

COLLABORATE

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SPECIAL REPORT: See Your Teaching Facility through Their Eyes

Do You Provide a Great “Experience”?

By David Gould, Staff Editor

In early 2014 there was a ribbon-cutting for Pebble Beach Resort’s new golf academy, which featured a design that had been discussed in great detail by executives and architects before ground was ever broken. Proponent member Laird Small, the academy’s director of instruction, offered this comment when asked about the finished product:

“We had a lot of different ideas about location and design and configuration, but it really turned out great,” said Small. *“You have to walk through the building to get to the learning areas, so everyone who walks in is greeted properly and made to feel welcome.”*

That’s a very telling statement. Asked about a facility that is loaded with the latest and greatest instruction technology, Small first mentioned a design element that was all about impressions and emotions felt by a golfer as he begins his visit. Laird’s comment is clear evidence that “customer experience” or “customer journey” are anything but throwaway ideas at what is arguably America’s premier golf destination.

At some point in the past five or 10 years, customer journey and customer experience began gaining traction as valuable business jargon. Noting that these terms were “creeping into job descriptions, titles and corporate strategy,” British business consultant Elizabeth Garber defined it as a push is to get customers “to stay with you, return to you and introduce you to everyone they meet.” For dedicated golf coaches—who have poured so much effort and investment into their



Keeping your student’s experience on track can be as difficult as maneuvering a winding roadway, unless you are paying very close attention to all of the critical touch points from initial contact to post-lesson follow-up.

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PROPONENT GROUP NEWS

Study Examines Continuing Education Choices

In recent years we've seen rapid growth in continuing-education opportunities for golf instructors, covering just about every niche in the game. Most – although not all – include an official certification for those who complete the program – an achievement they can promote to students and prospects.

Our members devour teaching-related information at a much higher rate than typical instructors. So, last year we first asked for your opinions on these experiences. We then poured your answers into a chart that represented the first-ever survey of its kind. Below we unveil the results of our second annual certifications survey. We hope the results will help you choose future educational offerings.

In the accompanying chart we listed the programs in order of how many Proponent Group members have attended. The top six most attended are: **TPI, U.S. Kids**

Golf, TrackMan University, AimPoint, Bioswing and Eyeline.

The programs rated highest for having “significantly added to your skill set” were: **Vision54, Fluid Motion Factor, The Golfing Machine, The Plane Truth and AimPoint.**

When asked if the program “somewhat or strongly enhanced their reputation,” the top rated included: **AimPoint, TrackMan, Vision54, The Plane Truth and U.S. Kids Golf.**

Earning the highest marks for “good or outstanding value” were: **Vision54, The Golfing Machine, New Rules Golf Coach, U.S. Kids Golf and Eyeline.**

Don't forget that we list upcoming certification dates for these programs on the members website under the Certification Guide menu and we'll be adding more programs in the coming months as we learn about them.

Golf Instructor Certification Programs Ratings

Certification Program	% of PG Members Certified	Additional % of PG Members Likely to Become Certified	% of Certified Who Said it Significantly Added to Their Skill Set	% of Certified Who Said it Somewhat or Strongly Enhanced Their Reputation	% of Certified Who Said it Was a Good or Outstanding Value
TPI Certified Golf Fitness Instructor Program	59	14	80	83	78
U.S. Kids Golf Certified Instructor Program	33	18	69	84	96
TrackMan University	26	33	79	92	84
AimPoint Technologies	19	28	83	96	83
Bioswing Dynamics	19	16	75	64	90
Eyeline Golf 4 Putting Elements Certification	19	11	40	36	93
K-Vest	18	14	60	71	63
Vision54 Coaching Program	16	31	100	91	100
Stack & Tilt Authorized Instructor Program	9	7	66	69	69
The Golfing Machine	8	8	91	75	100
New Rules Golf Coach Program (Charlie King)	7	7	70	60	100
SPI SeeMore Putters Institute	7	5	36	64	45
Lynn Blake Certified Instructor Training	6	5	56	44	67
Extraordinary Coaching (Fred Shoemaker)	6	11	77	67	89
Nike NG360 Golf Performance Specialist	6	8	56	44	67
The Plane Truth Golf Instruction	6	8	89	89	89
Impact Zone Certification Program	4	6	50	66	50
Fluid Motion Factor	3	15	100	50	75
Katherine Roberts Yoga for Golfers	1	5	N/A	N/A	N/A
Spirit of Golf	1	6	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tathata Golf Certification	1	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
Frank Thomas Certified Putting Instructor	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A

NOTES: **RED** indicates more than 80 percent positive responses. N/A indicates not enough data.

Source: Proponent Group Survey August 2015

Summit 2015

Connecting with the Future of Teaching & Coaching

November 1-3, 2015 (Sunday - Tuesday)
Las Colinas C.C., Irving, Texas

Register Today

Join us for our eighth year showcasing what's coming next in golf instruction and highlighting fresh opportunities to grow your teaching business.

Join Us in Dallas to:

- Learn how "Every Ball Counts" is changing the way golfers practice
- Discover the keys to building a fair compensation package for you and your facility
- Learn new ways to create the ideal training environment for junior golfers' improvement
- Avoid costly customer service mistakes that drive students elsewhere
- Learn how to overcome the three biggest mental issues in golf
- Learn five new industry trends you can leverage
- Check out the latest teaching technologies
- Make new friends and expand your network of peers from across North America



PLUS – New for 2015 – "Building a Top-Tier Teaching Career" A special pre-summit session on Sunday afternoon exclusively for our Associate Members.



Summit 2015 Agenda

Sunday, November 1

- 11:00am Registration Opens
- 1:00pm Optional Golf at Las Colinas C.C.
- 2:00-5:00pm ***NEW*** For Associate Members Only:
Building a Top-tier Teaching Career
- 6:30pm Opening Night Dinner at Las Colinas C.C.

Monday, November 2

- 7:00am Breakfast Buffet
- 8:00 The State of Instruction: 5 Trends to Watch (Lorin Anderson)
- 8:30-10:00 Compensation Consternation: Why it's So Hard to Get Instructors and Facilities to Agree on Pay (Panel Discussion)
- 10:00 Break
- 10:30-11:15 What a Junior Golfer Needs to Evolve as a Player and Person (Iain Highfield)
- 11:15-Noon Turbo-Charge Your Business Through Improved Customer Relationship Management (Jeff Penson)
- Noon Lunch Buffet

- 1:00-3:00pm Every Ball Counts: Merging Elite Coaching with Golf Intelligence (Darren May and Bill Davis)
- 3:00-5:30 Teaching Tech and Training Aids Demo Day
- 5:45pm Cocktails and Dinner at Las Colinas C.C.

