

## RETAILTRIBE ON MARKETING

While You're Busy Saving the Golf Industry...

# Instructors: Start a 'Golfer Engagement' Log

By Ian James,  
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This month's article starts with a \$64 million question, which I pose to all Proponent members on behalf of the golf industry at large.

If you work at a club, do you publish an "engagement report" to management that details the numbers of golfers who've attended your clinics, coaching programs, skills challenges, supervised practices, assessments, performance events and clubfitting sessions? Or joined you for an accompanied round of golf?

And, if you don't keep such a log and generate regular reports from it... why not?

I'm prompted to ask in part by something I saw while reading the Proponent Group Facebook forum. I was struck by the number of members who 'liked' or commented on the article "Growing the Game: How Golf Gets it Wrong," written by Brandell Chamblee, posted with a link on Proponent's Facebook page.

Chamblee's interesting essay highlighted the power of the golf professional, especially the coach, in introducing golfers to the game then developing their competence and interest. For the incoming golfer, competence and interest tend to feed each other—plenty of research proves that. So, Tiger Woods, Rickie Fowler and Jordan Spieth may awaken a curiosity or make the game seem cool—that's important. Meanwhile, the pathway from introduction and exposure to committed golfer is most effectively travelled in the company of a skilled golf professional.

I know that. You know that. The PGA seems to know that. But quite evidently, the people in charge of golf facilities are often less enlightened. In the face of that lack of understanding, whose job is to enlighten them? And how are you going to do it? For starters, who else did you forward the Chamblee article to?



If golf professionals hadn't taken the time to engage and encourage the previous generations instead of sitting behind a desk, would Bobby Jones, Arnold Palmer and Tiger Woods have even become lifelong golfers?

In my experience, professionals are not even recording the key facts of golfer engagement. I have visited 100 or more PGA Professionals at golf clubs in the last 18 months. On only three occasions did I find them keeping track of the numbers and / or names of golfers they had engaged with each month. One of the three, Scott Kirkwood at Ocean Reef Club in the Florida Keys, had a fantastic report on the back of the merchandise stock room door, maintained daily by all staff professionals. It's the best such "scoreboard" I have seen in many years. Unfortunately, the club president had no knowledge of it. Excess modesty on Scott's part led to continued unawareness on the part of club leaders.

### Coaches are the key to revenue for our whole industry

About a year ago, some truly sensational facts emerged from a Proponent Group research project. We at RetailTribe were able to take those statistics into the field and validate them with a large number of our prestigious country-club customers in the Northeast. These facts make it eminently clear that the most valuable revenue resource to a golf facility is the golf coach. If you'd like to learn more about them, go to [www.retailtribe.com/features/coachesfactpack](http://www.retailtribe.com/features/coachesfactpack).

A conclusion struck me right then—the true challenge of this era is educating CEOs and general managers about teaching, coaching, golfer engagement and club revenue.

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To that end, at RetailTribe we are on a mission. We've produced educational programs for several club managers' associations around the world. We're currently building on them to create a program for the Club Managers' Association of America.

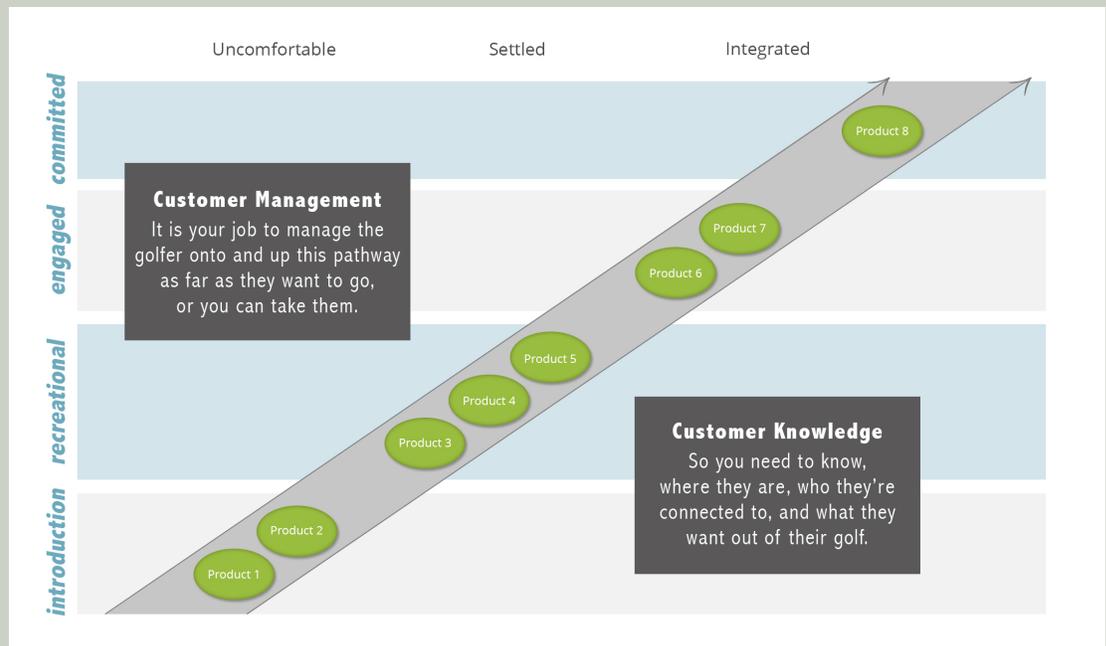
**Don't think about golfers you've 'coached.' Think about the golfers you've 'created,' 'saved' and 'activated.'**

