

Proponent Group

The Premier Network of Golf Instructors

PROONENT GROUP NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2016

BUSINESS GUIDE UPDATES:

TEACHING BUILDING SURVEY NOW COMPLETELY UPDATED

One of our most popular Business Guides – **Teaching Building Survey Results** – has been completely updated and is now available in the Business Guides section of the members' website.

This guide includes input from nearly 50 of our members who teach in an all-weather building as part of the practice complex at a club or range. Over the past year we've seen an uptick in interest from members and facilities currently looking to add a new teaching building. That prompted us to refresh our data so as to give you the most complete and up-to-date information available anywhere on this subject.

A few of the highlights from the new survey include:

Average size of the buildings included in this survey was **2,458** square feet of heated and cooled space with an average construction cost of **\$442,000**.

Two-thirds of respondents reported at least a **20 percent** increase in facility lesson and clubfitting revenues during the first two years following the addition of a teaching building while one in five saw more than a **50 percent** increase.

Teaching buildings are heavily marketed as a significant amenity to potential members at **85 percent** of facilities.

More than four out of five respondents (**82 percent**) said the general reception from their membership was that the addition of a teaching building was a "very positive addition." There were zero reports of a negative reaction to the addition of a teaching building.

The guide is chock full of additional insights and ideas. It is a must-read before anyone starts planning and building an all-weather teaching facility.

The companion to the updated guide is our Learning Center Photo Gallery which always can be found at www.flickr.com/golfbusinessnetwork and includes 400-plus pictures of teaching buildings from around the world. **PG**



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FULL SUMMIT 2016 LINE-UP

Below is the schedule for Proponent Group's 2016 Summit, which takes place Oct. 23-25 at Talking Stick Resort in Scottsdale, AZ. More details can be found on pages 6-7 of this newsletter. Note: Schedule subject to change.

Sunday, October 23rd

- 11am Registration Opens at Talking Stick Resort hotel
 1pm Optional Golf at Talking Stick G.C.
 2-4:30pm Associate Members Only Session:
 Building a Top-Shelf Teaching Career (Speakers will include:
Devan Bonebrake, Bernie Najjar and Sandy LaBauve)
 6:30-8:30pm Welcome Dinner at TopGolf Scottsdale

Monday, October 24th

- 6-7am Optional Yoga for Golfers with **Katherine Roberts**
 7-8am Breakfast
 8am Welcome/The State of Instruction (**Lorin Anderson**)
 8:15am Partner Presentation
 8:30am Teaching Today: Are You Prepared to be Your Best Coach?
 (**Mike Malizia**)
 9:30am The Pathway to Creating Life-Long Golfers and How You Can
 Create it (**Ian James**)
 10:30am Break
 10:45am Partner Presentation
 11am The Human Skills of the Game (**Pia Nilsson and Lynn Marriott**)
 Noon Lunch
 1pm The Human Skills of the Game - Outdoor Session
 (**Pia Nilsson and Lynn Marriott**)
 1:45pm Tempo (**Michael Boyko**)
 2:45 The Professional's Guide to Taking Great Photos and Videos
 (**Scott Miller and Dave Allen**)
 3:15pm Partner Presentation
 3:30 Teaching Technology and Training Aids Demo Day
 5:45pm Dinner at Talking Stick Golf Club

Tuesday, October 25th

- 7am Breakfast
 8am Partner Presentation
 8:15am Golf Instructor's Guide to Managing Your Personal Finances
 (**Brad East**)
 9:15am Secrets to Creating Long-Term Students: Pricing,
 Programming and Measurable Improvement (**Jeff Penson**)
 9:45am Partner Presentation
 10am Break
 10:30am Panel Discussion: Clubfitting: The Performance Triangle: The
 Club, The Swing Motion and Ball Flight
 11:30am Lunch
 12:30pm Better Golf From the Ground Up (**Bernie Najjar**)
 1:30-3pm Tathata Golf Movement Training: A Revolution in Golf
 Instruction (**Bryan Hepler**) **PG**

DEMO DAY WILL BE LARGEST EVER AT A PROPONENT SUMMIT

MORE THAN TWO DOZEN COMPANIES TO PARTICIPATE IN SCOTTSDALE

One of the most valuable portions of every Proponent Summit is our Monday afternoon Teaching Technology and Training Aids Demo Day where participants get to "kick the tires" on new products from the major companies supporting golf instructors.

This year we expect more than two dozen companies to be on site in Scottsdale. Another great reason you should attend the Summit.

Companies expected to participate include:

- 3ACT Slide
- BioMech Golf Equipment
- Blast Motion
- Bobby Jones
- Epec Golf
- Eyeline
- Fuzion Dyn-A-Line
- Game Golf
- High Level Processing
- Ben Hogan Golf
- Imavex
- International Clubmakers Guild
- JR Mats
- K-Motion (K-Vest)
- Mental Golf Profile
- Opti-International
- Orange Whip
- Par Bar
- Retailribe
- Saber Golf
- Shot-by-Shot
- Swing Catalyst
- Swing Coach
- TrackMan
- USchedule

IMPORTANT MEMO to Proponent Group Members:

COMPLIANCE WITH CHANGING WAGE AND HOUR RULES

by David Gould, Staff Editor

(NOTE: This is the same memo all Proponent members were sent last week. We are reprinting it in case you missed the original email on August 31st.)

Employers are avoiding payment of overtime wages to workers who have rightly earned them, according to federal auditors. Employees who ought to be in line for time-and-a-half have found their way into the “exempt” (from overtime) category, say officials, carrying a “manager” job title while receiving notably low per-hour compensation.

The Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor has addressed this with changes to its overtime-pay standards. Through these changes, it expects to increase the pay of approximately 4.2 million American workers.

There are only a few revisions that will go into effect (starting Dec. 1 of this year) as a result of the DOL’s actions, but at least one of them is quite significant and could impact a fair number of Proponent Group members who are employees.

NOTE: These rule changes DO NOT affect instructors who are properly classified as Independent Contractors.

From the member comments and questions submitted to Proponent headquarters, it seems clear that moving out of the exempt-from-overtime classification—the benefit the government is trying to provide—is not what’s desired.

Quite the opposite: Proponent members and the clubs or courses that employ them (mainly under the Director of Instruction or Teaching Professional titles) want to keep things as they are—some salary paid in many cases, but the lion’s share of annual compensation coming via lesson revenues. Meanwhile there are supervisory duties to handle but still plenty of time to simply teach.

Currently, you can fit into that comfort zone by drawing an annual salary of just \$23,816, or \$455 a week. After Dec. 1, unless something unexpected happens, your employer will need to basically double that salary money, to \$47,476 a year, equal to \$913 a

week. At your local fast-food franchise, there will be employees with “manager” titles and salaries in the \$30,000s who will no longer work 50-plus hours a week without increased compensation—that’s the DOL’s goal and expectation.

But salaried golf instructors who have spoken up are generally wanting to avoid having their employers experience sticker-shock on salary payments. The likely result would be a much bigger cut of lesson revenues for the club to offset the necessary salary bump.

