

COLLABORATE

Proponent Group

The Premier Network of Golf Instructors

PROONENT GROUP NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2016

It's Opening Day!

EIGHT WAYS TO MAKE 2016 YOUR BEST YEAR EVER

For our hundreds of members in the Northern climes it is "opening day" and even for those who operate year-round it's always worth it to conduct a springtime review of business practices. That way you can be sure doing what you want to protect and grow your teaching business.

The following recommendations are tried and true ways to maximize your growth opportunities and effectively market your teaching business. This is the blocking and tackling that wins the game. Hopefully you already employ most if not all of these tactics. If that's not the case, create a simple action plan for each area you need to add to or improve upon.

1) **Grow your database at every opportunity.** The most cost-effective marketing tool you have at your disposal is a database of the golfers who are most likely to purchase your teaching services. These are the golfers who already have made contact with you or your facility. You should be able to capture a significant number of new e-mails each month using proven gathering techniques. These may include having golfers provide their email address for a giveaway drawing, in return for a discount offer, when booking instruction, to receive your newsletter or when golfers complete a facility comment card.

2) **Communicate with your customers and potential customers on a regular basis.** Once you have a database in place and a template set up, sending out monthly newsletters or special offers takes little time or money. Make sure every communication has a strong call to action and that you have an easy path for golfers to follow to sign up for highlighted programs.



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MAKE 2016 YOUR BEST YEAR EVER

3) **Make your website work for you.** This is the hub of your communications and it needs to work hard for you. Make sure it is the workhorse in your arsenal of database-collection techniques. Make sure it is effectively calling visitors to action on every page. Make sure it is taking advantage of search engine rules so that it shows up near the top of the list when local golfers are looking for instruction (your website hosting service should be able to help with this). Also, make sure your website's menu is easy to navigate and don't overload visitors with too many choices. Finally, make sure that your key offerings are highlighted at the top of the homepage.

4) **Don't be shy about branding.** Put your brand (logo, tagline, etc.) on everything involved in your teaching including range balls, bag tags, staff clothing, grill room menus, cart cards, member newsletters and anyplace else that makes sense at your facility. Keep the message simple, consistent and ubiquitous.

5) **Develop a Unique Selling Proposition (USP).** Marketers have spent decades trying to create a strong reason to buy a particular brand. Building a strong teaching brand means having a USP that attracts golfers to your lesson tee. The USP is a direct message, saying "Buy this product and receive this specific benefit." Your USP needs to differentiate you from other instructors in your market. USPs that can work well include being the first, being the leader, having a specialty or offering a new technology.



6) **Don't try to be everything to everyone.** Instead, maintain your Unique Selling Proposition and refine and grow it at every opportunity. Add more certifications in your specialty, continue your education in your area of expertise, add new technology that complements your specialty and benchmark the world's best teachers in your specialty.

7) **Don't discount lessons, instead create "added" value.** For example, offer weekly supervised practice sessions for your students. Include a clubfitting session at the end of a lesson series. Add technologies to your lessons such as Game Golf, K-Vest, TrackMan or Swing Catalyst. Create special offerings for select groups (competitive juniors, beginning women, etc.) using ShotByShot analysis or some other premium offering. All of these ideas create leverage for you to stop discounting—instead you're creating higher perceived value than your competitors offer.



8) **Manage your business using the 10 Percent Rule.** Block off at least 10 percent of your total weekly working time to manage and create the above. If you don't build time into your schedule, none of these keys to growing your business will happen. **PG**

GAME GOLF MEMBER DISCOUNT

PROPONENT MEMBERS EARN SPECIAL RATES ON GAME GOLF

If you are not yet familiar with Game Golf – it is the only stat tracking



system for both iOS and Android phones (and now surfaces data on Apple and Pebble watches with Android Wear coming soon) that provides real-time data on every shot, and gives valuable information to help better understand your student's strengths and weaknesses, and engage with them in between lessons or post-tournament play.

There are two opportunities to work with Game Golf and increase revenue at your facility – both easy and effortless!!

You can stock Game Golf OR you can send students directly to the Game Golf website and through a unique promotional code that you provide your student, you can make a commission on every sale!! It is that easy!!

Game Golf will be reaching out to our members in the near future and they will take you through the platform and explain in more detail how it can help build your business and be an additional source of revenue. Also see page 9 in this newsletter for additional information .

If you'd like a demo sooner rather than later, please contact Linda Glassel at Game Golf at linda.glassel@gamegolf.com

Supply and Demand for Golf in 2016

NEWEST INDUSTRY STATS AND REPORTS: GOLF'S "MARCH METRICS"

by David Gould, Staff Editor

The end of the first quarter is a high point in the golf industry for putting out data on participation and supply-demand trends in the golf-course market. "March Metrics" would be an appropriate tag for this reporting and analysis—dedicated number-crunchers give it almost as much attention as their NCAA tournament brackets.

Studying all the new information about golf activity in 2015 and the multi-year trend numbers that go with it, we get a snapshot that would prompt neither dismay nor jubilation. Rounds played went up slightly, the number of golfers (those age 6 and up who played at least once) dipped from 24.7 million (the count in both 2014 and 2013) to 24.1 million, and there was a net reduction of 148.5 courses, or a 1 percent contraction from 2014.