Tuesday, November 3

- 7:00am Breakfast Buffet
- 8:15-9:15 Overcoming the Three Biggest Mental Issues in Golf (Dr. Bob Neff)
- 9:15-10:15 Secret Shopper: Customer-Service Mistakes by Coaches and How to Fix Them (Jackie Beck)
- 10:15 Break
- 10:45-11:45 Panel Discussion: How to Engage More Golfers in Instruction
- Noon Lunch Buffet
- 1pm Lessons We Can Learn from Topgolf's Success (David Ogrin)
- 2pm Why So Many Golfers are Scared to Take Lessons and What to Do About It (Chris O'Connell)
- 3pm Summit Ends

Summit 2015 Participant Details

Host Site: Las Colinas C.C. in Irving, TX is located approximately 15 minutes from Dallas-Fort Worth Airport.

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 a summit rate at Aloft - Irving (972-717-6100) for \$149 per night. Aloft will provide shuttle service to and from the Summit. This hotel is within one mile of Las Colinas C.C. Many other hotel chains including Homewood Suites, Omni Mandalay, Hotel

Las Colinas and Dallas Marriott Las Colinas also are located within a few miles of Las Colinas 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: \$495 for our Full and International members. Associate members are welcome to attend for \$545 which includes the new Sunday afternoon session just for associates. NOTE: Optional golf Sunday afternoon at Four Seasons Las Colinas TPC Course is an additional \$50 (tee times are limited and will be filled first-come, first-served).

SPECIAL REPORT: THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Continued from page 1

own knowledge base and teaching skill—the customer-experience challenge can appear somewhat foreign to their core skill set. But that’s a false deduction, especially if your goals extend beyond a busy lesson book and some nice awards to include true business success.

The customer experience is a long, winding chain of separate steps, interactions, “touch points” and transactions. The sheer complexity of it is one reason that business owners of all sorts turn away from the responsibility of analyzing it, investing in it and training staff to be ever aware of it. For many golf instruction specialists, there’s another complication—their own teaching and training center is contained within a full-scale golf facility that is managed by someone else. That means a customer attending a clinic, private lesson, supervised practice or a clubfitting session will most likely take steps along their pathway or journey that the golf operations people have control over.

So, that raises a key question—do instruction customers get what they need and want during that part of their experience? From the parking lot, through the golf shop and on their way to the range, does all go smoothly? In some cases the lesson-taker may be well cared for, in others they may fend for themselves or be made to feel uncomfortable. To some extent the quality of that segment of the golfer’s experience depends on how well coaches, teachers and academy employees interact with the people who run the main golf facility. One thing is certain: If you or your staff has an “us-them” feeling about the golf operations people, it will eventually detract from the experience of your all-important customer.

When on-site experience is monitored and documented, the term “customer corridor” is often used. That refers to the many touchpoints where customers interact with your facilities and service staff, and whether they receive more, less or just what they expect at each. The greet-and-welcome function has thinned out at golf facilities from coast to coast, especially during slow parts of the day or week. Facility managers fighting to keep afloat in the post-2008 period started to take the happy-talk out of customer-experience strategizing. They went by the credo of industry guru Bruce Temkin, whose Temkin Group specializes in customer-experience marketing.

“Promoting customer experience for the sake of customer experience is not a sustainable approach,” Temkin

points out. “You need to make the clear economic case that customer-experience efforts will improve business results. If not, they’ll get displaced by other initiatives that have a clear economic benefit.” So, in staff meetings where you’ve got the whiteboards out and you’re working on customer-experience improvements, remember that a nice idea like fresh cut flowers each morning or balls restacked in pyramids every half-hour is actually a bad idea if you can’t sustain it, or it precludes the possibility of providing clean restrooms, or attending to some other touch-point goal that customers would actually care more about.

Experts in the customer experience would have you break this challenge into an offense-defense or “angel-devil” proposition. Picture a spectrum, with free day care or a complimentary car wash at one end (one Virginia golf complex actually provides the latter) and cracked practice balls or an abusive range attendant at the other. Obviously you would never even discuss an “angel” facet of your operation if one or more experience-ruining “devil” issues had to be dealt with first.

Remember also that some of the worst customer-journey problems are almost invisible, most notably the early-contact issues involving incoming phone calls, incoming emails or attempts by potential customers to navigate your website and use your online booking engine.

Mishaps at this stage can end up making the customer invisible—i.e., they get frustrated and never make it to that first visit.

Meanwhile, you are correct to credit your teaching operation for those customer-journey elements that are most closely connected to actual teaching. For example, the follow-up email that shows a video clip of the golfer’s best swings and includes a set of reminders about upcoming practice or tourney play—those are important and highly valuable “experience” elements. For improvement-obsessed golf instructors, the trick may be to take those pleased, reassured feelings that follow-up messages provide

and simply extend that theme throughout the golfer’s interaction with you and your business operation.

Experts in customer experience like Elizabeth Garber understand that any business has to pick its spots along the customer corridor. That means aligning your efforts with the experience most customers now seek—as best you can determine it. Do golf lesson-takers think digital signage that you can computer-program is helpful and sophisticated, or will they consider it tacky and unsuited to the golf environment? There are plenty of questions like this to sort out one by one.

Most of your touches and comforts are small-scale and subject to review. When you institute one, track it—if it doesn’t boost sales or draw positive comments, re-deploy your resources. Listen to your employees, as well—they’ll have a sense that the latest service efforts on behalf of a better journey are hitting or missing the mark.

SPECIAL REPORT: THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

It's understood by specialists in this field that the customer-experience process is "partly about advocacy," according to Garber. By that she means the conveniences you provide sometimes have to be pointed out to people. That's why, during improvement projects, you no longer see signage that simply asks customers to excuse the facility's appearance while work is ongoing. Instead you see "advocacy" messages like, "Pardon our appearance while we create a completely state-of-the-art, best-in-class, ultra-convenient business center for our hotel guests!!"

Of course, it's a minority of "journey" elements that involve capital expenditures and new installations. Most of your touches and comforts are small-scale and subject to review. When you institute one, track it—if it doesn't boost sales or draw positive comments, re-deploy your resources. Listen to your employees, as well—they'll have a sense that the latest service efforts on behalf of a better journey are hitting or missing the mark.