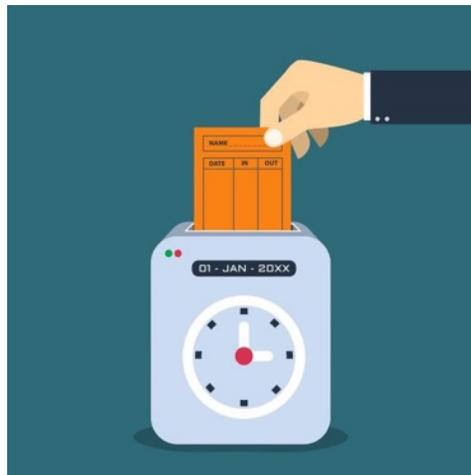
One way to avoid having that happen is to switch from compensation on a salary-plus-lesson-revenue basis to an hourly-wage-plus-lesson-revenue basis. In that case, the D of I would indeed get paid overtime for his or her 41st hour of the week, and everything beyond it. The time clock, and the card in the metal rack with that D of I’s name on it, would become part of the work routine.

Any member who is working with their club’s HR department to find a workaround should learn more about the “cost-neutral”

formula for switching a salaried person who works 40-plus hours to a by-the-hour wage-earner who works 40-plus hours. This equation lowers the base per-hour pay and uses the time-and-a-half dollars to get the weekly pay back to where it was before all these rule changes. One catch: Base pay can’t drop so low that it falls short of federal and state minimum-wage rules.

The workaround that seems most feasible—in cases where the gross lesson revenue has been comfortably over \$50,000, is to go ahead and up the salary to \$47,476. If the old salary had been \$30,000, the club will now want to be made whole on the \$17,476 the DOL has mandated. To do that, the percentage of lesson money that had previously gone to the club must be increased. If it had been 15 percent, it might be raised to 40 percent—until those extra 25 percentage points have yielded a sum total of \$17,476 to the club. At that point, the club’s revenue share can drop back to 15 percent. Under this scenario neither the instructor nor the club is

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penalized by the new rule.

One potential problem: If that program goes into effect and the D of I gets injured or contracts an illness early in the season, preventing all work activity for several peak-season months, the club is stuck having to pay the \$17,476 (on top of the original \$30,000) and likely won't get it all back that year.

Important: If you and the club that employs you are taking the trouble to comply with the compensation aspect of the rule, take a moment to assess your compliance with the "duties test." The duties test for exempt status is not being changed, which does help simplify matters, but you may not have been on the correct side of that test previously, and simply didn't realize it. Here is how the Department of Labor explains the "duties test."

- Primary duty must be management of enterprise, or customarily recognized department or subdivision of the enterprise.

- Must regularly direct the work of at least two full-time employees.
- Must have the authority to hire or fire, or provide suggestions and recommendations as to hiring, firing, promotion, etc. with those suggestions given particular weight.

Change is in the air, as federal regulators attempt to institute pro-worker reforms. Proponent Group members who are not independent contractors are faced with the need to analyze their situations, communicate with HR managers at their place of business and come up with a mutually satisfactory solution that maintains customary compensation and complies with government regulation.

If you are classified as an employee, Proponent Group strongly suggests that you discuss your specific situation with your CPA. He or she can help ensure that your overall compensation and business interests are being protected and are being properly adjusted for the new rules, with the goal of avoiding any reduction to your overall compensation.

Member-Designed Product Launches

SKILL IGNITE OFFERS NEW GAMIFIED SKILL TRAINING PLATFORM

Proponent Group members **Mike Bury** and **Cameron McCormick** have just launched the beta version of their new gamified skill training platform with the motto: "Test. Measure. Train." Their goal is to connect coaches to athletes' training.

The co-founders have spent a couple of years putting the software together as an extension of the training programs they have manually created for their students in the past.

"When it comes to training, an athlete has their 'medicine' and their 'vitamins,'" explains McCormick. "Vitamins are things you will need every day no matter what. Skill Ignite provides essential 'vitamin' skill training."



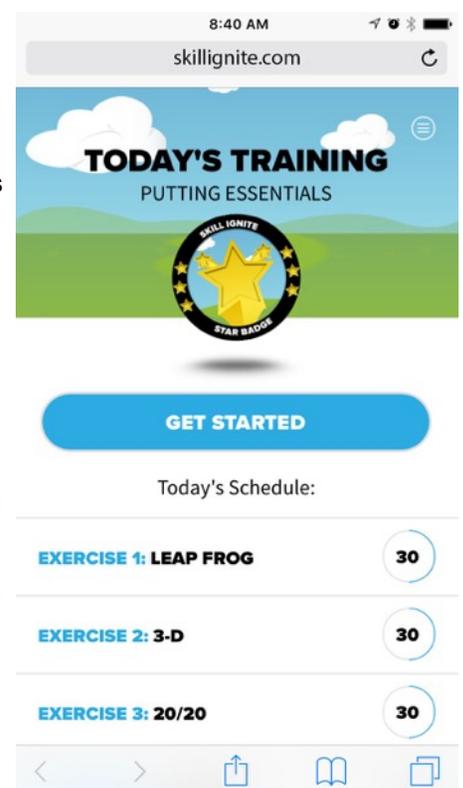
The platform's main features include Challenges (skill tests), Training (gamified skill training) and Training Programs (combined essential skill-training exercises). Instructors can use the pre-built training programs to create structured training sessions. An automated email with Today's Training details is sent to all relevant athletes and staff at the scheduled time.

Additional features to be added soon include Profiles for the coach, athlete and parent, a Skill Index calculation measuring various parts of the game and

native app development for both Android and iOS mobile devices.

The SMU Men's Golf Team is one of the early adopters along with several high school teams in Texas.

The website is skillignite.com and Proponent Group members who sign up for one-year a VIP Premium subscription before the end of October will receive 50 percent off the annual upfront cost.



USING INSTAGRAM TO MARKET YOUR PERSONAL TEACHING BUSINESS

By **Jeff Penson**, Golf Channel Academy Marketing Operations Manager

Over the past few months, we have received a number of questions and requests regarding the social media platform Instagram and strategies used to turn traffic into business. Below are some quick tips and creative strategies that you can employ to start building a larger following and start making the most of your social media efforts.

If you don't have an Instagram account or simply don't know where to start, we have created an "Instagram 101" cheat sheet for Proponent Group members keying on three basic, but critical, steps you should take when using Instagram.

1. Hashtags – The way people find you and your account on social media is through hashtags (#). This is a way of tagging or classifying your posts so that people can search for specific topics and find posts that they are interested in. Many of you post great Instagram photos but don't use any hashtags so not many people can find you!

Examples of some of the more popular and applicable hashtags you should be using are:

#golf #pga #golflife
#golfinstruction #instagolf
#golfsbag #nike #Taylormade
#livingthegreen #(Your course name) #(Your academy name)

This is a fun time to experiment and take advantage of current trending events such as the Ryder Cup and other big tournaments/events. A good tip is to follow successful Instagramers and see what hashtags and topics they are talking about, then replicate that (because you know it works!)

2. Be interactive – Where many people fall short with social media is in thinking of it as advertisement or one-way communication, rather than as a

call to action seeking a response. The key is to interact with people and get them interested in your academy and what you have to offer.

A cool technique for proactively tracking down potential students in your area is by searching on Instagram for people who have tagged their photos at your course or neighboring courses and then writing a comment on their post such as "nice shot!" or "great picture!" If they make a post about how terrible they are in the sand and the picture is them in a bunker – post a comment that says, "We can have you mastering sand shots in one afternoon" or something similar.