The reduced number of players and the rise in rounds-played are two facets of the same story, according to the NGF. Its report stated: "While the total drop in golfers from 2014 to 2015 was within the statistical margin of error, the results do suggest that a slow leak in overall participation persists."

But is this "slow leak" a true bottom-line concern? Possibly not, based on the fact that "NGF analysis continues to show that attrition is confined mainly to those who never really got into the game." So, people who played very little, didn't travel for golf and didn't buy much merchandise make up the 600,000 dropouts, according to the data.

But is this "slow leak" a true bottom-line concern? Possibly not, based on the fact that NGF analysis "continues to show that attrition is confined mainly to those who never really got into the game."

Meanwhile, "about 80 percent of all golfers, or 20 million of the 24.1 million, make up a committed base who accounted for 94 percent of all rounds played and all equipment spending in 2015."

These committed golfers in the base are the folks whose activity drove the overall increase in rounds played that came to 1.8 percent, versus 2014. (This stat gets generated by an entity called the National Rounds Played Coalition, comprised of NGF, Golf Datatech, the PGA of America and the course owners group.)

It's interesting to think about core golfers versus in-and-out types from the standpoint of the game's top teachers.

Top-tier golf instruction is the one aspect of industry activity that speaks almost equally to core-market and entry-level golfers alike. If you can teach and coach well, the committed, skilled players will flock to you. And yet, superior teaching skills also make someone ideal for engaging with a newer player or a returning player. Proponent Group members vary in the focus and energy they put behind new-golfer efforts—it's also true that an individual member may be very active in this area at one point in their career and less so at another time. Overall, it's likely that Proponent members had significantly more involvement with that "committed base" that plays and spends at such high levels than with the population that just took



Will Millennials take to the game as previous generations have? In 2015 they were the biggest group trying golf for the first time.

up golf last year, or left in 2015 having “never really got into the game.”

That being said, our March Metrics for 2016 include intriguing data about golf’s front gate and who might be walking through it. Compared to the all-time high figure for new beginners in a given year—2.4 million Tiger-inspired folks back in 2000—the 2015 metric for new beginners, 2.2 million, isn’t far below that. “And the biggest group of beginners in 2015,” the NGF report pointed out, “were Millennials.”

Meanwhile, the attitude data that measures interest in playing golf “is at an all-time high with an estimated 37 million non-golfers saying they are interested in taking up the game.” These wannabes aren’t just daydreaming about participation, apparently, given that last year 7 million “pre-golfers,” if you will, took part in the game “at a driving range, a TopGolf facility or on an indoor golf simulator.” Note to Proponent members: Perhaps the player-development push you’ve been considering ought to get some extra energy going forward.

Even Pellucid, the research and consulting group that has generally thrown cold water on golf’s player-development initiatives, bestowed high praise on PGA Junior League Golf and predicted further impressive growth for the program. In particular, group CEO Jim Koppenhaver pointed to the skill sets of PGA professional as “ideal for this activity.” Other youth team sports are overseen, he said, by “ultra-competitive adults reliving their glory days or by Type A corporate



Will golf’s current player-development programs fill up courses with the next generation of golfers? The jury is still out.

Discussing PGA Junior League Golf, Koppenhaver called PGA professionals “ideal” leaders of the program. He said other youth team sports are overseen by “ultra-competitive adults reliving their glory days or by Type A corporate personalities with their win-at-all-cost approach.”

personalities with their win-at-all-cost approach,” whereas golf professionals tend to be “selfless role models... with a soft spot for seeing kids learn, grow and succeed.” While that description paints coaches of other sports with an almost absurdly broad brush, what’s stated about the golf professionals who manage PGA JLG teams has a clear ring of truth to it.

The last metric to briefly pick apart is course count, and what it means for the high-echelon golf instructor. In 2015, a total of 17 new courses opened for business while 177 shut down—not for renovations but for good.

“Daily fee, lower-priced and 9-hole courses continue to be the segments that are disproportionately represented among the closures,” explained the NGF, adding that about two-thirds of the courses that closed in 2015 “had green fees of \$40 or less.” So, new openings are barely a blip—whereas back when they came in droves it represented a rich opportunity for teachers—but the courses that are closing hardly seem like ideal places of employment for a Proponent Group member. **PG**

Staying Enthusiastic About Your Own Game

ACCOMPLISHED GOLF INSTRUCTOR — AND STILL A GOLFER?

by David Gould, Staff Editor

When industry sources discuss obstacles to golf participation—especially lack of time or frustration at how difficult the game can be—do you ever hear an echo of your own inner thoughts? In other words, has playing the game become problematic? Do you think about how busy you are on the lesson tee and decide that there's no time to play 9 or 18—especially if you suspect you won't hit the ball well?

People who teach golf are expected to put out a Pied Piper-type energy, selling students on the joys of a day on the links and the satisfaction of making a few pars or perhaps that one memorable birdie. And yet that joy and satisfaction isn't always something the teacher still personally experiences, as a player. Long, draining days at the golf facility—thinking constantly about swing mechanics—can make playing the game and working on skill mastery unappealing.

In talks with Proponent Group members about their own golf games—and in reviewing a recent Proponent survey on the subject—both the enjoyment factor and the fatigue or disenchantment factor do emerge.

Proponent members who have played at a high level years ago may grapple with that age-old disappointment of not being able to replicate past brilliance. Meanwhile, members who haven't played much tournament golf on the way up may come to identify themselves as instructors and not feel a desire to master golf skills or shoot a number.

