it's been over most of the last 100 years. Given that we currently have significantly more national debt than at any time in our country's history, we think it's

## Million Dollar Mistake

	Before Tax	After 30% Tax	Tax
1	\$2	\$1.70	\$0.30
2	\$4	\$2.89	\$1.11
3	\$8	\$4.91	\$3.09
4	\$16	\$8.35	\$7.65
5	\$32	\$14.20	\$17.80
6	\$64	\$24.14	\$39.86
7	\$128	\$41.03	\$86.97
8	\$256	\$69.76	\$186.24
9	\$512	\$118.59	\$393.41
10	\$1,024	\$201.60	\$822.40
11	\$2,048	\$342.72	\$1,705.28
12	\$4,096	\$582.62	\$3,513.38
13	\$8,192	\$990.46	\$7,201.54
14	\$16,384	\$1,683.78	\$14,700.22
15	\$32,768	\$2,862.42	\$29,905.58
16	\$65,536	\$4,866.12	\$60,669.88
17	\$131,072	\$8,272.40	\$122,799.60
18	\$262,144	\$14,063.08	\$248,080.92
19	\$524,288	\$23,907.24	\$500,380.76
20	\$1,048,576	\$40,642.31	\$1,007,933.69

quite possible that tax brackets will be higher in the future. So not only does a Traditional IRA defer the tax – which still has to be paid on the growth of your account when you take withdrawals in retirement – it also defers the tax calculation since we don't know what taxes will be in the future.

What if there was a way to allow your retirement accounts to grow and compound without the effect of taxes and still be able to take out all of your money—including gains—without paying any taxes

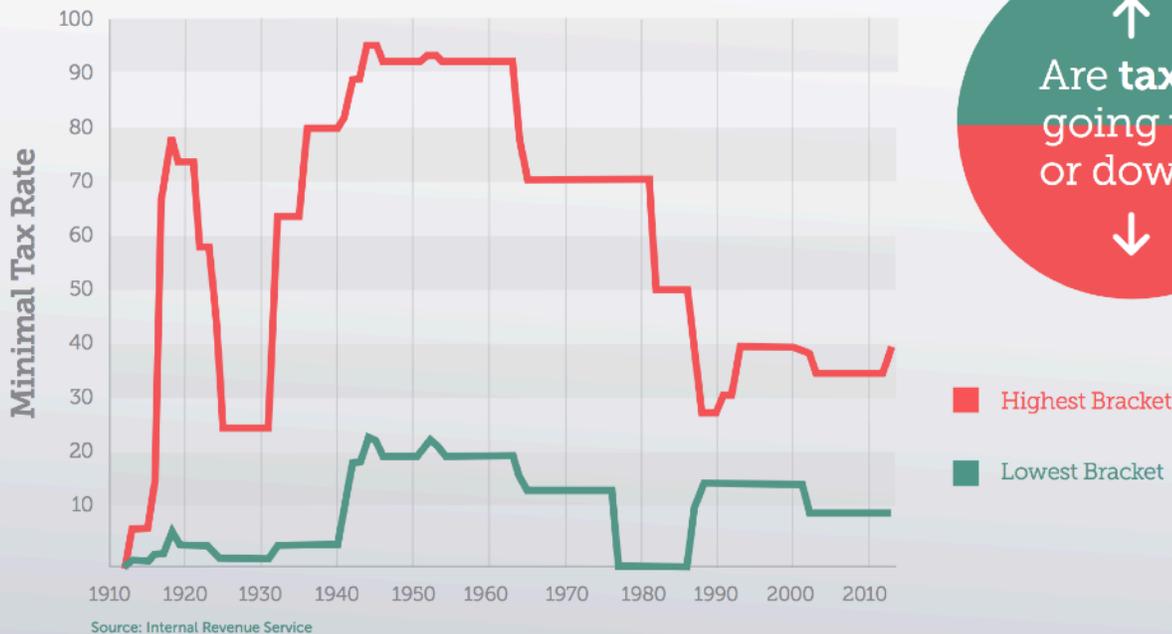
whatsoever? There is. In 1998, Congress created Roth IRAs, which are the mirror image of Traditional IRAs.