Remember, social media is all about making connections with the people most likely to want your services.

3. Content creation may be easier than you think – Often instructors complain about not having time to crank out a ton of content for social media, but the fact is that it may be easier than you think. Instagram is great because the bulk of the content is photos and can be videos (even better for golf instructors!) With that being said, every post doesn't have to be an amazing video tip or epic golf hole on your course. Instead, it can simply be a photo of your student making a common error that you discuss in the post or it could be a photo of the sunrise at your course and you write something like, "Happy Monday everyone! Hope your week is starting out as beautiful as ours."

This will drum up some comments and potential jealousy which is a great way to at least get some conversations going. **PG**

Instagram



Register Now for the Must-Attend Education Event of the Year

WHERE GREAT TEACHERS GATHER- TO LEARN MORE AND EARN MORE

October 23-25 (Sunday - Tuesday)
Talking Stick Resort and Talking Stick Golf Club
Scottsdale, Arizona

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

Join us in Scottsdale to:

- Learn how Tathata Golf is merging martial arts techniques into golf to create more effective training for golfers
- Discover the performance-enhancing secrets tied to each individual's personal tempo and rhythm
- Learn how you can build a pathway that creates more lifelong golfers and grows your business for years to come
- Find the keys to teaching with ground-forces data
- Avoid the typical mistakes that make your business photos project the wrong image about you and your teaching
- Get a first-hand look at what make's TopGolf one of the hottest entertainment companies in the country
- Check out the latest teaching technologies at Demo Day
- Make new friends and expand your network of peers

Register today by logging in to the members' website and clicking on Summit Registration in the left-hand menu.



OUR 2016 SUMMIT PARTNERS



Gain Teaching-Tee Tested Knowledge From Today's Industry Leaders

SUMMIT '16 LINEUP SPOTLIGHTS WHAT'S NEXT FOR INSTRUCTION

THE DETAILS

Host Site: Talking Stick Golf Club and Talking Stick Resort and Casino is one of the most popular golf destinations in Arizona. It is conveniently located only 14 miles and less than 20 minutes from Phoenix Sky Harbor airport. All summit events are within walking distance at Talking Stick and we will provide shuttles to the TopGolf event and to the Talking Stick Golf Club dinner so you will not need a car during the event.

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 a special Summit rate at Talking Stick Resort and Casino for only \$149 per night SINGLE OR DOUBLE occupancy. Contact the resort directly at 866-877-9897 to reserve a room. Mention booking #10327 to guarantee you receive our rate. Our room block will likely sell out as in past years, so book your room early.

Cost: Our summit package includes all meals, all education sessions, participant gifts and the TopGolf event for only \$545 for our Full and International members. Associate members are welcome to attend for \$595 and just for Associate Members, we include a special career building session on Sunday afternoon from 2-4:30pm before the full Summit begins.

NOTE: Optional golf Sunday afternoon at Talking Stick is an additional \$50 (tee times are limited and will be filled first-come, first-served).

Registration: Login to www.proponent-group.com and at the top of the Members Only menu on the left-hand side of the page you will find the Summit Registration link.

OUR SPEAKERS:

2016 Summit Speakers will include:

Devan Bonebrake, owner of the Southern California G.A., will speak to his fellow Associate Members on Sunday afternoon about his rapid rise in the industry as an academy owner.

Michael Boyko, creator of Tempo in Motion, is a professional drummer for the last 25+ years and has performed around the world with A-list groups of the music industry

Bryan Hepler, Founder of Tathata Golf headquartered in Scottsdale, AZ, a teaching and training program with deep roots in martial arts.

Ian James, CEO of RetailTribe, is one of the top marketing experts in golf and a long-time partner to Proponent Group.

Scott Miller is an award-winning photographer based in Central Florida. Some of his assignments have been covering Presidential campaigns, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Super Bowl, the NCAA Basketball Tournament and even a few miracle putts by Tiger Woods

Lynn Marriott and **Pia Nilsson** are the founders of VISION54. GOLF Magazine named VISION54's flagship program, 54 GOLF, the number one golf school in the U.S. Golf Digest currently ranks them the #1 and #2 female teachers in the US

Mike Malizia is the Director of Instruction at Harbour Ridge in Palm City, FL and is one of the most popular speakers we've had in our summit history.

Bernie Najar, Director of Instruction at Caves Valley Golf Club, in Owings Mills, MD, has quickly become a leading expert in understanding and teaching with ground force data.



Bernie Najar



Lynn Marriott



Pia Nilsson



Ian James



Mike Malizia

Tell Me Something I Don't Know

JOHN STRAWN: COURSE-DESIGN EXEC TURNED MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT

by David Gould, Staff Editor

If asked to name the industry's No. 1 consulting firm, you could blurt out "Global Golf Advisors" and simply see who disagrees. The Phoenix-based think tank and problem-solving juggernaut recently hired John Strawn as a senior executive. Strawn is the former CEO of Robert Trent Jones II and former president of Hills & Forrest International Golf Course Architects. His areas of focus at GGA are "business development, long-term strategic planning and creative solutions to clients' long-term challenges," as the press release on his appointment disclosed.

Readers may recall a Proponent newsletter article from 2012 that quoted Strawn extensively on golf-instruction opportunities in Asia. Well-traveled and well-liked, he remains one of the legit experts on Asia's golf industry, but Strawn is just as well-versed on what's happening in Europe and North America. While there are a dozen industry categories Strawn can speak on with authority, instruction opportunities and trends were the focus of a conversation we had with him as he settled into his new position. It included discussion of the ongoing course-closure trend, about which Strawn said this: When a course is losing just one nine, or being trimmed back in some other way, academy-style facilities tend to come in.

"In the Ft. Lauderdale area, Greg Norman Design has a project that will tear down an old Dick Wilson course—which was very sprawling and had enormous greens—and replace it with a slimmer-profile, Seth Raynor-type design," says Strawn. "The acreage that they free up will make room for a couple of residential towers and a state-of-the-art academy facility." From everything Strawn hears, the companies doing these repurposing or tear-down projects "will absolutely at least consider adding a state-of-the-art golf learning center."

Also discussed was the industry's pivot away from brutally challenging courses, toward a user experience based on fun and recreation. Strawn candidly admits that the field he worked in for so long—course design—bears considerable responsibility for the industry's 21st-

century troubles. "It came down to not challenging the developers, when they would ask for a course that was super-tough, because they figured if it Sloped at 145 it would get a higher ranking," Strawn admits. "Architects took the fees and built their businesses and didn't stop to think about the long-term consequences."

Now he's seeing the pendulum swing toward a challenge that makes golfers feel excited rather than punished.



John Strawn

"There's a leading golf clubhouse designer, a very innovative guy named Doug Frederikson, who is working on a Topgolf-style practice amenity that can be built into club ranges and won't require golf balls with chips embedded in them," John reports. "He's been drawing interest in that concept and you'll probably hear more about it." This is yet another echo of what one hears generally—whatever big or small ways there are to adapt or imitate the Topgolf approach, they'll get attention from people who build and remodel golf facilities.

When your specialty is long-term strategic planning—as Strawn's is—your task isn't to see

around the next corner, it's to see around the corner after that. This might explain his interest in Swan Golf Designs, a British firm that is known more for being market-driven and experimental than as artsy sculptors of the soil.