At the same time, any serious golf coach needs to competently demonstrate sound golf swings and show their students how to hit crisp approaches, solid drives, flop shots, knockdowns and the rest of the standard repertoire. That's a responsibility that calls to mind the miseries endured by Hank Haney through an extended early segment of his career. A brutal case of the driver yips haunted Haney, even as his teaching reputation soared.

Looking at the spectrum of playing patterns among instructors, Haney's case lies all the way at one end of it—from 1985 to 2002 the former NCAA Division 1 golfer avoided hitting a tee ball with anyone watching, until he was able to concoct an odd,



A few holes early in the morning or late in the afternoon will reset your personal compass, clear your head and help keep you in shape. It's a critical piece to having a long and prosperous career teaching the game that many members have gotten away from.

pre-swing contortion that broke the hex. On the the opposite end of the spectrum is a character everyone recognizes—the young assistant professional who’s assigned to handle most of the teaching at his club but instead plays so much golf he’s sent packing before the season ends.

Proponent members, based on our exclusive survey results, are a mixed assortment when it comes to their own games. The questionnaire distributed earlier this year drew 80 responses—certainly a representative sampling. Most respondents (52 among the 80 total) were members carrying the title of either “Teaching Professional” or “Director of Instruction.” There were also four head golf professionals and seven assistant pros in the mix, plus a dozen academy owners.

A Proponent member just starting out in his career, Patrick Hagenbucher, explained in follow-up interviews that he had given his own game a full overhaul last summer, fixing a power-and-distance problem that plagued him through the junior and college ranks. “I’m 20 yards longer through the bag than I was a year ago,” says Hagenbucher, a note of satisfaction in his voice. “It was a combination of technique, strength training and equipment changes.” Still only 24, he says he’s noticed that there are “some older golf professionals around who have lost the spark” to play and practice. “You start out with a passion to play the game, and as a teacher you share that passion with students,” Hagenbucher says, pinpointing a strong reason for doing what it takes to keep the flame burning.

Proponent member Gina Yoder, a 22-year veteran of the golf profession, was asked about this phenomenon on a day when she had hit the ball well while guiding a group of “boot camp” learners through a nine-hole playing lesson. One of Yoder’s intermediate women had posted a high score, and the student felt badly about it, despite having



Can you still remember the pure joy you had playing the game as a youngster, when you were in the moment, loving every day on the course?

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struck the ball well. “She needs a little help with her wedge, and she could really play,” Yoder notes. “I said to her, ‘I just wish you were as excited about your golf game as I am right now.’”

Yoder won a high school state championship in Indiana back in 1988 and played on the women’s team at Michigan State. Her training in TPI has helped her heal a back ailment that had taken away some enjoyment of the game. “I would say that if you feel good and work isn’t stressing you out, it’s easy to enjoy playing,” she says. “I had some years when I was injured and overbooked, teaching at a club and coaching a college team—it made me lose my interest in playing, but it was really just circumstances that caused that.”

Takeaways from the survey reveal a true gusto for the game among respondents, as well as what appears to be indifference. Responses that point to a continued zeal include the following:

- Of the 80 members who completed the survey, over half of them said they competed in at least one PGA section tournament in 2015.
- Asked about their playing aspirations, 26 percent said “I currently have serious goals for my own game/playing ability/competitive performance” while 51 percent said “I currently have a ‘wish list’ for my game and playing skills, but not serious goals.”
- Of the 80 respondents, 23 said: “In the past year I finished top-5 in a tournament against tough competition.” And somewhere in those 80 golfer are five who made at least one ace in 2015.
- If you work at a golf facility you can play a lot of holes without actually completing many 18-hole rounds—that being the case, the results of our question about number of 18-hole rounds played are fairly robust, showing that 51 percent played more than 20 18-hole rounds in 2015, with most of that 51 percent reporting that they played 30-plus rounds.

How to Fall Back in Love with the Game

One way to regain your enthusiasm for playing and practicing is to treat any physical ailments that might have been holding you back. Proponent member Peggy Gustafson, who splits her teaching year between Scottsdale and Anchorage, AK, feels “like a kid again” after last fall’s joint replacement surgery on her right knee. “I had forgotten what’s it like to hit the ball solidly,” she says. “This knee problem had been affecting my game for years—my trail leg wasn’t supporting me through impact.” The excuse, if that’s the right word, for not seeking help was “normal golf instructor workaholicism,” according to Gustafson. “You work hurt, you work sick, you don’t question it,” she says.

Gustafson never quit playing, but she was in denial about her disappointment with full-swing results. “When I was healed up and starting to take full swings with the driver and fairway woods I had memories come flooding back—of what a flush hit and good trajectory is all about,” she admits. The process has helped Gustafson relate to students who have minor or even major orthopedic issues, a development she is glad of. Ironically, Peggy’s longtime students felt free to say previously unspoken things to her about her swing and her golf shots, once the knee problem got fixed. “They told me, ‘It was painful for us to watch you,’” says Gustafson. If that’s not proof that students notice your form and your performance as a player, we’re not sure what is.