The catch with Roth IRAs is that —just like the farmer who chooses to pay taxes on the seeds—you forgo the privilege of deducting the contributions from your taxes. The money you contribute to the account is money on which you've already paid taxes (just like all of your other money—there's no

*(Continued on next page)*

**As bad as taxes seem now, our current top federal tax bracket of 39.6 percent is considerably lower than it's been over most of the last 100 years.**

## Historical Marginal Tax Rates



■ Highest Bracket

■ Lowest Bracket

additional tax when you contribute). So you do lose the benefit of slightly reducing your current tax burden, but in return for giving up current deductibility, the money compounds tax-deferred and, as long as you wait until age 59½, you're able to withdraw all of your money—including gains—without paying any taxes whatsoever. This ability to pay taxes on the seed money you contribute to the account and harvest all of your gains tax-free makes Roth IRAs the holy grail of retirement savings vehicles.

Everyone's situation is different. There are many cases in which it makes sense to contribute to a Traditional IRA instead of a Roth IRA. But on the whole, especially for those in their 50s or younger, Roth IRAs warrant significant consideration. There are also limitations to both forms of IRAs: You can only

contribute \$5,500 per year (\$6,500 if you're over 50) and if you make a certain amount of money, you may not be eligible to deduct your Traditional IRA contribution and may not be able to contribute to a Roth IRA at all.

We use a little-known loophole that can sometimes allow us to skirt the limitation on contributing to a Roth IRA. There are also other products that can mimic the tax treatment of Roth IRAs for those who can't contribute or are interested in contributing more than the \$5,500 annual limit.

The farmer might not need help deciding whether to pay taxes on the crop or the seed. But you might need advice on the best way to plan for retirement. For more information or to schedule a time to review your retirement game plan, contact Matt Luckey at 770-418-0300 x122 or visit [wealthwave.com/mattluckey](http://wealthwave.com/mattluckey). PG

## Proponent Group Summit 2017

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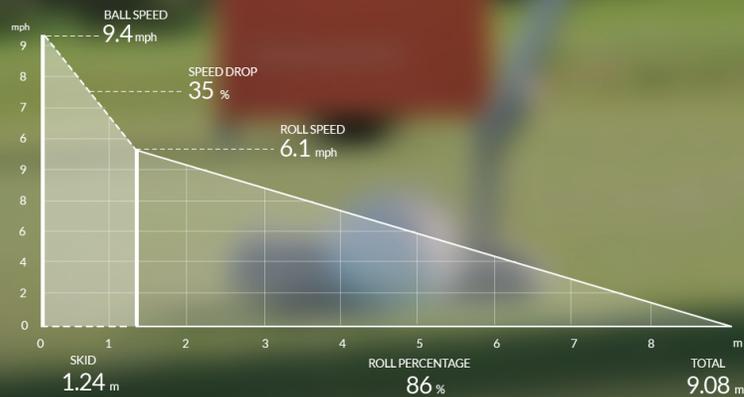
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## SPECIAL REPORT: A “VALUE STORY”

*(Continued from page 1)*

Group members have built themselves an academy-style business. They operate their self-contained enterprise and measure its success the way a storefront law firm or a dry cleaner would measure theirs. Other veteran members are in traditional greengrass environments where instruction has its own P&L but its value stretches beyond that—teaching and coaching are looked to as an energy center for the whole facility and a feeder program that helps attract, engage and retain golfers.

Proponent members in the earlier stages of their careers tend to fill staff-instructor roles in the established academies or at prominent golf facilities, some public and some private. Like anyone who teaches golf, a Proponent member has at least some responsibility for trying to promote the game and bring in new players—Get Golf Ready, New Player Assessments and other entry-level offerings are a shared responsibility within the teaching profession.

**Fortunately, a teacher can easily** measure the results of the new-golfer (and returning-golfer) programs they run. Are you getting a large majority of those newbies to “graduate” from their original intro series to some kind of second-stage participation, then on to a third stage, and so forth? How many of them eventually became league golfers (and did you create a special league to help make that happen)? How many referred friends or family members to the intro course?