"The Swan group is credited with designing the first footgolf course from scratch, not as an extension or a retrofit of an existing golf course," says Strawn, referring to FootGolf Chester, which is south of Liverpool and surfaced partly with natural grass, partly synthetic turf. "That's an interesting crossover, for a golf architect."

It prompts the question: Could golf academies make the same crossover, and create footgolf training and player-development programs? If footgolf continues its growth, will golf academies hire soccer coaches and tweak their facilities so as to lead the way and eventually "own" footgolf instruction? And if not, why not? Some combination of strategic guidance from gurus like Strawn plus entrepreneurial energy from golf instruction's top echelon will likely provide the answer to these future-oriented questions. **PG**



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BEING “IN THE ROOM” STILL MATTERS



By Lorin Anderson, President

The entire point of being a Proponent Group member is to sharpen your current teaching and business skills and be among the first in the industry gaining exposure to new trends and opportunities that can have a positive effect on your business. This all comes into sharp focus every mid-autumn when we convene our annual

Summit. This year's convocation takes place Oct. 23-25 at Talking Stick Resort in Scottsdale, AZ.

Sure, watching YouTube videos and reading Facebook forums can be helpful, but the power of attending a live conference, of actually being “in the room” immersing yourself in presentations and conversations, meeting peers from across the continent and trying the latest training aids and teaching technologies takes learning to a much higher level. Proponent Group believes in the power of live events so much that we take a significant financial loss on our annual summit each year. It's also why we include all of meals in our summit fee—we're aware that the long discussions over scrambled eggs or coffee and dessert are where so much of the value of being in the room comes from.

So if you're still on the fence about coming to Scottsdale next month, here are some important reasons you should be in the room.

First, it is critical to “sharpen the saw.” Stephen Covey, world-renowned business guru, lists this as his seventh fundamental for success in the bestselling book, “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.” The idea is that you sometimes have to take a break from the “work” to

sharpen your skills. As Covey points out, a dull axe won't cut a tree nearly as effectively as a sharp one. I doubt anyone has every returned home from a Proponent Group Summit without a notebook full of new ideas and approaches that made them more efficient and effective running their business and teaching their students.

Our Summit is where you can make personal contact with the leaders of the industry. Influencers such as Mark Sweeney, Dr. Rick Jensen and Matt Frelich were hanging out at our summits before most teachers knew much about Aimpoint, coaching programs and TrackMan.

Our Summit is where networking occurs that later turns into new jobs, new business opportunities and new sources of information. You just never know who you'll meet.

Our Summit is where you find the industry's newest tools of the trade. This year we expect to break a record for the most products and companies at our Teaching Technology and Training Aids Demo Day. As of now, more than 20 companies are planning to attend.

Our Summit forces you to break out of your comfort zone. The reason corporations have so many meetings off-site is to get people out of their ruts. Meeting people, hearing new ideas and just watching the amazing sunrises and sunsets in the desert for a couple of days will energize you.

And perhaps best of all, you will feed off the energy of being around like-minded professionals. Sad to say, a lot of folks working in the golf industry, including many instructors, don't have much interest in pushing themselves to stay on the cutting edge. By being an active member of Proponent Group you've already set yourself apart from the other 90 percent of full-time teachers. But to maximize your investment, you should mark your calendar to join us in Arizona in a few weeks ... because being “in the room” still matters a lot. **PG**

PROONENT GROUP PARTNERS



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ARE TEACHING AND CLUB FITTING DIVERGING (AND WOULD THAT BE OK?)

by David Gould,
Staff Editor

In the field of economics when a theory gets disproven many times yet keeps resurfacing, it becomes known as a “zombie idea.” Clubfitting has been plagued for decades by the zombie idea (in the consumer’s mind) that some golfers are “not good enough to need custom clubs.” It’s fine if you’re a single-digit player, goes the theory, but everyone else should be OK buying off-the-rack.

Tracy Schooler, a Proponent member based at an affluent club outside Indianapolis, sees that zombie idea on its way toward extinction. Schooler’s students have been looking at fitting carts on the range for so long and have heard so much word-of-mouth praise for fitted clubs that they very seldom raise the not-good-enough objection anymore.

Schooler gives a fair amount of credit to launch monitors and social media for quashing that zombie notion. The same Trackman or Flightscope that’s being used to diagnose Joe Golfer’s swing issues is usually a vital tool in the fitting process — Schooler sees golfers sharing this realization on social media the way people share everything else on social media. “Working with a professional clubfitter has become yet another way for technology to improve your life,” says Schooler, director of instruction at Wood Wind Golf Club. “The golfers I talk to are very receptive to it.”

Wood Wind is under the same management group as Prairie View Golf Club, a semi-private in nearby Carmel, Ind., where Proponent Group



When the first Henry-Griffitts fitting carts appeared on lesson tees, a core philosophy of the young company was that the golf club purchase should be a transaction between a teacher and his or her student, using the precision-fitting methodology.

member Sean Bolduc is director of instruction. Tracy Schooler’s Wood Wind students who need clubfitting actually get sent down to Bolduc, who is geared up to do all the fitting anyone might need. “They come back very happy,” says Schooler. “They might add in a kidding way that it was ‘a \$2,500 trip,’ but they’re always pleased with the results.”

This scenario is one of many that raises a question of specialization in the clubfitting end of golf performance.

In the 1980s, when the first Henry-Griffitts fitting carts appeared on lesson tees, a core philosophy of the young company was that the golf club purchase should be a transaction between a teacher and his or her student, using the precision-fitting methodology. Under that premise, any dedicated teacher would want to learn the clubfitting craft and every skilled custom-fitter would be a golf instructor with a stable of satisfied students.

In the time since, golf coaches have studied and mastered specialties such as green-reading, biomechanics, elite junior training, the psychology of

(Continued on next page)



The fitting cart parked near the teaching tee has become a staple at most quality golf facilities over the past couple of decades.

competition and the like. Among the larger academies, a new role—specialist in golf gear—has emerged. At the Mike Bender Golf Academy, Matt Wilkes is one such expert, although Wilkes does teach his own roster of students along with running junior clinics and coaching groups of women players.

Despite how advanced his golf-equipment skills have become, Wilkes still sees the world through the eyes of a teacher. No matter how inappropriate a client's clubs may be, Wilkes will still "point them to instruction" if their baseline ability to make a swing that advances the ball are below a certain level. And yes, his nationally known colleagues Cheryl Anderson and Mike Bender do assign to Wilkes the step-by-step work of a clubfitting session when one of their student's needs it, albeit with heavy consultation based on their diagnosis of what's happening in the swing.

It goes without saying that coaches of that stature and experience could easily develop into excellent fitters. But walk into Wilkes's studio within the Bender academy and you'll see immediately how and why this division of labor works. Laid out in workshop fashion, Matt's space is equipped almost on par with a manufacturer's equipment van on the PGA Tour. If you happen to be there when a box containing custom-fitted clubs arrives you'll understand something else—the academy counts on Wilkes to correct factory errors, which by his report are disturbingly common.