"Customer experience is about expectations, which tend to shift," says Naomi Karten, who writes and lectures on this topic from her base in Randolph, Massachusetts. "They grow, they shrink, they change shape, they change direction." Obviously, your physical layout is not going to change very easily. At older, tighter facilities, you may as well tout the fact that, while it isn't glitzy, your learning center or range complex doesn't require long hauls from point A to point B.

Remember that part of your customer's experience will involve other customers. That's one reason the dress-code relaxation process golf has been undergoing can have extra meaning to it. If someone wants to play or practice in fashion jeans that come with rips in them, there are golf facilities that will allow it, even though some regulars won't like it much at all. As the director of instruc-



The overall experience you provide your students day-in and day-out determines how they view your teaching business in the critical categories above.

tion, you won't be able to alter experience elements such as that.

At times customers are clearly visible to staff members—they may in fact be closely engaged. At other times, the customer's experience isn't visible to the academy director or any staff members. The No. 1 example of that would be when the customer is using a restroom. That's why retailers and restaurants now post signs saying – Tell us if this men's and women's rooms aren't clean.

Branding and the customer journey intersect.

What does your name, logo and tagline say? Where along the touch points is the brand promise most emphatically kept? Alternatively, where does the real-time experience and the brand promise come into conflict?

Timing means a lot. Do you have a "defector" email as part of your drip? If so, how much time has to go by before the customer gets a friendly note saying "we miss you" or the like? Too soon and you look pushy. Too long a lapse and you seem indifferent. Many experts advise two to five weeks, depending on the normal frequency of use of your facility.

You won't be able to cover every moment and every detail of the journey your customers take. Just keep prioritizing, keep monitoring and make sure you don't slip up on

the basics. Writing a memoir of his decades as a baseball manager, Earl Weaver of the Baltimore Orioles summarized his career in the book's title: "It's What You Learn after You Know it All That Counts." Golfers will look at a brilliant, dedicated golf instructor and feel pretty sure that he or she "knows it all" when it comes to golf swing and golf technique. The little extras that the teacher can learn after that—about running an operation people truly enjoy experiencing—are likely, from a business standpoint, to be the things that really count.

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Planning to Sell to the Regular Golfer

By Ian James,
CEO, RetailTribe

In speaking with PGA professionals I frequently hear it said that “most golfers aren’t interested in improvement.” In order to fill their lesson books, these professionals feel compelled to cast a wide net—marketing well beyond their club’s membership, when that’s permitted.

Only a small percentage of regular golfers say they’ll invest in coaching

Research into the attitude of club members conducted by RetailTribe echoes what professionals have told us. In our 2014 online survey, only 2 percent of club members said they were planning to invest in golf coaching over the next 12 months.

Now, most instructors would pounce on this data point as proof that they need to attract elite golfers, or ‘never-played-golf-before’ customers, from outside the club. Actually, there’s another narrative to consider, one based on the possibility that we’re not selling what the largest segment of our market wants!

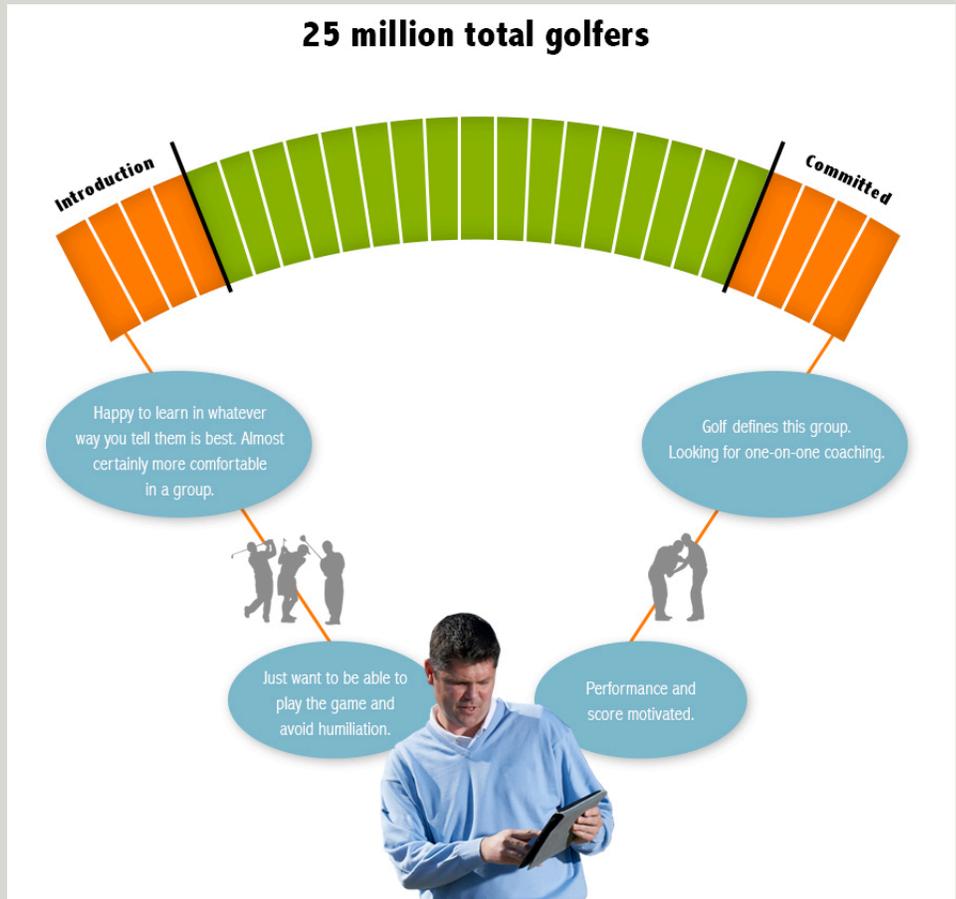
Your proposition talks to learners and the committed

When we look at golf coaches’ marketing it appears that you’re very strong on introduction-to-golf programs. Likewise, you’re doing plenty of one-on-one instruction with the more elite players. Your websites drive this activity. When I click on a teaching professional’s “Rates and Programs” button, I’ll see right away the price of an individual lesson. Under that will be the volume-discount price for a lesson package. Likewise, there are sure to be rates listed for Get Golf Ready and various junior offerings.

On that basis, you’ve got 8 million or so current golfers covered but there’s approximately 17 million who aren’t convinced.

Your offer is not much more than ‘I’m available’

The committed golfers are either performance-obsessed or swing-obsessed. They need you to fulfill objectives they’ve



It's time to look beyond the obvious instruction-oriented segments of “beginners” and “committed.”

more or less defined on their own. Knowing the price of one-on-one instruction works for them.