And that’s just one “macro” way of figuring out the residual or ripple-effect value of your interaction with students. In off the street comes Joe Smith and you are able to turn him into Joe Golfer—thereby raising the NGF participation count from 23,800,000 to 23,800,001. Any contribution to the big picture of golf on a national level is important, but it’s probably only a viable goal if it creates value for the teacher, the academy, the golf facility—in other words, it creates value close to home.

**With great help from Ian James** of Proponent partner company RetailTribe, the “multiplier effect” of a quality instruction program has come sharply into focus. And so, during last year’s Summit gathering in Arizona, a presentation on the subject included a slide dramatically showing the revenue implications of new-student on-boarding programs that are programmed to retain the client over an extended period.

That arithmetic, put up on a slide by Jeff Penson and Lorin Anderson, assumed just one new student per week paying \$75 for a single hour of instruction. Multiplied by a hypothetical 52-week season, that kicks out \$3,900 annually. The next metric shown was based on the assumption that two-thirds of those new students would continue on, at a spending level of \$350 over the course of the season. The math on that is \$12,250 in incremental dollars—added to the initial-session money it comes to \$16,150 an academy or learning center would not have otherwise earned. Plus there are those 35 new students in the database.

*(Continued on next page)*



Engaging programs for new golfers creates tremendous revenue potential for the instructor’s facility like this one at Henry Brunton Golf.

## SPECIAL REPORT: A “VALUE STORY”

At any self-contained academy, the question of coaching value and where it comes from or how it gets measured will turn a spotlight on staff instructors—they're on the hook to produce.

At the Grand Cypress Academy of Golf, long overseen by Proponent member Fred Griffin, staff instructors can be hired at a relatively young age but only after distinguishing themselves as superior performers on the golf staff of the resort, which has multiple courses and a strong service culture. Once part of the academy staff, instructors are handed performance goals and numbers to hit, all of it tracked by Griffin on a weekly or monthly basis.

“If I have three staff members who are trained clubfitters, I'll put out a monthly number of, say, \$30,000 in club sales and each one of them will be responsible for \$10,000 of that,” explains Griffin. “If I slot a staff instructor for 30 hours of lessons a week, their book needs to show 30 or more hours of teaching, and if it doesn't we have to look into why that is.”

Griffin's top performers over the years have certainly known who they are, and some have chosen to stay in the system for long periods of time, delivering value to the bottom line and getting rewarded with choice assignments and other perks. Others have stayed a few years, made their mark and figured they're now ready to go elsewhere, some of them climbing the career ladder and others not so much.

Naturally, there is a commercial relationship between Grand Cypress Resort and the on-site academy Griffin runs, whereby the academy can and does drive lodging, dining and retail revenue. And yet, measurement of that revenue is quite limited. Golfers arrive on property for high-quality instruction under the traditional golf-school model, almost always on a package plan that includes lodging and dining, and all of that activity gets measured and tracked, according to Griffin. But if four customers who visited on a golf-school package in March were to return in April, take lessons for several days and spend a combined \$5,000 on room-nights, titanium drivers, gourmet



Every instructor contributes to academy success, seeking to build their own brands in the process.

meals and vintage wine, none of that money would be “credited” to the academy.

“I'm an employee with salary and benefits, plus the chance for additional earnings through my personal company,” says Griffin. “All academy costs are borne by the resort, which wants to continue offering the academy as an amenity. So, there's no ‘case to make,’ about our value, and thus no compelling reason to track all the resort revenue we generate.”

**Proponent member Larry Ward**, whose Lexington, Ky., academy is called High Performance Golf, has gradually evolved his thinking toward a highly-structured type of staffing. His team consists of veterans, not teachers who are learning the ropes, and their skill sets are all different, on purpose. Myra Blackwelder, Grover Justice and Tyrus York are instructors who have each built and honed a personal brand. Ward identifies them by their specialties—excellence in working with female students, outstanding putting instruction, a gift for teaching tournament golfers, etc.—and offers them as proof of a realization he came to one day, “that I couldn't do it all myself.” Each HPG staff member pays the same annual amount in rent—the ones who teach the most bring home the highest compensation,

*(Continued on next page)*

## SPECIAL REPORT: A “VALUE STORY”

the ones who teach the least have the most free time to enjoy the fruits of their labor. While on property, they work together devotedly, according to Ward.