As Proponent member Skip Guss will attest, there can be mental impediments to enjoyment of the game as well as physical ones. The former PGA Tour player is known for his deep enjoyment of golf’s challenges,



but even his friends may not realize he felt close to quitting not long ago. The problem Guss has experienced is on the greens, and it vaguely resembles putting yips, but it’s something different — “fear of making contact” with the putter face, is how he describes it. A round of golf in Florida early last year featured the only four-putt greens of Guss’s adult life—“I did that three times,” he moans. The experience caused considerable fear and dread.

Right now there appears to be viable, sustainable cure for the problem, a change of equipment to the AccuLock ACE putter from BioMech Golf. Its tilt-shafted design allows the grip to rest against the leading forearm’s inner surface—and pre-sets the stroke in a way that could seemingly do a lot to offset fear of the hit. Skip Guss’s mind-game problem on the greens wouldn’t reach the magnitude of Hank Haney’s driver yips, but they come under the same category of impediment or obstruction to enjoyment of the game—and thus the ability to teach it most effectively.

Mixed in with those data points are some others that show members putting their own golf participation on the back burner. For example:

- Just about 23 percent of survey-takers say they played 10 rounds or fewer in 2015.
- Nine percent said “I’m not interested enough in my own game to really work on it,” while 21 percent agreed with the statement: “I don’t have time to practice properly—as a result I don’t practice much at all.”
- The comment, “I really don’t spend any time thinking about my own game anymore” was checked off by 23 percent of respondents.
- Why is that Proponent members would let their own clubs gather dust? An answer can be glimpsed in the following admissions: “In the past year or two, my swing has really deserted me” was a self-description chosen by 14 percent of survey-takers, while the statement, “In the past year or two, my short game has been erratic and frustrating” was

The results of our question about number of 18-hole-rounds played are fairly robust, showing that 51 percent played more than 20 18-hole rounds in 2015, with most of that 51 percent reporting that they played 30-plus rounds.

selected by a full 31 percent. One thinks of the comment often made by Proponent member Martin Hall: “Golf is a hard game—don’t let anybody tell you different.”

- Meanwhile, our avid and non-avid players alike showed nonchalance about carrying a GHIN card in their wallets. Of the 78 members who disclosed whether or not they “keep a current USGA handicap,” only 14 said they did while 64 said they did not—it just ain’t worth the money if you’re always playing gross-score competitions, apparently.

Along the spectrum of teaching pros who are devoted players, Henry Brunton is an interesting variation:

Brunton not only plays every week to keep up his game and stay in touch with the playing experience, he also uses 18-hole rounds with his buddies as proof he isn’t forgetting to have fun in life, to help offset all those long workdays. What a concept: Golf as a simple, enjoyable form of recreation—for the golf professional. **PG**



Your love of the game is why you do what you do. The game is patiently waiting for many of you to return.

SEE

exactly how your students perform on the course without having to be there with them

SHARE

your student's progress and successes by email or social media.

COMPARE

your student's stats with each other for more targeted practice and friendly competition.

INCREASE

engagement with your students and provide an additional revenue stream for your coaching.

HOW TO GET STARTED**OPTION 1**

Using your unique academy discount code provided by GAME GOLF, you and your students can purchase GAME GOLF LIVE on gamegolf.com and you will receive a profit on each unit sold.

OPTION 2

Stock GAME GOLF units at your academy or shop. No minimum order required; standard terms and conditions apply.

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Instruction Is Just a Means to an End

PUSHING BEYOND CUSTOMER SERVICE, TO “CUSTOMER VALUE”

by Ian James, Retailtribe CEO

A recent *Wall Street Journal* article took aim at our industry, saying how bad golf is at keeping players from quitting. If casting blame is your go-to response to such accusations, feel free to get indignant and point fingers. Or maybe you're among those who would shrug and simply point out that golf is a difficult game. If that's true, we probably need fewer clubs, fewer courses and, what — fewer coaches?

Another contingent would argue that club management is trapped in a box of heritage and dusty tradition. Others decide to blame the teachers, moaning that golf instruction has failed new beginners by leaving them short of the skills needed to break 95. Let's move beyond all that and take a clear-eyed look at both management and coaching.

We can start by encouraging golf managers and coaches to read “Unlocking the Generational Codes,” by Anna Liotta. This book explains the causes of customer behavior across the four generations that currently spend discretionary dollars: Traditionals (born 1927-45), Baby Boomers (1946-63), Gen-X (1964-1979) and Millennials (1980-1999). Liotta's book is as good a tool as you'll find for opening minds to the changes golf needs to make.

As you read along you'll find yourself connecting the golfer behaviors you see every day to the codes Liotta reveals. Traditionals, for example, honor commitment, loyalty and service. Their five-hour rounds at the same tee time every week with the same three friends reflect their commitment and loyalty to their group. Whatever the misery they experience with their golf game, they'll be back next week. (Ah, the perfect member.)

This group will say the younger generation is in search of instant gratification. They're right, and you can't change them. For Gen-X, the expectations of enjoyment from life — never mind five hours on a golf course — are much higher. They expect to get a return they can measure in terms of pleasure or benefit from that use of time. Not enough enjoyment? They'll find something else to do.

Let's be clear: The gap between learning the rudiments of the game and being able to venture onto the first tee, 350 yards from a green, surrounded by water, at the end of a fairway plagued with bunkers and framed by trees, is a big one.

Those who take up golf and find their way onto a course also feel constrained by traditions and “etiquette.” They arrive seeking fun and instead are

forced to endure round after round of misery, with the cold comfort of the occasional good shot.

