

RETAIL TRIBE ON MARKETING

Fun for Golfers, Marketing for the Coach: The Can't-Miss Value of Running a Skills Challenge

By Ian James, CEO, RetailTribe

Working with over a thousand golf professionals around the world, I am always amazed at how difficult it is to persuade them to run a 'Skills Challenge' with their golfers. Yet, this activity is probably one of the most powerful marketing tools available to a PGA Professional.

A skills challenge is a short (relative to the time it takes to play a round of golf) examination of a golfer's ability to perform a specific aspect of the sport. For instance, out of 10, how many straight 10-foot putts can a golfer make? How many times can he or she escape a greenside bunker and leave the ball inside a 3-, 6- or 12-foot circle drawn around the hole?

Some of the skills challenges we have in our playbooks, like a "30-yard Pitch Shot Challenge" may only take each golfer three minutes. Others, like the "Short-Game Handicap Calculation," might take each participant up to 15 to 20 minutes.

A challenge like the "30-yard Pitch Shot" can be run very simply, or a Professional can decide to add a launch monitor to provide the golfer with their launch angle and spin-rate readings. Maybe they want to video the golfer and send them a copy of the exercise. Some professionals have added individual feedback by email after the event. And we have one golf instructor who actually turned it into a charity event on a Saturday with a sponsor.

Inspire consumers to engage with a product

There is a fundamental four-step marketing model for retailers—no matter what product line or sector they are in. For any retail merchandiser, this particular scenario is what they are seeking to have their customer experience.

It goes in a four-part cycle: The merchant wants to **inspire** a consumer to **engage** with their product so they can **convert** this individual into a customer, before working hard to **retain** them as a customer.

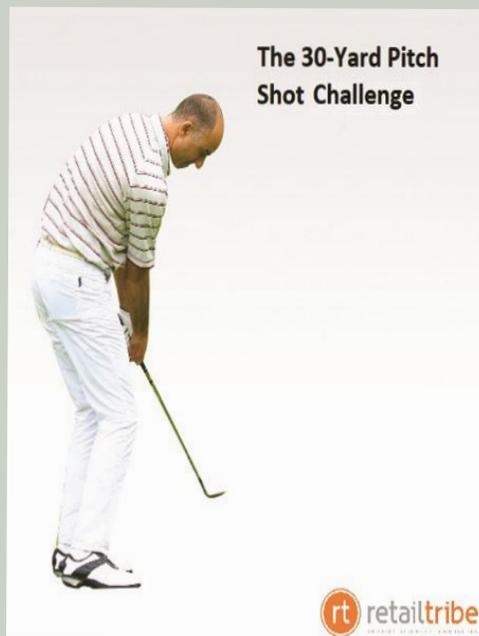
Audi spent a lot of money advertising its brand and its vehicles with the goal of persuading you to go into

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one of their showrooms to sit in one of their cars. Hyundai spent lots of money getting their cars into rental fleets so that business travelers especially would experience their vehicles. One of the large golf manufacturers spent a huge sum with a specialist company on the visual design of the sole of their Drivers. They were trying to create "rack appeal" so that golfers who walked past a rack of their drivers would be more inclined to pick one up.

Moving a consumer to the point where they engage with the product is hard. It's really hard. Get it right, though, and it offers a great chance to make more sales.



RetailTribe has a library of skills challenges designed to help you engage with your golfers

The Power of Engagement

A pair of adidas adizero golf shoes sitting on a shelf along with 20 other shoe models depends on advertising (including word-of-mouth) to **inspire** a golfer to seek it out, or else it depends on the golfer in need of shoes to walk over to the display without any other prompting. But a smart retailer can do so much more.

One of the retailers we work with spent a full week making sure that everyone who visited the counter to pay their green fee, or purchase golf balls and gloves, did indeed **engage** with the adidas adizero golf shoe. He first handed them two other golf shoes. Then he handed them an adizero shoe. The comparison in the overall weight was startling for the consumer.

What made this engagement so powerful was the way the consumer experienced the product. The demonstration highlighted the unique strengths of the adizero golf shoe. It didn't mean the consumer was going to buy a new pair of shoes there and then, but it did mean that the golfer had a much better understanding of the product and its benefits to them. Now that's marketing.

A Skills Challenge Achieves the Same Result and More

A PGA professional who spends three minutes with a golfer watching them hit three 30-yard pitch shots, and then offers a quick analysis and a small tip, is providing that golfer with the equivalent of the shoe weight test.

As a result of this very brief interaction, the golfer is exposed to the professional's unique skills. He or she recognizes the pro's ability to help people play better golf and to have fun on the golf course. That's three minutes of great marketing.

Meanwhile, it offers an entirely separate advantage. It quickly benchmarks the golfer's skill and allows the teaching professional to move the golfer into a discussion about their personal improvement and how that would translate on the golf course.

That right there is progress. It means we're already moving into a phase in the model where we can convert the customer into a sale. From our experience with this skills challenge there are three potential sales:

- A short-game coaching program
- A new wedge (which of course leads into a full wedge system or set)
- Up-sell of a two-piece golf ball player into a premium golf ball offering a better launch and spin.

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A higher sales conversion rate

Invest three hours of marketing time running a short skills challenge on a busy playing day and you will create between 40 and 50 engagements. From that exposure, in our experience, you ought to see at least 15 warm sales leads.

Talk to Monte Meyer, a PGA Professional who runs skills challenges on a regular basis, and he'll assure you that they create leads that he converts into big sales. Monte will tell you he could never sell a driver above \$400 at his club, yet this season he's already up to 20 sold above that mark.

The same goes for coaching programs. If you have a specific short-game program ready for your 30-yard pitch-shot skills challenge, you will sell them. As they experience the fun and value of that program, they will become a customer you **retain** within your teaching portfolio.

If you're selling equipment or instruction, skills challenges ought to be a core part of your marketing program.

Let RetailTribe Make 2014 Your Best Year Ever



"I cannot believe the results that RetailTribe has achieved for me, my business and my golf club. Shop sales are through the roof and I have more coaching demand than I can manage. Every PGA Professional, golf club or instructor should be using RetailTribe."

-Monte Meyer, PGA Professional, South Hills G.C.

You'll be surprised at how easy we can make effective marketing for you. Just give us 20 minutes and we'll show you how we can make an impact for you.

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