Your learners have decided to play golf. They know they need an introductory program of some sort. And, whether it’s ‘Get Golf Ready’ or ‘Golf 101’, many of you have created programs that promise to deliver a result. Great products.

But how are those web pages or promotions talking to the 17 million golfers in the recreational and engaged categories? This group clearly has a significant inertia factor when it comes to any sort of investment in improvement, so we need to work hard to attract them.

Your one-on-one lesson packages seems to have a lower appeal to the recreational/engaged golfers than with the committed group. In fact, it’s almost like they have their handicaps, they’ve got their weekly game or league, and they can carry on just fine under those circumstances.

Imagine you’re a 57-year-old-male, who’s played the game for 20-plus years. You hit it 200 yards off the tee, sometimes. Often it’s only about 170 yards and wide on the right. From 40 yards in you’re not confident you’ll get down in 3, let alone

RETAILTRIBE ON MARKETING

manage an up and down. The word 'hazard' doesn't come close to describing how you view a bunker. You write yourself a 92 but in truth you only just broke 100. You've played this way for years and doubt that it will ever change.

With that golfer in mind, peruse your web site. What do have there, by way of inspiration, products, programs or pricing, that could legitimately speak to this player?

With this golfer you need a more structured approach to selling. Before you dismiss the effort required, if a potential market of 17 million golfers wasn't enough, remember there are probably around 40 million golfers who gave up the game because of the struggle. Many would like to play again.

A lesson in selling

You can divide the market of 25 million current golfers into two categories:

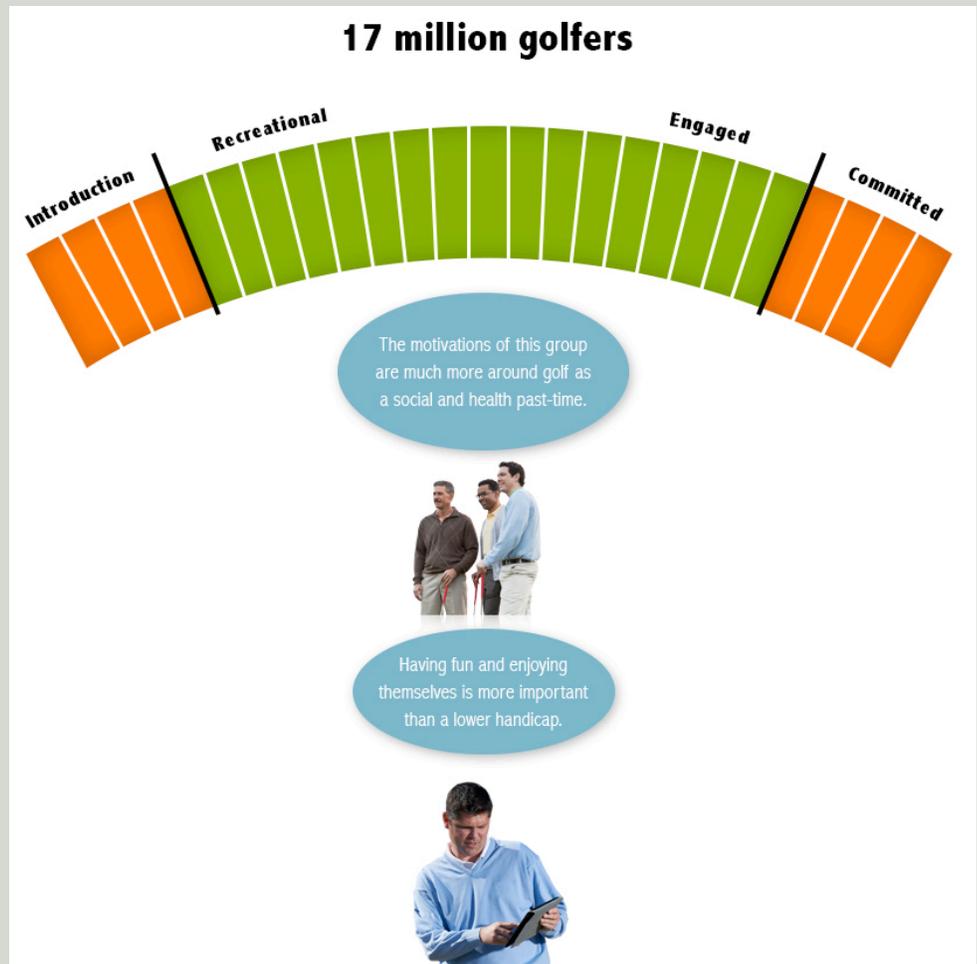
- a) Those who make a decision to buy after identifying a need themselves, and will seek out some person or company to supply it, and
- b) Those who would have more fun if they improved, but haven't articulated that desire or need

The former probably describes our learner and fanatic, while the latter probably describes our 17 million regular recreational and engaged golfers.

If you read most books on how to improve your selling technique, they'll tell you not to dive in and make an offer to your latter group. The selling manual guides the sales person to create a 'call plan' that walks a potential customer through some steps from "didn't even know I wanted a solution" to the point where you can make your offer. Let's think about your version of the 'salesman's' call plan.

We think it's easier than you might imagine, and it involves having fun—something large groups of golfers yearn for. We recommend that, if you're at a golf facility with a large group of recreational and engaged golfers, you should invest time in scheduling and promoting activities that allow golfers to engage with you, in an environment where you can assess their needs and talk to them when they've got a golf club in their hand.

Take the example of Bill Abrams at Balmoral Woods. He scheduled and promoted a short pitching event. It was de-



The largest golf segment wants their golf-related activities to be social and fun.

signed to create fun in 10 minutes for every golfer who participated. It allowed social groups to have their own competition, to laugh with, and poke fun at, each other.

With each individual or group engagement, Bill was looking to move the customer into one of two directions. One was towards an equipment sale. The other was towards the sale of one of a set of short-game coaching programs he had ready.

Best practice selling advice would indicate that you should have intermediate steps available between the event and the sale (clinics, assessments etc). In the engagement with the golfer at the event, you may sense that the golfer is ready to receive a coaching offer. However, in many cases the offer to attend a clinic or an assessment may have a much better chance of success. Remember you're trying to keep as many golfers on your sales pathway as possible.

Why not try this before the season ends? Design each of the components we've shown in the diagram. Decide which components you want to charge for, and what the outcome for the golfer will be, along with the price. (p.s., You need an outcome, even if you're not charging).