“Never mind, it builds character” — we've certainly heard that one. But Gen-X and Millennials aren't inclined to spend major chunks of time building character, week after week. Nor are today's Boomer females, as they enter retirement. For

decades these women have juggled responsibilities — managing a home, bringing up a family, and being at least the second-line breadwinner, if not a career climber. They've had more than enough character-building. They're ready for relaxation and enjoyment.

The term “Customer Value” is our context for all this. It's a principle embodying what we've long thought of as “customer service,” but it extends well beyond that. If golf operators and managers truly understood Customer Value, they'd have picked up on social trends and brought new variations to the ancient game. They would be placing a much greater focus on nine-hole, 40-yard events. They would offer plenty of short, par-3 fun. They'd let golfers start from wherever they felt comfortable, and if necessary toss the ball out of bunkers. They would design 4-hole scrambles for fivesomes, and so on. As for priorities, they would have treated this programming with the same importance as their monthly stroke-play competitions.

Topgolf offers proof-of-concept that hitting golf balls can be fun. It should serve to motivate management to think about the Customer Value our



By amazing coincidence, Anna Liotta is the daughter of a traditional PGA Professional. She understands our market.

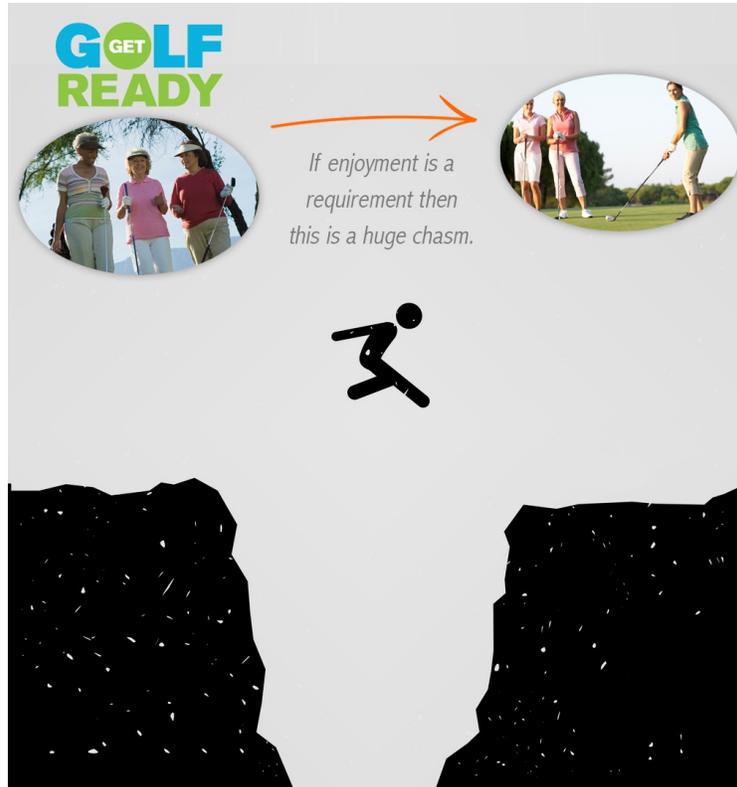
new and occasional golfers are looking for. The result would be new plans and new programming that delivers sufficient Customer Value to keep people coming back for more, more often.

“Golf coaches have failed to help golfers make the leap.” I’ve heard this from a very senior Club Management Association leader, who goes on to say that instructors have lined their pockets running introductory programs that don’t produce golfers who can enjoy themselves out on the golf course. He’s right.

The leap from Get Golf Ready to full-on recreational golfer, able to actually enjoy taking on a traditional 9-hole or 18-hole challenge, is immense. We know that. *So why is there no well-defined route from Get Golf Ready to the metaphorical top of the mountain?* Look at golf coaches’ websites and I doubt you’ll find even a hint of a true pathway from incompetence to enjoyment.

What the newcomer to golf encounters are introductory programs, then a chance to participate in clinics, and an offer to buy a series of lessons. There is no express promise of fun activities on the golf course. Where’s the professional’s schedule of programming to keep the developing golfer interested, to provide him or her with fun and enjoyment?

In fact how many coaches take responsibility for retaining their learners in the game? I don’t mean take an *interest*, I mean take responsibility. How many produce a monthly report that shows the number of rounds in 2016 their 2015 Get Golf Ready graduates are playing? How many track their learners over the years on a Customer Management chart? How many learners of yours lasted longer than 24 months in the game? What’s your conversion rate, from learner to activated golfer?



What’s your target conversion rate?

When I talk to coaches about their careers they’ll tell me how many players they’ve coached, how many lessons they’ve given, how many golfers they’ve introduced to the game and how many champions they’ve coached.

These answers indicate a marketing proposition that is obsessed with grip, stance, posture and the giving of lessons. It ignores the true metrics: How many rounds have you generated? How much revenue have you added to the industry?

How many golfers have you activated? Again, what about that conversion rate?

Coaching is a means to an end. An important means, for sure. But if it doesn’t achieve that desired end, it’s a proposition without value. The *Wall Street Journal* article is telling us we’re failing to get to the “end.”

Obvious? Then listen to how many coaches moan about how few of their older golfers want coaching or lessons. Some even post comments like that on Facebook. Let’s be clear: “Lessons” is not a Customer Value. “Coaching” is not a Customer Value either. Why would anyone want to buy it? If you really cared about the customer you’d investigate the Value they were looking for. Deliver that, and not only will we reduce our losses at the front end, we’ll get more golf out of everyone!