“Taking personal ownership of how the academy runs is a requirement, and my people all do that,” he says. “No one leaves a task for someone else to do.” Maturity is a major part of all this, according to Larry. “Younger instructors with lots of certifications still aren’t yet excellent teachers, and they often don’t realize that,” he says. “They also don’t easily get the teamwork part—I’ve seen too many who are prima donnas.”

Ward is currently seeking a top-tier clubfitter, because that niche is currently not filled at High Performance Golf. He also wants to bring in someone with standout skills and energy for non-elite junior instruction and programming. Assuming those slots get filled, Larry would be in a position where if one of his staffers resigned, he wouldn’t just need another-barber-to-cover-that-barber-chair, he would have an important sub-specialty to fill. Part of his philosophy is to cross-train wherever possible, but uniqueness of each team member is a core concept.

**Compared to Grand Cypress**, the Ward academy and its Pied Piper qualities are more carefully examined—and perhaps appreciated—by the host facility. To begin with, Keene Trace Country Club, where Ward does business, is a privately-owned member-only club that not only allows but encourages the academy to teach non-member golfers. Furthermore, Ward’s own golf-management micro-company runs the country club’s golf operation. Synergy is the obvious result. “It’s a management company just for this facility, not something I would try and expand,” says Larry. “My skill is I can make the ball fly straight—on the business side I’m qualified enough to make this particular operation run properly.”



All quality instruction contains a promotional element—a message that golf played well makes life better.

Making the ball fly straight is, of course, the magic bullet at the core of the golf industry—it builds revenue in multiple ways. “In the past 24 months,” says Ward, “our academy has sent 30 new members to Keene Trace. The owner totally gets how valuable that is.” Larry feels there is even a bit of rivalry among his staff teachers, over whose lesson book is producing the most new members for the club. That’s a rivalry you want.

**Few golf professionals in the U.S.** have given as much thought to this “value” question as Proponent member Don Parsons. He is owner of Don Parsons Golf Instruction at Twin Lakes Golf Course in the Santa Barbara suburb of Goleta, Calif., where people who once thought of themselves as called by the heavens to a life of golf instruction might trade their teaching shingle for a realtor’s license. “Around here you can sell two houses in a year and make considerably more money than you could teaching golf,” says Parsons, with a twinge of irony.

That being the case, he pays his still-not-branded teachers a salary you can live on in this most unaffordable part of the world. But, in Don’s words, he no longer brings in “the 28-year-old who looks in the mirror and sees the next David Leadbetter.” The recruiting priority of late for

*(Continued on next page)*

## SPECIAL REPORT: A “VALUE STORY”

Parsons has been impressive certifications plus devout interest in the next-new-thing, all of it strongly leavened by personal integrity and an appropriate dose of humility.

“I go to Proponent Group events like Summits and I make sure to have lunch or dinner with some of the younger members,” says Parsons. “From those interactions I recently ended up hiring Preston Combs and Adam Young. They each had the teaching qualifications—for this stage of their careers—but they had the personal qualities that you can’t teach and that allow me to create the academy environment I need to create.”

**Tim Mahoney, who is constantly** hiring staff instructors for the Troon Golf organization, uses the phrase “360 degrees of ownership” to describe the type of dedication to a common cause he asks young teachers to demonstrate. By “360 degrees,” he means a staff teacher has to cooperate and communicate well with superiors, peers, other departments and of course with customers. It can be hard for a staff instructor who has attained some early success to retain perspective, according to Mahoney.

“When I started out,” he recalls, “it wasn’t prestigious to be a teacher. Now it’s the cool thing to do and you can have a nice career. But I get a call once a month from one of the 300 general managers throughout the Troon system telling me about a younger instructor who isn’t a team player.” Having the GM of the facility contacting the corporate director of instruction with complaints about him or her—that’s a case of creating negative value, for the teacher and for the organization.