RETAILTRIBE ON MARKETING

Schedule and run the ‘fun’ event, but make sure you allow time with each competing golfer to review their game and their opportunity to have more fun. Then, with each golfer during that engagement, make sure you try and move them along to another stage on your pathway.

Keith and Bill have proved this works

Speak to Keith Stewart at Springdale C.C. in Princeton, N.J., and ask him if this works. On one Saturday in July 2015 the number of wedges he sold was a fifth of the total number he sold throughout 2014.

I was hugely impressed with the way that Bill Abrams used analysis with the golfer in his event to allow them to see where they needed improvement. Once Bill had sold them on the need to improve, he could move them to the next stage of the sales process – in his case an assessment or a fitting.

A sales pathway example



Fun events that have an element of instruction let social golfers experience the value of hitting better shots.

And just to highlight the size of the opportunity

If you want to calculate the dollar size of the opportunity you're sitting on, ask any good AimPoint Professional how much money they've generated this year from clinics and programs. I know several who have done over \$50,000, selling improvement in the putting game alone.

Do much less selling in your Marketing



We create Campaigns and Content that inspire golfers to engage with their expert.

For world class marketing designed to drive more customers, contact Rick Williams on 215-622-6324 or rickwilliams@retailtribe.com.

Coaching works

Big reasons to swing on plane



And golfers will buy a whole lot more from you, worrying less about price.

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

It's Time to Improve Your Customer's Experience



Being based in Orlando, it's a common topic of conversation in business circles to discuss Disney's extraordinary success at elevating their customer service to the level of "an experience" In fact, Disney Institute was formed a while back to provide Disney's training methods to any company that wanted to pay for the privilege. It's an inside look at the world-famous systems that prompt most Disney visitors to sing the company's praises and return for more of that magical hospitality.

While we don't yet have a Proponent Institute to come out and train your staff in customer service best practices in person, I wish we did. And perhaps in the not-too-distant future this will be a service we can provide, but for now let's start with an awareness campaign as I truly believe a lot of our members don't even recognize they have customer experience issues... or are simply in denial.

Let me be blunt, many of you do have customer experience issues. Earlier this year we conducted a Secret Shopper study of nearly 50 Proponent Group members' instruction operations. Our Secret Shopper contacted each location by email through their local website and by phone. The results were often disappointing.

While our members generally would score mostly "A's" relative to the rest of the industry as swing technicians and coaches, unfortunately, some of you would score "C's", "D's" and the occasional "F" for your customer's experience.

In a significant number of Secret Shopper visits, the local website would not have a phone number for a potential student to call or there was no Contact Us page. Likewise, pages on the website would be years out of date for program

information or pricing, there was no calendar of upcoming events listed, the person who answered the phone couldn't provide details about specific programs and the list went on. There were even multiple cases where our shopper left email or voicemail requests for more information and either didn't hear back for many days or never heard back at all.

These sorts of inquiries are called "hot leads". They are the easiest sales in business. To mess up hot leads is small-business suicide.

Proponent Group wants to elevate all of our members to running their businesses with the same expertise you have mastered for the technical aspects of the golf swing. One of our next steps will be to have Jackie Beck, of Beck Communications in Connecticut, who conducted the Secret Shopper study for us, present during the upcoming Proponent Group Summit. She will provide more details from the study along with ways all of our members can do a better job with customer service issues and in turn increase your business.

You should also pay close attention to the Customer Journey Special Report article starting on the front page of this newsletter. Understanding all of the touch points your teaching business has with students and potential students will open your eyes to the fact that there are many places along that pathway where you may need to shore up your protocols and standards.

Now a lot of small business owners when asked will say their customers love their products and almost always say great things about their business. That is likely true of the people speaking directly to the owner. What you don't know is how many people silently left after a lesson or two or never even visited your facility because they didn't get the basic, timely information they were looking for from your business.

Proponent Group Partners



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Data delivered in its purest form. Every time. On every shot.

What I've Learned: Kevin Rhoads

The Country Club, Brookline, Massachusetts

Interview by Paul Ramee, Jr.



Driving past Francis Ouimet's childhood home and easing his way onto the ancient grounds of The Country Club, or walking through the main gates of Harvard Yard in his role as varsity golf coach there, Kevin Rhoads demonstrates he is a Californian unfazed by New England's most revered institutions.

But Kevin is a bit of a legacy, himself—son of Rick Rhoads, tour player turned lifelong head professional at the esteemed San Francisco (Calif.) Golf Club. This is Kevin's 13th season as director of instruction at TCC and also his 13th year coaching Harvard's women's golf team—Rhoads took over the men's team as well, in 2012.

He was named the New England PGA Teacher of the Year in 2008 and again in 2013. In October of 2010, Kevin was recognized by Golf Digest as one of the nation's Top 20 teachers under 40 years old. Under his watch, Harvard's women have won a combined 40 tournaments, which is 35 more than they had won in all the years before he became coach. On the men's side, Harvard placed third at the Ivy League Championships in both 2014 and 2015—that's the program's highest placement at the Ivies since 1996.

Before joining the staff at The Country Club, Rhoads was a staff instructor at the PGA Learning Center in Port St. Lucie, Fla., from 2001-03. He played collegiately for two years at UCLA, where he walked on as a junior and earned honorable mention All-Pac 10 accolades as a senior. He went on to a three-year professional playing career in which he competed on the Canadian PGA tour, the Golden Bear Tour and others. Rhoads attended PGA Tour qualifying school three times and advanced to the second stage twice. He took some time recently with his Proponent Group colleague Paul Ramee to explain the golf coaching experience from his unique perspective.

Kevin, could you give us a little insight into your background and how you got into the game and the business?

As some people may know, my father, Rick Rhoads, is a PGA golf professional. He is the longtime head professional at San Francisco Golf Club. So longtime, actually, that it's the only head professional job my father has ever had. He did play on the PGA Tour for seven years, prior to club work. As a dad, he never forced the game on us. He would encourage us and support us when we played.

You grew up in an interesting place, at an interesting time wouldn't you say?

I do remember my father playing in the "Crosby," the famous West Coast pro-am, when we were young. Bing Crosby was a member at SFGC and we would always take school off the week of the Crosby and travel to Pebble Beach as a family. I thought it was a really attractive environment. At that point in my life, I thought my father's experience in the golf profession was just normal, typical.

Over time, it must have dawned on you how unique a job he had.