"I check every set of irons that comes in," Wilkes says, "and I'd estimate that 90 percent of them have lie angles that are off. Some of the lofts are off, as well. Cast clubs are way

worse than forged, regarding lie angle," he adds, "and occasionally there will be a length error, or some weights could be off." As a result Wilkes is constantly bending irons to fix the lie angles. "The farther from standard the spec sheet calls for, the more likely that the factory doesn't get it right," he reports.

With his shop all tricked out to handle repairs, reshaping, regripping and the like, and with Wilkes so skilled in these arts, it starts to look normal for an academy-scale operation to have a specialist of this type—and hey why not have him or her do most of the hands-on clubfitting, as well? It should be said that the Bender academy is not at all unique in this area—the setup described above is one you'll find in any large golf market across the U.S.

And lest it go unsaid, some very fine instructors simply do not enjoy clubfitting and have no serious ambition to become experts at it. Fitting, when you think about it, is only needed once or twice with any student—compared to the dozens of lessons that same golfer might take—and it does seem to use a slightly different part of the brain than teaching calls upon. Furthermore, if you're going to become a true gear wizard like Wilkes you will eventually find yourself straining at a loft and lie machine, wondering if one more degree of bend will crack the hosel you're clamped onto.

A good indicator of industry opinion on clubfitting's role can be found by looking at Professional Golf Management programs and how they approach that question. Proponent member Rob Comerer is a 2012 graduate of Penn State's PGM program who went through a fairly intense clubmaking and clubfitting unit during his sophomore year.

(Continued on next page)

"I check every set of irons that comes in," Wilkes says, "and I'd estimate that 90 percent of them have lie angles that are off. Some of the lofts are off, as well.

According to Comerer, who co-directs a dual-site teaching practice called Smash Factory Golf, outside Rochester, N.Y., the Penn State PGM faculty “puts a definite emphasis” on understanding how clubs are designed and how they enhance or hobble a golfer’s swing motion. However, in Comerer’s view, they expect only a certain percentage of students to become deeply immersed in it.

“When I was there we talked about fitting and club design quite a bit,” says Rob. “In year two of the program, you could see how your fellow students were tracking—the ones headed into golf operations weren’t as intense about golf equipment as the students who were tracking toward teaching and coaching.” Even among the latter group, he found that only a subset seemed to be “gear hounds who want to know all about fiber weaves and the bend profile of some new shaft.”

Component shaft expertise is the sharp tip of the spear when it comes to specialization in fitting and customizing. It’s a corner of the golf market that is highly innovative and pretty heavy with the hype, as well—making it a challenge to stay abreast of. “It’s gotten much harder to stay current on the shaft market—I would guess there are 50 people in the whole U.S. who know all the designs and how they perform,” says Jacques Intriere, who owns and operates Greenwich Golf Fitting Studio in western Connecticut. He was recently honored as Worldwide Clubmaker of the Year by the International Clubmakers Guild (ICG), a valued Proponent Group sponsor.

Indeed, it is now possible for clubmakers to acquire branded heads from these leading companies, in order to mix and match them with whatever shaft performs best.

“It’s even more challenging now that there are branded components available for purchase from the big OEMs,” says Jacques. “That wrinkle originated with Chip Brewer when he moved to Callaway Golf as CEO.” Indeed, it is now possible for clubmakers to acquire branded heads from these leading companies, in order to mix and match them with whatever shaft performs best.

Intriere tells of a Met Section professional early in his career who has sent business to the Greenwich Golf Fitting Studio and had many follow-up discussions with Jacques about the sets their collaboration has produced. “We’re working with a good assistant pro in the section,” Intriere says, “and he is amazed at how much goes into the process of fitting and building—down to things like shaft profiling, Puring the shafts and what have you.” And yet the assistant professional’s teaching skill remains a vital ingredient. Intriere describes the extent of his own expertise by saying, simply: “I don’t give golf lessons. People in my niche of the golf industry, we don’t know the swing and we certainly shouldn’t pretend to.” Specialization is only natural, in his estimation. “The areas of expertise in helping people play better golf are diverse,” he observes, “and they are only getting more so.”

Proponent member David LaPour of Colleton River Plantation in Bluffton, S.C., will someday soon have a finished academy building to work from, which would raise the prospect of setting up a repair and customizing shop with digital frequency machines and other exotica.

(Continued on next page)

Summit '16 to Take a Close Look at Clubfitting's Future

Seeing that fitting and teaching are so closely intertwined, Proponent has included a panel discussion on the agenda for Summit 2016 at Talking Stick Resort in Scottsdale next month.

The panel includes three of the most accomplished clubfitters in our membership: **Randy Henry** of Randy Henry’s Dynamic Golf at the Coeur D’Alene Resort in Idaho, **Kenny Nairn** of Celebration Golf Academy in Orlando and **Gregg Rogers** of Gregg Rogers Golf Performance Centers in Seattle.

The panel will discuss **The Performance Triangle: The Club, The Swing and Ball Flight** as a starting point, but will also take a

look at where clubfitting is heading next. As always, the panel will take questions from our members on all things fitting-related.



Randy Henry



Kenny Nairn



Gregg Rogers

“If we were like Sea Island and doing 10,000 sets of clubs a year, I would go that route, including having an equipment specialist on staff,” says La Pour, whose academy lies within an upscale 36-hole golf community which is not a resort by any means. For now, La Pour still has a fondness for the idea of the golf coach who is a competent fitter, doesn’t shy from the task and can navigate any golf-swing or ball-flight issues a student may have. “We want to be the experts for our golfers, rather than bring in a specialist,” says LaPour, who has some limited experience with Tour Spec Golf, the tech-heavy company that parachutes in and fits en masse using almost a demo-day model.

La Pour does check all lie angles on custom irons his members order, and finds plenty that need bending, though not nearly as many as Wilkes deals with. He recently received a set of 3-SW that had spot-on specs for the 3- through 7-iron and completely incorrect specs for 8-SW. “I checked with the factory and they told me the assembly work gets split into two departments, one of which read the order correctly and one that misread it,” explains LaPour. “That was a new one on me.” Word to the wise: LaPour always carries a star-tip wrench in his pocket and is constantly checking for loose set screws in adjustable-angle drivers, and he is constantly finding them.

Meanwhile, the debate about specialization vs. every-teacher-fits isn’t a static one. There will continue to be refinements and developments on the tech side, therefore a continuing task for the teacher-fitter who wants to stay current. Matt Frelich of Trackman, well known to Proponent members who have attended annual Summits, says his company will be debuting a new advancement in the fitting-through-technology march of progress late this year. Meanwhile there is already a specification—landing angle—that Trackman measures precisely and that fitters should rightly be including on their spec sheets.

“Typically, the fitter will be watching for launch angle, spin rate and ball speed, meanwhile checking on trajectory,” says Frelich, “but are they paying attention to landing

“I checked with the factory and they told me the assembly work gets split into two departments, one of which read the order correctly and one that misread it,” explains LaPour. “That was a new one on me.”

angle? It has a big effect on tee-to-green play and fitters can use it strategically to improve performance.” A landing angle of 50 degrees or more is considered plenty steep to have the shot accepted and settle on the green as desired. What Frelich would urge teachers and clubfitters to consider is some experimentation with shafts and head designs so that, for example, a 6-iron that was producing a 50-degree landing angle based on a 6500 RPM initial spin rate might keep that same landing angle based on a 5500 RPM spin rate. “On a calm day that won’t make much difference but in a 10 mile-per-hour wind you’ll have better control with the lower spin rate,” he says.