The ski industry is good at creating different challenges for different skill levels, ensuring everybody has fun.

Golf club managers and golf coaches share responsibility for the failures the *Journal* article highlights. Neither party has evolved its understanding of the customer, of the Customer Value that's got to be delivered, or of the tracking of the customer on an activation scale.

So, find some time to read Anna Liotta's book, then create your pathway, and create a schedule of fun events and activities, all the while evolving your understanding of your own daily activity until all of it becomes that "means to an end." Take responsibility for the end, which is the activation—or, when things don't click, the loss—of every single customer. **PG**



"We don't actually care about the golfer's grip, stance, posture or swing plane. We care about how many memberships, visits and rounds this will lead to."

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.**

MY TOP 10 PROPONENT PRESENTATIONS



By Lorin Anderson, President

It's hard to believe that next year will mark the 10th anniversary of the beginnings of what is now Proponent Group. While we had to go through a couple of iterations to get to our current state, we have from the very beginning done a few things notably well. One of our ongoing strengths has been

the ability to spot emerging industry trends and delivering the best current information to members—with the twin goals of building more successful instruction businesses and improving your understanding of the teaching/learning process.

The other day Lori and I were going through the webinar and video archives on the members' website and I realized I had lost track of how many amazing presentations have been made exclusively to our members over nearly a decade. It adds up to 120-plus hours of excellent content. While I'd recommend that every single presentation stored on the site has lots of helpful information for our members, there were some that really stood out as chock full of valuable insights that have the ability to make you rethink how you teach and how you run your business.

So this month's column is dedicated to all of our members who have stood up and shared rich insights and data with their peers. Proponent Group would not exist today without your selfless

contributions to your fellow members.

If you haven't watched an archived video lately, consider screening any of my 10 personal favorites to get you pumped up to keep getting better in 2016.

10. **Trillium Sellers** on Being Uncomfortable, The Challenge in Learning.
9. **Dr. Tim Lee** on The Science of Acquiring and Retaining Golf Skills.
8. **Martin Hall** on How I Teach the Short Game.
7. **Jackie Beck** on Secret Shopper: Customer Service Mistakes Made by Teachers and How to Fix Them.
6. **Fred Shoemaker** on Unlocking Your Students' Potential.
5. **Kate Tempesta** on How I Teach Very Young Golfers.
4. **Ian James'** Marketing Workshop.
3. **Dr. Rick Jensen** on Coaching Golf: Easier Said than Done.
2. **Mike Malizia** on Effective Communications Skills for Instructing.

And, my personal favorite (so far) is... 1. **Cameron McCormick** on The Journey to High Performance.

While all of these are absolute standouts, what's amazing about our video archive is there are at least 50 others just as good as these. Tap into this treasure trove of teaching information on a regular basis and watch your business grow. This incredible sharing of knowledge is what makes our members and our organization so successful. **PG**

“This month's column is dedicated to every member who has stood up and shared rich insights and data with their peers.”

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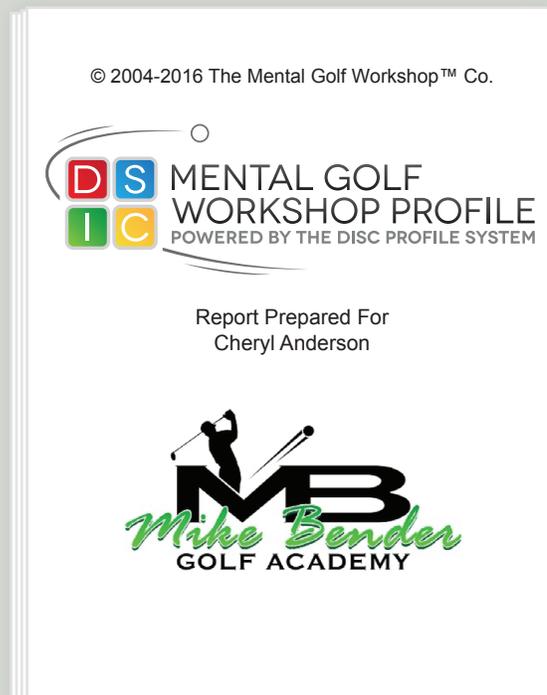
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Bobby Foster

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Bobby Foster developed the golf profile after using DISC with his corporate consulting clients for 15 years.

“In my corporate consulting work, I saw the positive impact DISC profiles had on people in the workplace and other areas of their lives, and decided to convert DISC into golf terminology. The acceptance of our golf profile by coaches and their students has been very gratifying.”

Bobby is a former golf professional and college coach, and a member of the South Carolina Golf Hall of Fame.

TIM SUZOR

THINQ GOLF, SCOTTSDALE, AZ

INTERVIEW BY PAUL RAMEE, JR.

It's an indicator of how far teaching and coaching have come that some of the professionals who do it best are actually off the lesson tee these days, devoted to technologies that improve golf performance and are built with science in mind. Proponent Group member Tim Suzor, a prime example of this trend, is a right-brained, left-handed golfer from Michigan. Founder and CEO of THINQ Sports and partner at K-Vest & Optiherence International, Suzor was in the earliest wave of teaching professionals pushing for breakthrough

knowledge of the whole-mind, whole-body causes of human motion in golf. Trained and certified across a wide spectrum of mental and physical disciplines, Suzor has harnessed expertise in bio-mechanics, biofeedback, neuroscience, 3D-motion analysis, clubfitting and fitness training to develop a new approach to golf performance. As a teacher, Tim has worked with players who have won at every competitive level, including the PGA and LPGA tours, as well as NCAA Division I.