In general, all the associations I had with golf and my father's position added up to a strongly positive association with the golf business, I never really asked why Dad wasn't at home, due to the long hours he worked.



Rhoads was recognized by Golf Digest as one of the nation's Top 20 teachers under 40 years old in 2010.

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Talk about your own entry into the industry.

I started to compete later than most. It was not until the middle of high school that I got somewhat serious. I felt like I knew a little bit about playing golf, but it took a while—it took until my third year to walk on at UCLA and not until my fourth year to get good results. After college, I stayed an amateur for a couple of years and then played professionally for several seasons.

What came after that?

After I stopped playing I thought about what I wanted to do and the idea of “making someone better” was very appealing, so I began my pursuit of a golf teaching career. I started my apprenticeship working for Rick Martino at the PGA Golf Club in Port St. Lucie and it was really amazing to interact with the people who came through the doors to see Rick. I was with him for a year and a half and then I was extremely fortunate to be contacted by Brendan Walsh and offered the teaching professional position at The Country Club, in Brookline.

Was there a defining moment when you said playing is not working out and it was time to pursue another career?

I was getting better every year and I asked myself, “do I keep pursuing this?” I suppose if I had unlimited funds I probably would have stayed with it longer, but I really had to ask myself if playing continued to make sense. When I turned to instruction one thing that I had to keep in mind was that not all professional players make great teachers, due to the fact that you need to be somewhat selfish to get to a high playing level. So I really tried to rely on cues from my father on how he treated people, and his selfless attitude.

With a father who is a renowned head professional and two brothers who work on the golf operations side of the business, does it surprise you in hindsight that you took to the instruction side?

Not really, my father provided a very high level of instruction at SFGC and teaching people is the side that appealed to me the most.

Could you pass along some secrets to your longevity at one club? What is the key to keeping the membership happy?

My father has been my biggest influence by the example he set, how he treats people and the fact that he never forgets that he is there to help the membership. The people are the priority. Brendan Walsh is very much the same way. He has one thought uppermost in mind: “What is best for the members and the facility” Easy to say, though not so easy to do, day in and day out.

How did you get into college coaching?

It was always in the back of my mind as something that would appeal to me. I thoroughly enjoyed my college playing experience. I like dealing with that age group, it is a great intersection of individuals with a pretty soundly developed skill set, but they still have room to grow as players and as people. Actually it was Brendan who came to me and told me he had been approached by Harvard to see if I had any interest in coaching women's golf. I asked him what he thought and told him that my first priority was

to the club, but that I did have interest and if he and the club were supportive I would love to pursue it.

What is your feeling now, regarding that turn in your career path?

The main thing to say was that I was able to go over to Harvard and achieve success with the women's golf team—and now at this point I'm coaching both men and women. Their tournaments happen during the club's shoulder seasons, and the autumn season is tougher than the spring, but we have been able to make it work. The Ivy League limits the days that student-athletes can be off campus, so that does make it easier.

How about summer recruiting? Do you have to attend AJGA events to see potential prospects?

We have a phenomenal setup at Harvard. We have a Director of Golf who handles much of the recruiting, fundraising and admin, so I do less of that and can focus more on coaching. From a recruiting standpoint we have certain benchmarks that really vet the players. Obviously at Harvard, grades will rule out a certain percentage of applicants first, golf and personal characteristics are also important, but the process's high benchmarks reduces the pool for us and makes it easier on the recruiting side.

What are the best and worst parts of coaching at the college level?

Some of the highlights include working with super-bright, very talented, highly motivated, hardworking kids. They fall into a spe-



“I think younger instructors are as knowledgeable as anyone about technology but they need to continue to learn how to engage with people... As Butch Harmon famously said, “I don't teach golf, I teach people to play golf.”

- Kevin Rhoads

cific profile of kids that are motivated and stay on the straight and narrow. We don't have a lot of issues with grades and other problems. Our players don't have time for distractions that get in the way of school or golf. As I said earlier, the age group is really awesome, the level of refinement is enjoyable, but the fact that we can still develop certain aspects of their skills is very gratifying.

What would you say are the challenges?

I'd answer that by saying that the challenges stem from the same qualities that make these kids successful. They truly want to succeed, but we have a finite amount of time to accomplish our goals while trying to balance school and golf. Therefore, our reps are reduced, which makes for a fun challenge. With school as the number one priority, it makes it very difficult to find practice time.

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Does coaching both the men's and women's teams allow you to see differences in how you work with men versus women to get the most out of their games?

Yes, but not in the ways I thought it would. I coached the girls first and then picked up the boys team later. I might have thought that the girls would be more emotional, but that is not the case. Each individual is different and has different emotional aspects. I think back to Pia and Lynn and what they say about the garden—how each plant or vegetable in the garden has its own unique needs.

What do you perceive to be the benefits of an instructor being the head coach of a college program and do you think it could be the new model with individuals such as yourself and Mike Small at Illinois?

I actually do not require my players to have me as their primary skill coach. All I ask is that they are organized with respect to what they are working on and I will certainly offer input if I think it is needed. I do however get to observe them in practice and competition and can cross-reference with them on what they are working on and how it may change during competition. We discuss their "competition tendencies" and work on their mental preparation and their process.

Have you ever thought about opening your own academy or do you plan to stay on the club side for the long haul?

As most of us are wont to do, I analyze my fit with my current employer and what my long-term options seem to be. But I am extremely lucky to work in a supportive culture with great members and a great employer. Geography may be the only thing that would ever pique my interest, given that my wife and I are both from San Francisco. But I don't think there is a job out there that could fulfill and challenge me any more than what I am currently doing.

What books are currently on your nightstand?

I am currently reading books that pertain to "mindset," in particular books by the authors Angela Duckworth and Carol Dweck. Angela has written "The Key to Success? Grit" and Carol has written two books titled "Mindset." They are great books for help-



Under Rhoad's watch, Harvard's women have won a combined 40 tournaments, which is 35 more than they had won in all the years before he became coach.

ing realize potential.

How about social media?

It is an area where I may have an opportunity, but as you can imagine, The Country Club does not encourage it. However, with the Harvard golf teams there may be an opportunity. Something that I am using is Edufii, with two teams going in two different directions the ability to communicate and see what is occurring through Edufii has been very helpful.

Given your background as the son of an old-school golf professional, do you think you bring any skepticism to the question of teaching technology and what it can offer?