The golf professional with the teaching bug who spends their 20s and early 30s learning the craft and piling up certifications may take pride in



Effective, inspired coaching is the golf industry’s magic bullet. Getting that message heard is critical.

their progress yet still feel themselves “in between,” with skills and knowledge but no personal brand to trade on, as yet. “If their book stays full and corporate groups ask for them specifically, that might persuade a younger teacher to go out on their own,” says Fred Griffin. “If the best players all want to work with them, they might head out on the mini-tours and try to build a career that way—if they’re great clubfitters that’s another possible avenue to independence.”

**Proponent member Matt Lindberg**, now 32, found himself in that tricky spot of being well-trained and well-credentialed but without much leverage. A graduate of Ferris State who earned himself a spot on-staff at the super-prestigious Oakland Hills Country Club, Lindberg spent his years there learning face-to-face member service, studying merchandising and “scratching for every lesson I could get,” in his words, with plenty of junior-program duties along the way.

In the decade since graduation, Lindberg has noticed a couple of his peers making progress with their teaching brands. “There are two or three that have been able to do that, basically using the strategy Lorin has written about,” says Lindberg, “where you create content and market yourself as having expertise in some particular niche or area, using media however you can.”

*(Continued on next page)*

## SPECIAL REPORT: A "VALUE STORY"

As for Matt's career path, at age 30 he landed himself a head-professional position, at Chequamegon Bay Golf Club, a fairly obscure member-owned facility on Lake Superior in Ashland, Wisc., But Lindberg's concept of how to best serve the club is very much teaching-oriented, in line with some new thinking that's starting to show up elsewhere in the golf industry.

"I've always pictured myself as a head professional," he says, "but a head pro who teaches and is out there connecting with golfers, not stuck behind a computer all day." Like Larry Ward down in Kentucky, Lindberg is allowed to teach non-members, which he has done enthusiastically. And yes, you guessed it,

he's been turning his students into members of the club. "In my two full seasons here that has happened at least six times that I can think of," Lindberg says. "The board of directors, they applaud that, although I probably don't do a good enough job of spotlighting those cases."

No, not compared to the way advocates like Ian James or Jeff Penson would want him to, with all the spend-per-member data and "multiplier effect" arithmetic that goes with that. Value, for the professional who can "make the ball fly straight" and build excitement around this difficult but beautiful game of golf, is something to create and something to take credit for, as well. **PG**

### The Nuts and Bolts of Measuring Your Economic Impact

If you go to Business Templates in the members' website, you'll find a nifty little spreadsheet called **Instructor Economic Impact Calculator**. It resides next to the **Instructor Economic Impact Study Results** and **The Business Value of Golf Instruction Report**.

If you teach at a private club, own an academy or rent/lease from a public facility, the information and guidance in these three documents can assist you in defining and defending the full value that your teaching operation produces. All three taken together provide a composite picture of the substantial impact your teaching operation has on your facility's bottom line.

The Economic Impact Calculator, shown at right, offers a clear, concise way to illustrate the wide scope of services that combine to create the Pied Piper effect that RetailTribe's Ian James often discusses. Proponent Group and RetailTribe have been working to put the spotlight on the extraordinary lifetime value you create every time you get someone new engaged in playing golf.

The Instructor Economic Impact Calculator is designed to take you step-by-step through all the areas where you provide direct and indirect financial benefits to your club or facility. It is set up in a Microsoft Excel file so you can add or delete categories as appropriate, producing a final document that's fully customized to your situation.

The assumptions listed at the bottom of the calculator can be adjusted to better match your

data for your facility and are only sample values.

The combination of these tools will allow you to convey your vision to the leaders of your facility in a clear and concrete manner, illustrate your diverse responsibilities and quantify the financial impact your position has on the facility. The end result should be more job security and a fairer distribution of the revenues generated.

