10 Proven Ideas Covering 5 Approaches:

TROVE OF TIPS TO MAKE YOUR MARKETING MORE EFFECTIVE IN 2018

By David Gould, *Staff Editor*

Creativity, discipline and the occasional daring idea all weave together in a sound marketing effort. Some marketing efforts can take place whenever the golf coach chooses, some of it requires advance planning and some of it is tied to certain parts of the season or dates on the calendar. Below are 10 classic marketing concepts or tactics devised for Proponent members or else adapted to fit the member's needs.

They divide into sub-categories of audience-building, leveraging social media, running skill-based events, customer appreciation and marketing via special events. Give all 10 a fresh look and see if they can boost your business in 2018.

Besides these 10 tips there are nearly 100 more in the Instruction Marketing Guide which can be found in the Business Guides section of the members website. We also bring you a brand new marketing tip each week in the Members Weekly Rundown in your email in box every Tuesday. Now is the perfect time to review all of our tips as you plan your marketing strategy for the new season.

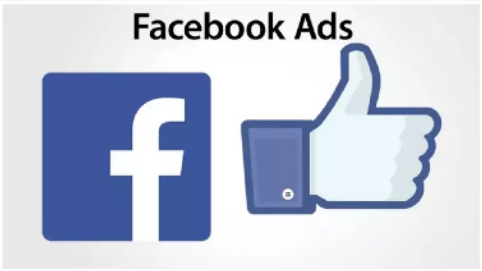
1) **Do Some Database-Sharing with a Non-Golf Business Nearby**: The people who spend money on golf coaching also spend money on—fill in the blank. It could be a luxury auto dealer, a jeweler, a conference center or some other local business. Test how well you and a partner business can pull good prospects from each other's databases. You can even openly cross-promote each others' services in the emails you send. For example, test-drive a certain car by a certain date and get a certificate for a group clinic series. People are highly receptive to recommendations that come from businesses they already trust and have had positive experiences with. It's even possible that the car dealer or jeweler is already a student of yours, which would make the partnership all the easier to initiate.

2) **Connect Your Golf Instruction Offerings to the Yoga Community**: It's highly impressive to see how intently golf coaches have studied bio-kinesiology and other aspects of the fitness-golf connection. Question: Do any of the 1,000 regular yoga students in your upscale know that flexibility and golf success go together? Do the yoga instructors?

Think about this: Whatever value the local yoga teachers feel they are delivering to their students, you could give them one more arrow for their quiver—they are helping their clients develop the type of flexibility, balance and conditioning that a good golf swing thrives on. Any yoga student who has remotely considered trying golf is, at the very minimum, going to get a little thrill at knowing they've got a big advantage over the non-yoga beginner—and that's incentive for them to come to the tee. How about a Get Golf Ready just for active yoga students? Or a demo at the yoga class showing how well a limber and yoga-trained body can make good golf swings? Self-improvement is the umbrella concept, for the yoga student and golf student alike—make that connection in your local market and see what happens.

3) **Devise a Plan for Effective Use of Facebook Ads**: At least for now and into the near future, Facebook advertising is so inexpensive you really can't justify ignoring the opportunity. A recent study of golf courses using

Facebook Ads found the price of getting a text-only ad in front of a very targeted audience came to 25 cents per 1,000 impressions. For a photo ad on Facebook it was under $3 per 1,000 people reached and for a sharing of a blog post that got to 1,000 sets of eyeballs it was about $3.75.



The various filters used by these golf facilities to ensure an appropriate audience for their ads included age, sex, home address, education, marital status, work status and several other key traits. The trackable results of the investment were measured in home page Likes, click-throughs to website home page and click-opens of the blog. Don't expect 1,000 impressions to be enough for major results, but at these prices you can test a few messages and hone your approach. Someday, when Facebook totally rules the media world, it won't be cheap to take out Facebook Ads, so give it a try this year.

4) **Messaging to Mobile Devices, Using Pictures**: Instagram, which is owned by Facebook and has 80 million daily users, started as a mobile app, so when you use the platform to promote golf instruction your message will show up on a smartphone or a tablet. The latest wisdom on effective Instagram posting includes these tips: Only use two-thirds of the screen for the photo you post—surrounding blank space will help draw the eye. Work on your captions, so that they don't just identify what's shown—if you add questions and strong statements you will heighten engagement. And remember to reply to people who have liked or commented on your Instagram post—now you're in a true conversation with a current or prospective student

5) **Combine Custom Wedge-Fitting with Coaching and Supervised Practice**: You can promise— and deliver —an impressive double-down on scoring shot accuracy when you pair wedge fitting with your coaching sessions. No less a golf facility than Haggin Oaks, in Sacramento, Calif., does this on an "event" basis, scheduling its combo teach-fit opportunities on Friday evenings and Saturday afternoons. For these events, the award-winning Haggin Oaks crew will try to bring two or three vendors together who provide an array wedge lofts, sole designs, shafts and grips for the fittings. A golfer will split his or her time 50-50 between instruction/practice and the fitting. Haggin Oaks charges participants $150 and for that price customers receive one fitted wedge plus instruction. As many as 40 to 60 people participate in each event, roughly dividing into 30 percent women, 60 percent men and 10 percent youth. Four to six instructors will cover it, sharing $25 from each customer's fee. On average, anywhere from $6,000-$9,000 in revenue is brought in during this two-hour event, with 15 to 20 percent of participants actually purchasing more than one wedge.