I believe in the idea of "Everything in its place." In that spirit, I would be quick to say that technology is very effective at cleaning some things up. We have to understand it and translate it to make it effective. My father taught me to come at things with this

question: "How do the elements add up to a functional system?" You look at players like Trevino, Player or Weiskopf and you need to understand how the elements come together to form the whole. With our students, we need to understand which elements aren't related to the functional system, and how it affects the whole. Once we gather all that information, we need to understand what is unrelated and what we can take action on to help the player.

What are you doing with the teams to keep them sharp during the long New England winters, such as we had last year?

Our season ends in early November and starts again the first of February. In between those dates and winter break we are limited in how much we can practice. We ramp up our conditioning in the off-season and the teams are very self-motivated to practice on their own when they can. When we get back to it in February we will typically work indoors until mid-March and we make technique a focus. This is the time to make changes and work on the fundamentals.

Where should young instructors be spending their time to develop their skills?

I think our younger instructors are as knowledgeable as anyone about technology but they need to continue to learn how to engage with people. They need to connect with them with respect to what the students need, so they can work towards the players' personal goals. As Butch Harmon famously said, "I don't teach golf, I teach people to play golf."

JUNIOR GOLF

Kids, Fitness, Fun, Skills—Then Golf

Isler Opens a Different Sort of Gateway for Juniors

By David Gould, Staff Editor

Jeff Isler seems to have come up with a good definition of “sanity.” He’s doing something differently than most instructors have done it in the past—and getting a better result.

We’re talking about group teaching of grade-school children who are fairly new to golf. In late June, Isler opened his Junior Athletic Golf Academy (JAGA) northwest of Dallas to a rousing reception. The new 4,500-square-foot training center—climate-controlled and stocked with state-of-the-art gear—serves golfers age 5 to 12 with a novel approach. They gather in groups of 10 with a head coach plus an assistant for 90 minutes of weekly athletic fun and challenge, plus some golf technique sprinkled in. The students advance along a color-coded, level-by-level path of progress, similar to youth martial arts instruction with its colored belts.

Underlying the JAGA’s design is an understanding that golf is a “late-specialization sport,” or at least it should be. By this Isler and others mean juniors must develop physically and athletically through varied sports activity before they turn to golf as any kind of full-time pursuit.

The “Golf Fun Zone” is what Jeff and his crew informally call their JAGA. The term represents a seamless convergence of facility design, development concept and day-in, day-out programming. Enrollment ramped up quickly with an original 20 or so students in July. That number increased to 30 a month later and the projection is for some 50 kids to be active in the JAGA program by the time the Proponent Group



An optimal learning environment for kids was the goal when designing JAGA. It’s been a hit since opening day.

Summit convenes down the road from this new academy on Nov. 1.

Research supports the premise that golf ought to remain just one facet of the pre-teen and early-teen athlete’s regimen. To some that may seem paradoxical at first—after all, wouldn’t constant training, begun early, produce mastery of a sport or activity? Not if fatigue and breakdown set in—which recent studies insist it will, and does. The problem is a lack of foundational fitness for athletic movement. There’s also a burnout factor partly based on golf’s solitary nature, which doesn’t mesh well with the pre-teen instinct toward having fun with peers.

To develop the JAGA facility successfully, Isler needed a curriculum that made sense—one that overcame his long-held belief that group teaching of young golfers was ineffective. “That

image of 10 fifth-graders strung along a practice tee in the hot sun with piles of balls to hit, working on grip and posture and alignment, never seemed right to me,” he says, calling this an approach that “doesn’t help the kids and doesn’t help the game of golf.” What he decided was that indoctrinating kids that age as potential golfers meant creating a way for them to

build an athletic foundation, which is what JAGA is all about.

For starters, in the age of video games and helicopter parents, you can’t assume that physical development occurs the way it did a generation or two ago. “Take a group of second-graders and test them for movement skills or game skills that you think would be universal at that age,” Isler suggests. “You’ll be surprised to find out that many of them can’t skip. Others can’t throw a tennis ball. You



There is little to no downtime during a typical JAGA session.

BUSINESS PRACTICES

really can't assume anything."

Taking some cues from TPI's recent junior training innovations, Isler and his daughter, Proponent Associate member Kaylin Skovron, studied and planned for two years before developing the master curriculum and binders full of "lesson plans" that guide his new junior academy's programming. It's very station-based, progressing through movement, balance, agility, coordination and other foundational skills. The blood gets pumping and the pace stays quick, broken up by brief breaks for water and perhaps an engaging short video on golf technique, then it's back out to the stations.

"Those 90 minutes fly by," says Isler. "If the flow stops, or dead time sets in, this kind of program doesn't work. The kids sense that you don't really have a plan and they become difficult to control." One golf-skill station that the youngsters enjoy is a simple putting competition with two competing teams lined up 20 feet across from each other with a white line halfway between them. The object is to roll putts so that they come to rest as close as possible to the line. "It's putting, which is usually a pretty calm activity, but the kids are screaming the whole time for their teammates to score points," says Isler.

Along with developing a model of physical training, Isler wanted and needed to hit upon a business model that would create a path to growth. "There are only so many elite juniors trying to compete in AJGA tournaments, and our academy certainly had more than our share of local kids like that," he says. "I took note when their parents would tell me we were doing great work with their 13-year-old, but did we have any opportunities for the 7-year-old sibling?"

For \$199 a month, plus some optional upgrades, the JAGA student receives one afternoon a week of varied training and competition that includes golf but doesn't put it front and center.

This will sound like heresy, but you really don't need much golf expertise to operate a program like Isler's new JAGA. And yet, only a prominent golf instruction group like Isler's could



An airy, colorful interior at JAGA is designed for maximum functionality.

make it happen, for several reasons. The basic reason is that no other sport has the professional coaching and teaching infrastructure that golf has, with the possible exception of tennis. Furthermore, the parents who send their 5-to-12-year-old kids into the "Golf Fun Zone" once a week know that elite junior training is available from the same source at such time that their child might be ready for it.

That's how golf can "get away" with running a junior activity program that is very light on the technique side of its own proprietary sport, and be successful with it. One additional reason is golf's legacy of courteous, ethical, respectful behavior. "We make respect for

each other and respect for the coaches a requirement," Isler says. Again, when life-lesson material like that comes in the flow of a fun, camaraderie-building experience it goes down easier, the coaches would tell you.

It's early in what appears to be a new era of golf instruction for pre-teens, with athletics and fun at its core. The version of that new approach found in Jeff Isler's "Golf Fun Zone" will yield highly valuable feedback, as the teaching model—and the business model—come in for further refinement.