Director of Instruction Position				
Annual Economic Impacts and Benefits - 2017				
	Total Revenue	Facility Percentage	Facility Total	Total
<b>Economic Impact - Instruction Department</b>				
Individual Lesson-takers <sup>1</sup>	\$ 100,000	20.00%	\$ 20,000	
Group Instruction <sup>2</sup>	\$ 40,000	20.00%	\$ 8,000	
Custom Clubfitting Fees <sup>3</sup>	\$ 3,000	20.00%	\$ 600	
Junior Golf <sup>4</sup>	\$ 40,000	20.00%	\$ 8,000	
Other <sup>5</sup>	\$ -	20.00%	\$ -	
<b>Total Direct Economic Impact of Instruction</b>				<b>\$ 36,600</b>
<b>Facility Economic Impact</b>				
	Customers	Average Cost	Total Spend	
F&B - Students <sup>1</sup>	200	\$ 7.50	\$ 1,500	
F&B - Golf Schools and Clinics <sup>2</sup>	5	\$ 300.00	\$ 1,500	
Range balls <sup>3</sup>	400	\$ 5.00	\$ 2,000	
Range memberships <sup>4</sup>	10	\$ 500.00	\$ 5,000	
Green Fees Driven by Instruction	100	\$ 75.00	\$ 7,500	
Cart Fees Driven by Instruction	100	\$ 30.00	\$ 3,000	
Club memberships - Initiation Fees <sup>5</sup>	2	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 40,000	
Club memberships - Dues <sup>5</sup>	2	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 15,000	
Corporate outings <sup>7</sup>	1	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000	
Student Lodging (on site hotel) <sup>8</sup>	10	\$ 200.00	\$ 2,000	
Golf equipment sales to students <sup>9</sup>	20	\$ 400.00	\$ 8,000	
Other <sup>10</sup>	0	\$ -	\$ -	
<b>Total Facility Economic Impact of Instruction</b>				<b>\$ 82,500</b>
<b>Additional Benefits of Instruction Program provided wholly by the Director of Instruction</b>				
Free Instruction Clinics (# of hours per year x hourly lesson rate)				
Time playing golf with members/students (# of hours per year x playing lesson rate)				
Health insurance premiums paid by Director of Instruction as Independent Contractor				
Other				
<b>Total Additional Benefits provided</b>				<b>\$ -</b>
<b>Total Economic Impact of Director of Instruction Position</b>				<b>\$ 119,100</b>

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More Searches Now On  
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## YOUR NEW TASK, AT ANY GOLF FACILITY

# MANAGING “COMMUNITIES” IS THE JOB AT HAND

By **Ian James**,  
RetailTribe CEO

Over the last 12 weeks I've run Revenue Workshops for 100-plus decision-making teams at golf facilities. We have gathered the general manager, the director of golf (or head professional) and—at clubs that have one—the director of instruction. If there is no director of instruction we bring the golf instruction staff into the Workshop. Of the 105 clubs where we have done this, 51 were overseen by management groups. The rest were standalone—either resorts, semi-privates or public courses.

While you may consider this a subtle point, the massive epiphany for me was in seeing that the managers (PGA professionals included) all believed they were “running a club.” In fact what they're doing is *managing a community of individuals*. It is 100 percent clear to me that the outdated concept in the minds of these managers—that they are “running a club”—is the reason golf coaching and teaching is so profoundly under-valued.

It's a very ingrained mindset, and it should concern all Proponent Group members. It creates a blindness of sorts, the result of which—for teaching professionals—is that you are only able to demonstrate your value if you can uncover a superstar player or you get to coach star players on a regular basis.

### AVERAGE ROUND RATE



### OPERATING COSTS



*The impact of our approach to demand generation over the last decade has been a couple of trends we can't afford to have together.*

The running-a-club mentality has led to a steady decline in average round revenue without any significant increase in rounds played or participants in the game. It is this outlook that has seen the number of participants (per NGF figures) decline over the last seven years from 28 million to 23.8 million. At the same time, the cost of operations has increased—a painful profit squeeze being the net result.

But those two trends are the inevitable outcome of a perception that management's job is all about a product rather than all about customers. If it's in your head that you are managing a facility, maintaining a course and running various events, then your approach to demand-generation can go one of two ways—either you improve the “product” (the facility and/or the course, usually) or you discount your price.

**The running-a-club mentality has led to a steady decline in average round revenue without any significant increase in rounds played or participants in the game.**

*(Continued on next page)*

The fundamentals of “community management” create a different priority. Let me explain: If you decide that you’re managing a community, *your focus will be personal value for each member of the community and social value for the community as a whole.* Note: That second benefit, social value, is what exerts the greatest positive impact on activation and retention. Discussions about customers, rather than about operations and service, should dominate your management meetings and staff meetings.