Tell us about your early golf experiences.

I grew up in the 1970s and '80s in the resort town of Houghton Lake, Mich., in the Northern Lower Peninsula, where my father was the town veterinarian. When I was seven years old, my family built a house on a golf course. To me it was a great big playground in our back yard.

Did you spend a lot of time out on the course, as a kid?

I was left-handed and had a real old set of clubs and I basically played golf recreationally. In 1987 when I graduated from high school I went off to the University of Western Michigan to study aviation.

So at what point did you veer away from that, toward a golf career?

The summer after my freshman year my brother and I were playing golf with a guy and his grandson. We got to talking and they told me about Ferris State University and their Professional Golf Management program—Ferris was the original PGM site, established in 1975. At that point I didn't have a handicap but I thought the program sounded pretty cool. so I applied for it. After proving that I could get my handicap below 8, I was accepted and began my studies, including the summer internships, which are a big part of a PGM education.



Suzor at the 2010 PGA Championship with student Tim Petrovic.

Where did you get placed?

I was lucky to end up at some great facilities—TPC Scottsdale, for one. Also the Seaview Resort outside Atlantic City, N.J., which was run by Marriott Golf at the time. After I got my degree from Ferris State I went to work as an assistant at Seaview. That was my summer employment and then in the winters I worked at Camelback Golf Club in Scottsdale, under Joe Shershenovich.

Between your PGM training and those jobs at high-profile resorts like Seaview and Camelback, it appears you were on the golf operations track.

I probably was, but I had Jeff Ritter as a co-worker at the time, and I noticed that Jeff was very intent on studying the golf swing and how it worked. I started to do the same and it became a real passion. Another fortunate circumstance was that Camelback let their young assistants teach. So, I worked there from 1992 to '96 and got a lot of teaching experience, along with working the operations side. In 1996 the head professional asked me if I wanted to go ahead and teach full-time.

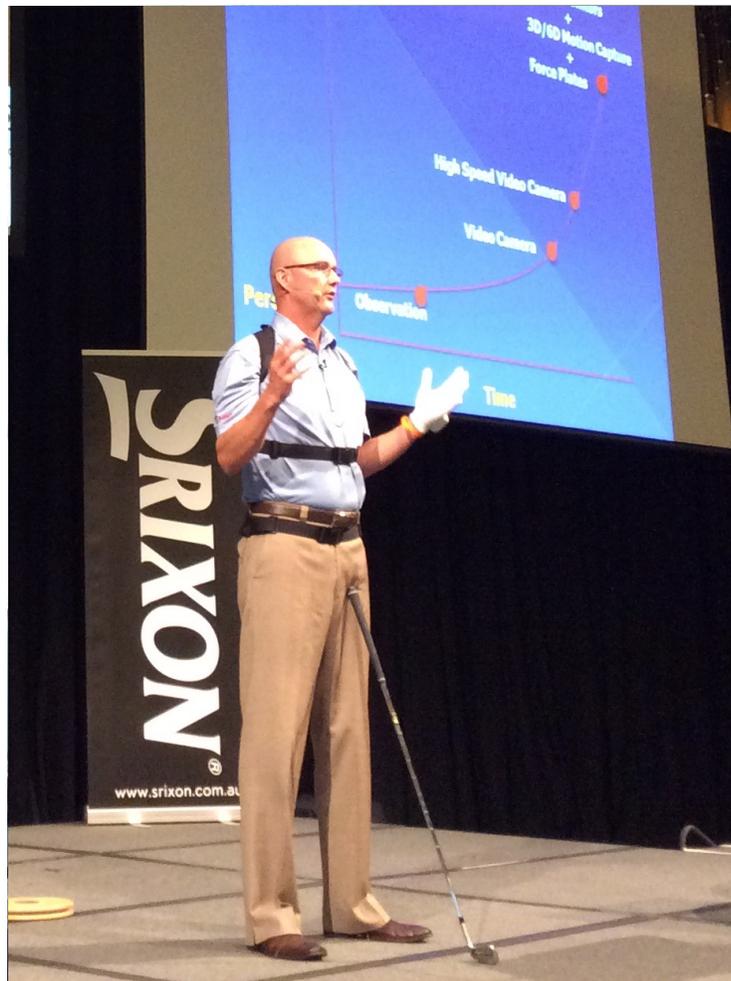
Did that seem like a good opportunity? At the time, instruction wasn't considered as solid a career path as operations.

It was scary for me, but the more I thought about it the more it made sense. So I said yes and in '96 I became Camelback's director of instruction.

Where did your focus shift next?

After a couple of years of teaching full-time I became interested in biomechanics, especially the kinematic sequence, as we call it. That led me to join the K-Vest staff where I wound up teaching their Level 1 and 2 Certification courses. I used what I was learning to create the Kinetic Golf Academy at Camelback.

Was that roughly the time you began working with tour professionals?



Suzor speaking at a teaching conference for the Australian PGA in 2014.