Point being, the subject of club specs and ball flight is getting more nuanced rather than less. The old ideal of the teacher who fits and the fitter who teaches is certainly still adhered to successfully by many professionals. That being said, this seems like an appropriate time for the question of specialization within the custom-club niche to be examined and discussed, so that best practices in the years to come can be formulated in a way that makes the most sense for all concerned. **PG**



Matt Wilkes at the Mike Bender Golf Academy conducting an iron fitting session.

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CREATE 'PRODUCTS,' MARKET THOSE PRODUCTS, SELL THOSE PRODUCTS

by Ian James,
RetailTribe CEO

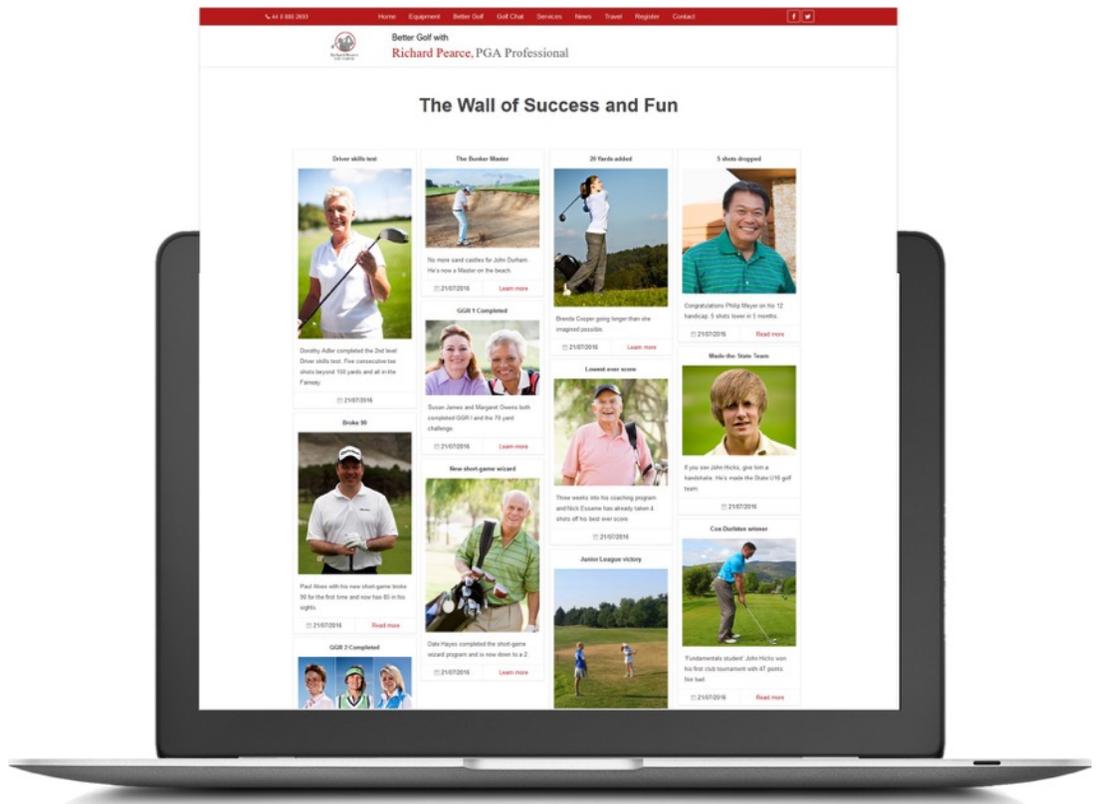
The strategizing is complete and a plan is in place—to make 2017 your best year ever.

So let's pick up on the discussion from last month's column, where we talked about a teaching professional's "success wall" and its power as a marketing tool. The first point to grasp is how willingly golfers participate in the creation of such a wall—how much they enjoy the process. These students are proud of what they've achieved, and they are rightfully proud to call you their golf coach.

The success wall, and the messages the teaching pro posts on it through the early part of next year, will fulfill two important marketing functions. The first is to clearly highlight the teacher's core proposition—that he or she is a bona fide game-changer. Secondly, it will show that a diverse array of golfers has benefitted from that coach's expertise. Just go light on the expertise part and heavy on the impact that's been made on the golfer. As a nice bonus, each post will also be an inspiration to anyone who spends a bit of time looking at the wall.

Inspiration is a very good thing, particularly given how it can open the door for contact and engagement. This won't happen on its own, however, which brings us to the part of the plan that calls for some off-season effort on the coach's part. It should start with you taking a close look at the portfolio of "products" you offer for sale to the customer. I encourage you to create a number of standard products that will strongly appeal to golfers—tipping them over the edge from "This is a great post about John or Mary improving their golf" to "I want to invest in coaching right now!"

Virtually every golf coach RetailTribe sits down with has a variation on the following product portfolio:



The success wall, and the messages the teaching pro posts on it, will fulfill two important marketing functions.

- Introductory golf programs (e.g., Get Golf Ready)
- Standard lessons, with a volume-discount option
- Playing lessons

Many, many golf coaches make a fine living selling these bare-bones products. They enjoy very good turnout for their introductory programs and they teach a good number of regulars in one-on-one lessons. So, any criticism of the above product portfolio may seem unfounded. But, in my opinion, even the list itself contains some clues as to how we could improve it.

Get Golf Ready is a product designed to appeal to the consumer, probably a very specific consumer, as well. It seems to effectively target females who seek help clearing the hurdles to participation, because they long to experience the social enjoyment they believe golf will deliver.

The design of the product also encourages higher hourly yield for the golf coach, insofar as it gathers multiple students in group sessions. The lessons someone receives when they pay their Get Golf Ready fee are part of the product. The lessons are not the product themselves. The product is very

(Continued on next page)

clearly “about her.”

We should have more products like this.

Let’s look at the three golfers below and think about products that might strongly appeal to them.

Each of the golfers pictured has different needs in mind, yet the only product you offer them is “a lesson.” The lesson is *your* component or commodity. It’s your service. It’s actually about you.

Meanwhile, what **John Avon** needs is a product called “Break 85 Every Time.” And, by the way, it doesn’t matter whether you get John to that goal in two lessons or five lessons, the value to him is the same. In fact, I suspect the value would be greater if you could get him there quicker.

Ian Rose, poor fellow, rarely gets to enjoy his round of golf—too much ball-searching in the woods and heavy rough. Ian needs “Longer and Straighter off the Tee.” **Sally Bonnell**, meanwhile, needs a product we call “Master of the Short Game.”

Get Golf Ready is a product designed to a very specific consumer.

If John Avon saw a post about a golfer previously shooting in the low 80s at the end of 2016, after taking part in your “Break 85” program, the recognition that a fellow golfer had achieved that goal would appeal directly to him. He would be much more likely to respond to the call-to-action in the post.

“Break 85” is a product about John and his golf experience—current and future.

In your down time, formulate a list of products that would likely appeal to the golfers you’re targeting. For each product, describe the target golfer and the skill level they’ll leave the program with. We know from working with our client professionals that this approach is alien to many golf coaches. It seems easier to say I’ll treat each customer as an individual and develop a personal improvement plan (as you should), but there’s a marketing and yield element to look at here. Your products need to appeal to a customer and tip them from inspiration and inclination to action and purchase.