If we understood we were managing a community of golfers, the first point of our quarterly operating management meeting would be “customer review.”

Specifically, someone at the meeting would be reporting on:

- a) The number of golfers in each of the following categories: Committed (our golf nuts), Engaged (or regular) and Recreational (a.k.a. occasional). Beyond that numerical snapshot, there would also be trend data on how these categories have gone up or down over the previous four business quarters;
- b) The number of golfers we had managed to graduate from our introductory programs into the Recreational category (this is a cause for celebration);
- c) A list of the golfers whom we consider to be at risk of leaving (those playing less than once a month, and those who haven’t been on-property in the last quarter), highlighting those at-risk people who have not yet received a personal contact from the club;
- d) The number of golfers now in Introductory programs (probably by different age / gender categories);
- e) The number (and its trend) of golfers being coached who are not either

**If you decide that you’re managing a community, your focus will be personal value for each member of the community and social value for the community as a whole.**



*Too many Operating Meetings have an agenda that has no item for Customer.*

Introductory or Committed;

- f) The number of golfers who haven’t participated in a single club event in the last quarter and the trend line on that data point.

There would be other key customer metrics to review that would be more directly linked to leads and sales. Again, looking at such numbers drives a different conversation from the one club

*(Continued on next page)*

managers currently engage in. The current belief system drives a discussion around budgets and service. That is not enough for this industry, and it isn't a discussion that sheds light on the potentially huge impact a golf coach can make at the facility.

Changing the way we think changes the actions we consider important. So, if we're running a golf facility as a community, then most of our attention would be focused on the question of why at least 50 percent of that community consists of individuals who are only visiting occasionally.

We would be invested in discovering how we're falling short of the personal value goal. We would see that the great majority of golfers feels they are not receiving personal value. We would likewise begin to see how much social-value opportunity exists. This is not just theoretical rubbish. RetailTribe has been working with an ownership group for just a few months, but it's clear already that we are going to make a significant impact on their financial position—just by examining the golfer, rather than the facility/course.

By examining the golfers who were leaving or those at risk, it became obvious that the major "loss group" consisted of golfers *who had been at their clubs under three years and are playing once a month or less*. Setting up accompanied play with these golfers has enabled the ownership group to discover that it is the social value that has not been established for these golfers. They don't know enough other members. They're not part of a group. They don't know the management or the professionals.

One of the primary fixes has been to get those golfers into "practice clubs," or a 9-hole "Dawn Patrol" program or "Better than Gym" groups—all formats that the clubs we're working with have recently created.

It is amazing how many of these at-risk golfers have been very willing to sign up for coaching programs. In all cases, the hands-on engagement of the professional is critical both to uncovering the personal value the golfer is looking for, and in resolving the challenge of delivery of both personal value and social value to their club experience.

There are two other areas of community management, both of them critical to ensuring that the facility maximizes its financial potential. Customer knowledge is one of them. There is much more a club must learn beyond facts like age, weight, height, handicap, rounds played and so forth. Actually, if you knew none of those, but you knew:

- a) The personal value the golfer wanted and their future aspiration;
- b) The social connections the golfer had, and what additional social connections would be valuable to them

... *and the customer knew that you knew this information*, there would no reason for them to consider leaving or moving to another community. They would have the basis for a trusting relationship with you. They would know that you cared about them, and knew enough about them to make them happy in your community.

*(Continued on next page)*



*There is a well defined methodology for managing  
'commercially viable communities'.*

*There is so much opportunity for us to exploit in this methodology.*

With trust established, you can offer each customer whatever it is that will make a difference in their life. Rather than displaying a shelf of products and offers they'll need to sort through in order to find what might interest them, you can talk to them about what it is that will specifically deliver on their wishes.

The golf club, the course, the range and the golf academy—along with events and programs—are just tools we use to help deliver personal and social value to the customer. Our job is to care about every golfer in our community and to work on how we deliver the value they're looking for.