Yes, although it was on a small scale to start. I remember going to the John Deere Classic one year with a single client. As time went by I added more players as clients, on both the men's and women's tours. Anna Nordqvist was one of my LPGA players, also Amy Fruhwirth. I found myself paying a lot of attention to how the brain is involved with golf performance. I was studying how thought precedes motion and how it affects overall performance. I need to thank Dr. Debbie Crews and Dr. Joe Dispenza for the neuroscience education.

You're at the epicenter of that now, in your work with THINQ Sports and Dr. Crews. Talk about that.

Yes, so in 2011, Debbie Crews and I and a few other people started a company called THINQ Sports, with the idea of specializing in cognitive skill training. Given the demands of our startup venture I backed away from teaching and from my consulting work with K-Vest, to focus on THINQ Sports. I went from teaching 100 percent of the time to teaching about 5 percent of the time, doing K-Vest 10 percent of the time and working on THINQ Sports 85 percent.

Did that feel like a major turn in your career path?

It did, but I was excited to be involved in something that can help 60 million players as opposed to one at a time. And despite what I'd been able to achieve up to that point, teaching tour players requires a lot of travel and your focus is on very few athletes.

Why did teaching need to turn toward science?

Bio-mechanically speaking, a lot of accepted ideas in golf instruction contradicted each other. You had phenomenal instructors who could not have been more different in what they taught. Jim Flick was teaching hands and arms while Jimmy Ballard was teaching connection and right-side power, that kind of thing. I knew I had gotten as far as I could teaching ball-flight laws and swing plane. I needed to turn to the science of how the body actually moves.

Did you miss being out on the range, working with students?

Yes, but I kept a handful of clients.

Explain your current relationship with a student.

Someone who comes to me now will be made aware that this is a process and I am not going to give them a one-hour lesson and wish them good luck. They have to be committed. When they arrive, we do a screening. We capture 3-D data, take high-speed video and they complete a questionnaire. From those inputs we build them a multi-year plan to guide them through the necessary changes.

Regarding brain function and patterns, do men and women think differently?

There is right-brain dominance and left-brain dominance, but it's not a male-female thing. What is interesting is that someone like Anna Nordqvist, who is more of a left-brain type—more analytical, less intuitive—can turn that off. She can be in a lesson soaking everything up and processing it, then she'll walk to the tee and totally shut off the mechanical thoughts.

Turns out there is a learning mode and then there's a performing mode—is that the point?

Yes. And golf instructors should be aware of this left-right dichotomy. For example, we're aware now

that most of the best players are typically more right-brain, one second before they take the club back. Meanwhile, most coaches tend to communicate a lot of left-brain analytical information. Coaches need to be careful in how they communicate with a player and get an understanding if they are more right- or left-brain dominant. With the better player you communicate feelings and pictures and they can execute it. This is one reason I am a big fan of biofeedback with K-Player, from K-Vest. You don't need to fill them up with a bunch of data.

“Someone who comes to me now will be made aware that this is a process and I am not going to give them a one-hour lesson and wish them good luck.”

— *Tim Suzor*

You've been around 3-D for a while. How did you get started?

At the very beginning, during the VHS camera days, we would use two cameras and we'd send two VHS tapes to a lab on the East Coast. They were able to digitize the video and send us back graphs. That was great, except I had no idea what the graphs meant. At our Kinetic Golf Academy at Camelback we also had a system called Pedar,

which had insoles with sensors to help us understand ground reaction

force. Keep in mind this was 16 years ago. Like most teaching professionals I had mentors who helped me interpret the data. The data and the concepts were powerful because I could see swing-plane changes immediately once I understood how the forces created the motion. The cause-effect relationships are actually simple if you follow the science. For me it took the mystique out of the golf swing and that is one reason I moved on to the mind. I'm thankful to this day for that education. Mike Bentley and Chris Welch were instrumental in the success I've had with my players.

What do you see yourself doing in the years to come?

I would like ideally to build a world-class performance center that houses all the finest technology, and lead a highly trained staff. My desire would be to attract the best junior, collegiate and tour players to our facility. I think there is a big void on how to efficiently train elite-level golfers. At Camelback we would put up three tents—we called that area the Circus because we had to set it up every day—and our program was billed as the Ultimate Learning Experience. We sold one-, three- and 12-month memberships. That's the basic model I would like to build on.



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Golf Industry "Talking Points" That You Should Know

The following talking points were produced by leading industry organizations including the PGA, USGA and NGF and were distributed during the recent PGA Show in Orlando. Proponent Group members, as leaders in the industry, are well-advised to have up-to-date data on all matters golf-related. *Here are some highlights:*

- A national report commissioned by the NGF found that while 25 million Americans played at least once last year, another **32 million** have significant interest in trying golf.
- In 2014, **2 million** people in the U.S. tried golf for the first time, more than in any year since 2002.
- The number of youth golfers between 6 and 17 grew 29% from 2.4 million in 2011 to **3.2 million** in 2014.
- Girls account for **864,000** (27%) of the 3.2 million youth golfers in 2014.
- Golf saw the largest jump in junior participation (**800,000**) since 2011 of any youth sport in the United States including soccer, football, basketball, baseball, etc.
- Millennials are taking up the game: **6.3 million** golfers between the ages of 18-34 play an average of 14.7 rounds per year (93 million rounds) and spend an estimated \$5 billion a year on equipment.



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