It’s worth noting, with some emphasis, that a portfolio of such products will take a coach beyond the simple equation of selling his time at a rate of X dollars per hour. The products are a means of converting perceived customer value into income. They have the same potential for improved yield that Get Golf Ready presents you with.

Even if you start every customer engagement with an assessment, you still need these products because of how valuable it is to be discussing

Thinking through the golfer’s requirements

John Avon
Mid 40’s, plays golf at different public tracks every week with the same group of buddies. Very good racquet sports player. Never had a lesson but still manages to go low 80’s most times, but without a sound platform usually hits low 90’s.

Ian Rose
Early 50’s golfer who’s played for 30+ years, playing off an 18 handicap. Taught by his father. Sometimes wonders whether it’s worth to keep going. Leaves his partners on almost every hole looking for his ball in the rough on the right and feels a little inferior as they’re all longer than he is, even his older partners.

Sally Bonnell
A good golfer. Longer than most women off the tee, and puts it in the fairway. Her approach shots are consistently up around the green. She’s shooting low 80’s most rounds but could get to single figures if she could get up and down more often.

Each of the golfers pictured below has different needs in mind, yet the only product you offer them is a lesson. The lesson is your component or commodity. It’s your service. It’s actually about you.

needs in specific, inspiring terms that go beyond that old, well-worn term, “golf lessons.”

Furthermore, the “products approach” in and of itself creates an image of progress down a path—whereas “lessons” only depicts the path, itself. If you’re able to say that you have lead a number of golfers successfully through a “Longer and Straighter” program, that gets the person to whom you say it envisioning a proven path of progress.

Don’t forget that progress along any path can be marked in milestones and new plateaus. By introducing names and tags for these milestones, you are able to identify a skill level reached and inspire those who’ve reached it with the opportunity to climb to yet another level—just the way they do it in martial arts and computer games. Thus, you could tell the golfer, “Your short game is now at our Graduate Level. You’re getting down in three consistently inside of 50 yards. But if we can take you through our Master of the Short-Game Level, you’ll be getting it up and down from a variety of lies around the green more frequently—which is an important step for anyone interested in a single-digit handicap.”

Some short-game products



The “products approach” in and of itself creates an image of progress down a path—whereas “lessons” only depicts the path itself.

Compare that conversation, and its value to the customer, to a simple offer of “six short-game lessons for the price of four.” One is specific and goal-defined, the other is vague and without any particular promise of achievement. Think back to your “success wall” and structure products that contain a success story, built right into each product name. **PG**

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MAKING THE MOVE

THE ROBINS FORMULA: PROGRAMS THAT MAKE A 'SKILLS PROMISE' AND KEEP IT BOOST FACILITY PROFITS

by John Torsiello, Staff Writer

Just like any businessperson with bottom-line responsibility, a course owner or general manager will periodically ask their lead teacher or director of instruction, *What have you done for me lately?* Likewise, if an overture arrives from a teaching pro wanting to set up shop at a given facility, the owner or GM there would ask: *What can you do for this golf operation and its profitability?*

"It's the responsibility of the coach/instructor to focus on what the course is looking for and to lay out a solid plan for providing it," says Proponent member Will Robins, owner of Robins Golf Logistix (RGX). His company—headquartered at Empire Ranch Golf Club outside Sacramento, consults teaching professionals on how to grow their businesses by transitioning to the coaching model and creating programs that require lots of practice time and guarantee lower scores.

"Golf courses are in the business of selling green fees," says Robins. "It's great if they provide their golfers a menu of instruction programs, but that alone is not going to actually boost the bottom line—a percentage of normal lesson revenue won't add up to enough money," he contends. "To impact net profit calls for player-development programs that generate increased participation from current and new customers, in multiple streams such as green fees, food and beverage, range balls and merchandise."

Robins has more experience than most in



Will Robins

this form of partnering between coaches and course managers. In discussions with decision-makers at a facility you wish to move to, minimize the presentation of your impressive qualifications and how far you've advanced in your profession, he advises. Much better to focus on the measurable goals of the operation, whether it be an increase in memberships, walk-up play, spend-per-

visit or some other metric. You are there to gather that data and, in turn, explain how you can contribute to the achievement of those goals.

"During your conversation explain how your instructional programs will create avid golfers by getting them to shoot lower scores and become motivated to play more golf," says Robins. "Show them you understand the importance of reaching out to the local community to bring kids, families and businesses to the course to learn and improve at golf."

In the Robins approach, all first lessons are playing lessons, involving a "stroke harvest" analysis. The student is shown the shortest route from his score of, say, 96 down to 86. "You are teaching them how to be coached toward a result," he explains. "You are charging them for results, not for your time.

They will have lots of repeated contact with you and you'll find that they want to play well for their coach."

(Continued on next page)

"To impact a facility's net profit calls for player-development programs that generate increased participation from current and new customers."

His mechanics and the arithmetic go like this: Golfers form into “teams” of six (you’ll find they provide important support to each other) participating in 10 sessions over 12 weeks. Five of those sessions take place on-course, five happen on the short-game practice area or the driving range. The cost is \$695 per person, broken into \$470 for the “tuition” (at \$23.50 per hour) plus \$145 in green fees and \$80 in range ball value. The program guarantees 10 strokes of improvement over the player’s baseline average. “We guarantee we will get them to their goal or we will teach them for free,” says Robins. It’s a model proven to work, over many seasons.

Part of the business strategy developed by Robins is the use of playing lessons as tee-sheet feeders. The on-course playing lesson is a standalone menu item that can be added on a unit basis into any student’s regimen at any time.

“It’s simple but often forgotten that our role as teaching professionals is to create avid golfers of all ages and then connect them to the club through various products, such as range memberships, discount range keys, off-peak green fee specials, summer camps, leagues and so forth,” Robins says. “Any instructor who does this will generate significant revenue for the course and bolster its bottom line.”

Robins suggests a target number of \$900 per year in additional revenue for each customer a teaching professional is working with on a regular basis. “If you can connect 25 new players a year to a club you’re bringing tens of thousands of new dollars in the door and that’s a huge difference-maker for their business,” he asserts. On that basis, when negotiating your revenue split with a course, think about the “additional spend” you can generate out of new, or newly engaged, customers. This is the true financial impact a teacher can bring to the facility—and it ends up being far more significant than 20 percent of your lesson revenue.

Robins provides this example of his approach: Commit to management that in your first year you’ll bring in \$25,000 in additional green fees and related revenue. This goal can be tracked through cross-tabulation functions in the POS system, flagging just your clients. If you reach this \$25,000 goal, the share of your own revenue payable to the club would automatically drop 20 percent down to 5 percent.

“Think about it from their point of view,” advises Robins. “Would management prefer 20 percent of your first-year teaching revenues—say those come to \$60,000 and they throw off \$12,000 to the club—or would they be happier about a bump of \$25,000 in green fees and range balls?” One other point, regarding that \$12,000 you now keep in your pocket: “Some of it will be invested in additional marketing and promotion



Learn more about Robins Golf Logistix at robinsgx.com.

of your services,” Robins points out. “That will be a contributor to further growth of the club’s business.”