Summit Goers Invited to JAGA

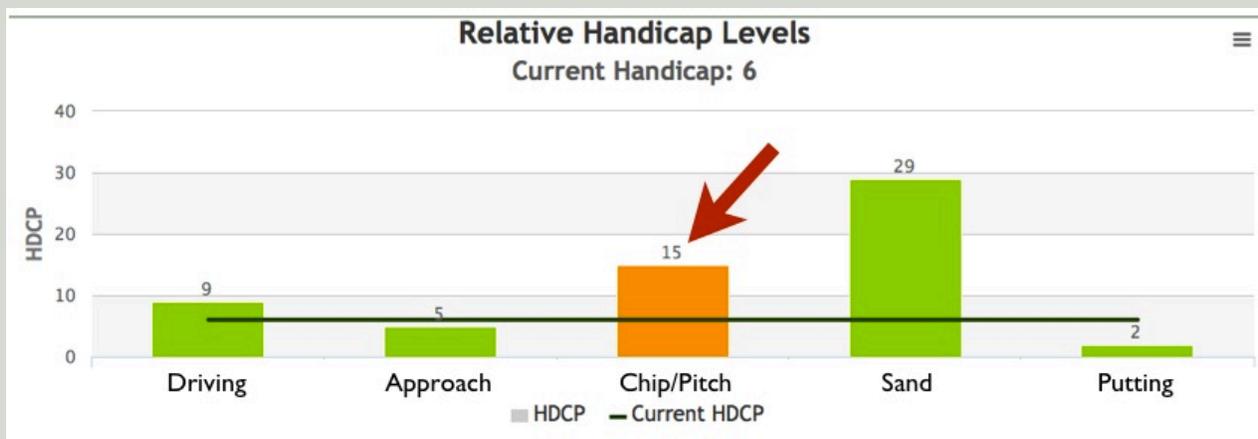


While attending the Proponent Group Summit Nov. 1 – 3 at Las Colinas Country Club you'll have the opportunity to visit the Junior Athletic Golf Academy as a guest of fellow Proponent Group member Jeff Isler, its founder and owner. Jeff is making time available before, during and after the Summit for interested attendees. To visit, contact Jeff at jeff@jeffislergolf.com or 817-789-3382

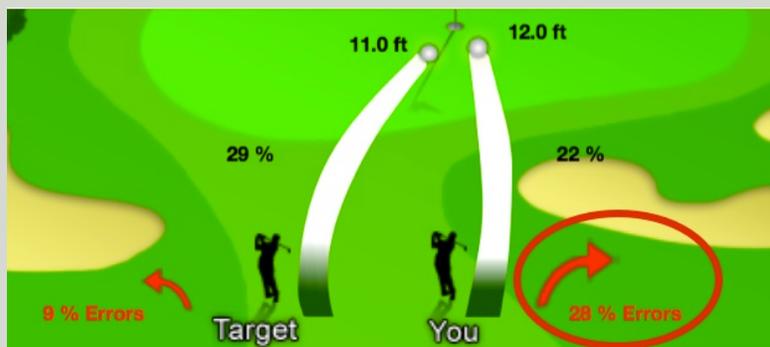
ShotByShot.com Update: Strokes Gained is In

- The program was completely converted to Strokes Gained analysis in May.
- ShotByShot.com is the only place where non-touring professionals can go for this unique analysis.
- 150+ Instructors/coaches now build and monitor groups of students.

Understand exactly where your instruction will do the most good. Our Strokes Gained analysis clearly identifies your player's #1 improvement priority. In the example below, the player's short game (Chip/Pitch shots) is costing the most strokes each round when compared to their Target Handicap profile.



Our detailed comparative data focuses on exactly what about the skill needs the most work. For example, for the player below, eliminating ERRORS will lead to the most improvement in the short game.



- We updated our Player Ranking Report.
- Group Leaders can get email notifications when players enter new rounds.

For more information, call 203-968-1608 or email psanders@shotbyshot.com.

*** Don't forget to ask about the Proponent Group member discount. ***

MEMBER MILESTONES

Please Welcome Proponent Group's New Members for August 2015

Troy Denton, Stevens Park Golf Course, Dallas, TX - Full Member

Dean Kandle, St. Davids Golf Club, Wayne, PA - Full Member

Michael Kelemen, Westchester Country Club, Rye, NY - Associate Member

Sean Lanyi, Black Gold Golf Club, Yorba Linda, CA - Full Member

Jamie McConnell, Butch Harmon School of Golf Dubai, Sports City, Dubai - International Member

Mike McGetrick, Mike McGetrick Golf Academy, Humble, TX - Full Member

Arturo Manuel Garcia Rosa, Vision Golf, Buenos Aires, Argentina - International Member

Chris Rowe, Whispering Pines Golf Club, Trinity, TX - Full Member

Martin du Toit, Eagle Canyon Golf Estate, Johannesburg, South Africa - International Member

Golf Channel Academy Launches New Golf Instruction Magazine

Golf Channel Academy Magazine has launched. It is the world's first digital all-golf-instruction magazine. Get your free trial subscription at golfchannelacademy.com.

Golf Channel Academy Magazine will be published monthly this year and will increase to 20 times annually beginning in 2016.



The Job Cycle: How Proponent Prepares You for Your Next Position

At any given time, about a quarter of Proponent members are actively considering a new position. We know that the instructor job market is tight and that there is a lot of competition every time a quality position becomes open. This is why we have created a suite of tools to help you stand out when it's time for you to pursue the next rung on your career ladder. Whenever you are in the job market, take advantage of our unique templates and information.

All of these documents may be downloaded on the members website under The Job Cycle menu.

Instructor Resume Evaluation

Our template and guide may be utilized to evaluate or develop your professional career readiness for the next level. It will help you to determine if your resume incorporates the necessary information in each area of administering a high quality teaching operation. We have consulted with many golf clubs in the selection process of their Directors of Instruction. This experience provides us with a unique perspective on writing an effective resume that will present your skills in the best possible manner.

Instructor Guide to Cover Letters

This guide shows you the steps for taking a blank sheet of paper and transforming it into a persuasive, attention-getting cover letter by walking you through critical issues including: The five basics of letter writing, doing your due diligence on the open position, pacing the letter and creating the proper voice.

Instructor Interview Preparation Guide

This guide will help you present your best self the next time you have an opportunity to be interviewed. We've included a list of questions that our Proponent Members who do lots of hiring tell us they use during interviews. So, remember: Prepare well and you will perform well. Follow the step-by-step plan in this unique guide and you'll ace your next interview.

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