6) **Create a Putting Expo and Show All the Putting-Performance Help Now Available**: All under one roof (although there's no actual roof) you can gather your staff of fine teaching professionals, a putter-fitting expert, perhaps a rep from a manufacturer known for its putter line, putting practice-aids, an AimPoint teacher and and all sorts of other resources from this putting-intense era. Proponent member Nicole Weller called her event at The Landings Club in coastal Georgia a "Putting Fair." Weller's members received coaching in distance control, putt reading and alignment/aim, along with all the other bells and whistles gathered on her practice green. The direct result, says Nicole, was increased exposure by members to the club's golf professionals, nine putters sold at the fair plus interest in spin-off lessons, extra practice sessions and clinics to advance ideas that were discovered during the fair.

7) **Use Nameplates as Rewards and Recognition for Regulars**: It used to be said about Mercedes-Benz ads that they weren't designed to convince non-Mercedes owners to buy the car, they were all about congratulating Mercedes owners for having bought the car. At any golf academy, creative use of tee-station nameplates will perform this same important function. Even if you all you use are plastic plates that with an erasable surface, golfers

will still enjoy seeing those beautiful words—their own first and last name. The plates you order could even have preprinted titles, like "Golfer of the Week" or "Fast-Improving Student" or "Top 20 Most Improved," etc. You don't have to have one of these plates ready for every student every time, if doing so would be too time-consuming. Instead use them as an incentive for those who don't yet have one, as well as a reward and retention tool for those who do.

8) **"My Golf Teacher Reached Out to Me!"** Apparently this was the excited thought that went through the minds of 10 students who received texts from New Jersey-based instructor Brian Dobbie. The question Dobbie sent to his students, none of whom were currently active in his book, was disarmingly simple—he asked: "How is your game?" The message went out to the 10 golfers simultaneously and results came back to Brian quickly. All 10 golfers responded and the outreach resulted in Dobbie booking three standard lessons plus one playing lesson. He puts this nice success down to "the importance of following up," in all kinds of different ways— including a quick, simple text.

9) **The "Cinco de Mayo Approach" to Events and Engagement**: A marketing how-to article in Inc. Magazine once told seasonal businesses to "Invent holidays," just like Hallmark does. More accurately the advice was to leverage obscure events like Grandparents Day and Teacher Appreciation Week, create a relevant program and e-blast an offer. One of your first efforts in this direction could well be Cinco de Mayo—you'll get millions of dollars in promotion help from Mexican beer companies, and May 5—a Saturday this year—is a classic "hall pass" day for adult males, since families don't go away on it. Give a 15-minute clinic on "Lee Trevino's Driving Secrets," bring in a Mexican restaurant to cater, perhaps create a charitable tie-in, and use this theme and occasion to drive bonus revenue that day—meanwhile demonstrating how you help golfers play better the other 364 days of the year.

10) **Get Strategic with Your Father's Day Program and Pricing**: Proponent Group member Doug Holub draws upon his experience as a GolfTEC instructor when he mounts a marketing effort geared toward events like Father's Day. His primary targets are names from his "defector" or "lost" list—inactive students. He also targets the children of current clients, knowing they will be in need of a worthy gift for Dad. Doug is careful not to schedule these promo-priced lessons in prime-time slots, reserving those for full-rate bookings. Menu items include "45 Minute Lessons for $99," "Lesson Plus TPI Golf Body Evaluation for $149" and a "One-Hour On-Course Lesson for $199." The 2016 version of this promotion generated many responses and drew several "defector" clients back into Doug's lesson book. PG

(**Taxes, Continued from page 1**)
in equipment. TCJA allows full expensing for five years (and increases the Section 179 small-business expensing cap to $1 million, from $500,000.) If you're a W-2 employee being compensated via the standard paycheck, you may find that your federal tax burden is reduced because you've dropped into a lower tax bracket. That's information you can readily access online by inputting a certain annual salary and letting a calculator gadget spit out the bracket (and tax liability) that goes with it.

Those are the elements of the law that are most likely to affect golf instructors and, at the same time, are easily explained. The factors that are likely to impact your taxes but are more complex—and more influenced by specific family situations—involve the deductions you've been taking on your Schedule A. Mortgage interest, charitable contributions, the dependents you claim, state taxes you pay—those items may disappear from your return based on a much higher "standard deduction"—a blanket figure that is widely expected to reduce the number of taxpayers who itemize from roughly one-third to fewer than 10 percent. — *David Gould*