Robins also suggests establishing a review with the course owner or GM six months into your agreement, in order to determine if you are delivering on what you committed to. “If the numbers aren’t coming in as promised, you can adjust the percentage dependent on the success you’re having, so there is no risk for the course.”

According to Robins, the theme of your interview should be reinforcing the fact that the instructor is the connection to the customer. “We are the only tool the owner has for creating new golfers and fixing broken ones. We take recreational golfers and make them avid golfers,” he says. “Even the best marketing campaign or special offer a course has can’t do that. That is why teaching professionals are so valuable to courses. We need to remember that when we go into our interviews.”

When Robins puts it that way, you almost want to go to a local stable the day before the interview and rent a white horse to ride in on. **PG**

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TRAVIS BECKER, Beloit Club, Beloit, WI - Full Member

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ANTHONY Di NAPOLI - Golf Channel Academy with Kelley Brooke, New York, NY - Associate Member

DAN GAUCHER, Lyman Orchards Golf Club, Middlefield, CT - Associate Member

ALAN HODDE, Axis Golf Academy and Fitting Center, Montgomery, TX - Full Member

JUSTIN KLEMBALLA, Paradise Valley Country Club, Phoenix, AZ - Associate Member

JUSTIN LICK, The Meadows at Mystic Lake, Prior Lake, MN - Full Member

LEON MARKS, Golfschool Luxembourg, Golf De Luxembourg, Belenhaff, Luxembourg - International Member

AMELIA RORER, Cedarbrook Country Club, Blue Bell, PA - Full Member

Dr. QUENTIN STAPP, The IQ Lab and FitGolf Performance Center of Cincinnati, Mason, OH - Full Member

JOEL VAN DER SLOOT, Legacy Golf Performance Center, Phoenix, AZ - Associate Member

MASON WALL, Todd Sones Impact Golf, Vernon Hills, IL - Associate Member

BEN WILLMAN, Axis Golf Academy and Fitting Center, Montgomery, TX - Full Member

MEMBER DIRECTORY AVAILABLE ON MEMBERS' WEBSITE

If you are in need of contacting any one of our nearly 700 Full, International or Associate Proponent Group members, don't forget that we have an easily searchable Member Directory on the members' website. When you search for a member you'll also find their profile (if they have completed it with additional information about where they teach and an email and phone contact for each.

If you haven't yet completed your member profile, please take a few minutes to do so.

MACPHERSON SPOTLIGHTED IN TOASTMASTERS MAGAZINE

Cathy MacPherson was so intrigued by Mike Malizia's presentation on public speaking at a Proponent Summit where he mentioned that he had joined Toastmasters that she decided to give it a try too. Boy, did she ever. Toastmaster Magazine this month celebrates Cathy's success in recent Toastmaster competitions where she beat out nearly 5,000 competitors! We'll toast to that!

QUICK TAKES

MEMBER MOMENT

Golf Coach Communicates on the Course

BY SHANNON DEWEY

On any given day, Cathy MacPherson, CC, instructs golfers on their backswing, teaches them how to get out of a sand trap or helps with their stance.

For the past 20 years, MacPherson has been a LPGA (Ladies Professional Golf Association) Teaching and Club Professional.

A teacher in two clubs in Massachusetts, she was recently named a lead coach for the Golf Channel Academy—a network of top-tier golf coaches throughout the U.S.—and has been recognized as one of the best golf teachers in her region by Golf Magazine.

Based in Framingham, Massachusetts, MacPherson had two loves as a child—playing sports and playing the trumpet. She thought music was her calling, but after being introduced to the game of golf in her 20s, her life was never the same.

MacPherson is also a limited instructor. She pursued a teaching career to serve in the nonprofit world, and she continues to coach and teach the golf.

Why did you join Toastmasters?

I was inspired by a presenter at a conference who talked about how Toastmasters helped him become better at public speaking. My hopes were to improve my skills as a coach, and he talk inspired me to find my local club. Little did I know I would find myself competing in and even winning award speech competitions.

Tell us about your golf career.

Although I play more often during the off-season, I would not say I'm that "weekend golfer." I have immediately that I would make it my career. My goal was to become a LPGA. Your player and I went through all the trials and tribulations on the journey to that goal: getting sponsors, playing on mini-tours, going to Qualifying School and working part-time in the golf industry to help pay for tournaments. Ultimately, it was a part-time job that led me to discover my true passion: teaching the game of golf.

I operate my own golf instruction business, Cathy MacPherson Golf at the Forest Country Club in Middleboro, Massachusetts. I work with men, women and junior golfers whose skills range from beginner to the expert level player.

How important is communication in your line of work?

So much of what I do hinges on communicating ideas, techniques and strategies in an accurate and meaningful way as possible. My success as an instructor depends on my ability to connect with clients and deliver information in a way that sticks to them.

It's hard to say, working through each project in the Toastmasters Communication manual brought a different level of awareness to how I was delivering a certain message.

What advice do you have for members who want to coach or mentor others?

My advice to coaches or mentors is to get to know the person with whom you are working. Ask questions, discover their strengths and passions. Use the listening skills you develop as a speech coach to better hear who they are and what makes them tick. Understanding them more fully will help you frame your ideas in a way that relates to them specifically.

How has Toastmasters affected other aspects of your life?

As a member of the Board of Trustees for the Greater New England Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, I've created and shared multiple events. Not four years ago we shared our Mission Gala, and each year I conduct the live auction and holding for the middle-line segment. The skills I've developed through Toastmasters contribute to my ability to deliver messages about multiple sclerosis in a clear, significant and inspirational way. It was reflected in this year's public case; the bright stars we've seen. Thank you, Toastmasters!

To learn more, visit cathygolf.com.

Shannon Dewey is the editorial coordinator for the Toastmasters magazine.



Cathy MacPherson, CC.

How do you handle media interviews and TV appearances?

There is no doubt that I love Table Topics to thank for my improved ability to think on my feet and speak unscripted. Table Topics is not only enjoyable, it helps build a skill set that I use every day. As a speaker, I still have some when it comes to media interviews, live TV segments and other media demands, but the confidence Toastmasters has given me helps diminish nervousness significantly.

What advice do you have for members who want to coach or mentor others?

My advice to coaches or mentors is to get to know the person with whom you are working. Ask questions, discover their strengths and passions. Use the listening skills you develop as a speech coach to better hear who they are and what makes them tick. Understanding them more fully will help you frame your ideas in a way that relates to them specifically.

How has Toastmasters affected other aspects of your life?

As a member of the Board of Trustees for the Greater New England Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, I've created and shared multiple events. Not four years ago we shared our Mission Gala, and each year I conduct the live auction and holding for the middle-line segment. The skills I've developed through Toastmasters contribute to my ability to deliver messages about multiple sclerosis in a clear, significant and inspirational way. It was reflected in this year's public case; the bright stars we've seen. Thank you, Toastmasters!

To learn more, visit cathygolf.com.

Shannon Dewey is the editorial coordinator for the Toastmasters magazine.

Proponent Group
The Premier Network of Golf Instructors

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Lori Bombka Operations Manager

Debbie Clements Accounting

GOLF ACADEMY

Todd Wilson CEO, Golf Channel Academy

Scott Novell President, Golf Channel Academy

THE PREMIER NETWORK OF GOLF INSTRUCTORS

1513 Cherry Ridge Drive, Heathrow, FL 32746 • (407) 878-1235

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