It seems to be taking a while for golf coaches to grasp their own importance and appreciate the influence of their own activities. Recently I spent time with a teaching pro who, in 2013 alone, had led some 350 women through Get Golf Ready programs. That produced nice fee money for him, the coach. However, through follow-up it was found that only 28 of those women had gone on to play even a single round of golf. Few if any had made it to what we term the recreational level.

In that context, what was the value of the professional to the current cause of expanding the U.S. golfer base? It was very scant. His Get Golf Ready efforts produced almost no membership or green fee revenue, nor any equipment sales for the gear vendors. And, of course, no ongoing coaching revenue.

The good news is that this professional was a very quick learner and now appreciates that it's his job to develop the golfer, assisting them up a pathway from learner to recreational. And from there, to engaged if there's interest. And finally, to committed, if possible.

The value of a single golfer to the industry along that journey from introduction to even just



The value of a single golfer to the industry along the journey from introduction to even just recreational, never mind engaged or committed, is enormous in membership fees, food and beverage, retail sales and coaching.

recreational, never mind engaged or committed, is enormous (see graphic above). Do the arithmetic just for the one facility where you work. Project, over 10 years, the value of a golfer to a private facility, if that's where you are, in membership, fees, food-and-beverage, never mind retail and coaching. If you're at a public facility, you can do a similar projection (see example at left).

I'm willing to bet that you are shocked at the figure you've come up with. How about your management—wouldn't they also be shocked to see those figures?

## Imagine we reported against that figure

Now think about a report listing the number of new golfers you were responsible for each year and the projected 10-year value of that. Add the golfers you saved, or "retained," to use the industry term. Add the golfers you managed to move up the pathway from recreational to committed, or to engaged.

Those are the end-result statistics the golf industry needs. But they make sense only insofar as you add the stats on all those instructor-led

### The value of each new golfer created

Joining Fee	= \$ _____
Annual Dues (\$ _____) x 10 years	= \$ _____
Average annual spend on F&B (\$ _____) x 10	= \$ _____
Average annual spend On retail (\$ _____) x 10	= \$ _____
<b>Total value</b>	<b>= \$ _____</b>

Your calculation at your club may be different. Just make the adjustments and work this out. And if you're at a public facility, you can do something similar around green fees, but remember that one golfer usually brings on average 1.8 additional golfers with them to pay and play at the facility.

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activities that produce the happy results. As noted, we are talking about the number of golfers you've engaged with in clinics, coaching programs, performance events, skills challenges, supervised practices, assessments, fittings and so forth. Again, how can the industry value those measures if there are no logs and reports detailing them?

Your job is to make sure that your management understands that those activities create the golfers and revenues they desperately need. A start is to immediately begin the publication of an engagement report every month, and to begin a conversation with your management as to why that's so important (see example at right).

### Why are we so interested in this?

At RetailTribe our passion is revenue. We know that you're critically important to the revenue figure at any facility, and fundamental to the top-line health of our whole industry. Our job is to create 'Campaigns and Content' that inspire golfers to want to engage with you. Your job is to convert them onwards and upwards along the pathway to more golf.

And on the way, there's a better life for you. One where you're not only better rewarded, and more tenured, but one where your value and status in this industry is truly appreciated.

### Engagement Report

– Scott Kirkwood & Team March 2015

Activity	Golfers Engaged
Accompanied Play	18
Supervised Practice	12
Swing Assessments	16
Fittings	9
Clinics	36
Coaching	8
Skills Challenge	18
Fun Performance Events	16

We borrowed extensively from Scott Kirkwood at Ocean Reef in the layout of this report. Scott's report also includes the name of every golfer engaged.

## 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](mailto: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.