Unfortunately, at the moment, too many management teams define lack of participation as a sign that the customer isn't interested in what's being offered. At best, they try to polish the product, at worst they drop the price. Going forward, make a decision to be part of the movement to change that thinking. It's not only good for your business to help make that change happen, it is fundamental to the health of the industry. **PG**



*The Customer wants you to know enough about them, to deliver them the result they want from belonging to your community. It's a huge part of trust.*

## It Works! (Value of the Teacher—Proven)

At the most recent Proponent Summit I highlighted the need for coaches to understand the financial impact on your facility's business. I asked if you knew how much a golfer was worth to your facility and if you knew how many you'd acquired or retained for your facility. I emphasized that this was critical to your future.

Etienne Olivier isn't a member of Proponent or a customer of RetailTribe but he has attended one of our Revenue Workshops, wherein we explore the same questions. Etienne runs an academy at a prestigious golf club in a gated community.

Last week he called me to describe a recent experience. He had received notice from the "community management board" that his rent was being doubled, effective May 1. He asked for a meeting with the board and at that meeting:



Etienne Olivier  
EOGA's Managing Director

a) With a flip-chart he asked them to calculate the average value of a new member to their club, using the calculation I had shared in my presentation;

b) Having established the value of a single golfer (a much bigger number than they had ever appreciated) he then listed each golfer he had introduced to the club through his academy in the previous 12 months;

c) He then multiplied that number of golfers by the value per-golfer, to showcase the value his academy, at a minimum, had delivered to the golf club.

**The result:** *Rental increase withdrawn, and the general manager instructed to work more closely with Etienne on new-golfer acquisition and current-golfer retention. I wish you a fine start to your new season, and every success.*



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## WELCOME PROPONENT GROUP'S APRIL NEW MEMBERS

**TIM BUCZAK**, Manhattan Woods Golf Club, W. Nyack, NY - *Associate Member*

**JOE CHARLES**, Treetops Golf Academy, Gaylord, MI - *Full Member*

**CHRIS DACHISEN**, Core Golf Performance, Oakland, NJ - *Associate Member*

**JIM LAFRATTE**, Core Golf Performance, Oakland, NJ - *Associate Member*

**MICHAEL MAGGS**, Southern California Golf Academy, Carlsbad, CA - *Associate Member*

**VINCENT MALONSO**, Manhattan Woods Golf Academy, W. Nyack, NY - *Associate Member*

**FRED MALTINO**, Core Golf Performance, Oakland, NJ - *Associate Member*

**CATHY SCHMIDT**, Conaway Golf Academy, Sarasota, FL - *Associate Member*

**ED WHITMAN**, Core Golf Performance, Oakland, NJ - *Associate Member*

## GOLF INDUSTRY BY THE NUMBERS

Here are some fresh golf industry metrics you should be familiar with:

Approximately **24 million** Americans played **455 million** rounds last year at **15,000 golf facilities** in the U.S.

**75 percent** of facilities are daily fee or municipal that are open to the public.

Currently there are **2,492** municipal golf facilities in the United States, a record high number.

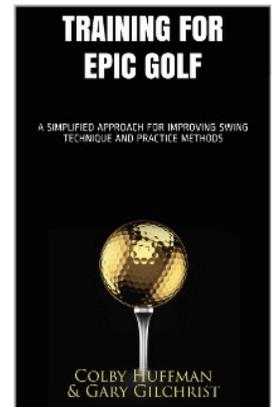
Approximately **80 percent** of golfers play on public courses.

Golf-related spending last year totaled nearly **\$70 billion** in the United States.

Approximately **143,000** charity events, raising **\$3.9 billion**, were held last year with **12 million** participants at **12,700** golf facilities.

## HUFFMAN AND GILCHRIST PUBLISH TRAINING FOR EPIC GOLF

Proponent Group member **Colby Huffman** and **Gary Gilchrist**, coach of the top three ranked women golfers in the world, have launch a new eBook titled *Training for Epic Golf: A Simplified Approach for Improving Swing Technique and Practice Methods*. The new publication climbed to No. 1 on Amazon's Hot New Releases lists in both the Golf and Sport Psychology categories. The book details the research and testing the authors have done over the past 20 years on the concept of training cycles. The text includes information about evaluations, goal-setting, mindsets, tournament planning and much more. Order at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).



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