

SHOULD YOU BE YOUR FACILITY'S NEXT HP?



By Lorin Anderson, President

I have said this for years: *The only way a golf professional can stand out for the long haul is to be a superior player and/or teacher.* Everything else a professional does is related to retail or administration, and those duties don't pay well. It's a reality that has sunk in for golf pros who have let their Head Professional and Director of Golf

positions turn into paper-shuffling administrative jobs. At my club, I haven't seen the Director of Golf outside his office—it's down there in the bowels of the clubhouse—ever. Nice guy, but I doubt most members would recognize him in line at the bank.

That can't be what he thought he was signing up for when he entered this business years ago. Can it?

Proponent member Josh Points, who is a GM and Director of Golf, and who still teaches a decent schedule (Note: he also qualified for the National Club Pro this past year) made a comment recently that hadn't previously occurred to me, but makes total sense. Josh feels most golf professionals "choose to do paperwork because they lack the skills to do other things." He went on to say it was a huge mistake when the PGA convinced members they were "businessmen." Points didn't state this lightly. Here's a guy who made the effort to earn an MBA—and now says his MBA training has little overlap with the small-bore business skills needed to run a golf operation.

OK, to be fair, the industry faced a lot of changes a couple decades ago when POS systems landed at clubs and there were demands on the pro to be fluent in accounting software and reporting functions. Those became must-have skills for all head pros and DOG's, but in the process these Class A pros

shifted away from the soul of the business. *They were no longer helping golfers play the game better and enjoy the game more.* That's the job, people. And that engagement has been stripped from the majority of Head Pro and DOG positions these days.

Points makes the case that the Director of Instruction has stepped into this breach and become the most visible, most accessible and most consequential member of the golf staff. The head teacher has gone center-stage when it comes to driving the facility's business and creating customer engagement. (The monthly articles in this newsletter by RetailTribe's Ian James hammer home this same message.)

Points has recently taken this argument one step further and suggested that Directors of Instruction should be applying for Head Pro and DOG positions. He is convinced that the leader of the golf operation is most valuable when instruction and golfer engagement are at the center of their activities.

So, how to prepare the DOI for this transition? I contend it is about giving them the freedom to continue doing what they already do well, and couple that with team-building. When a DOI moves into the leadership position of the golf operation, they should *not* focus on paperwork, but instead apply their unique skills to enhance and upgrade the culture of the club.

As people continue to have shorter attention spans and more options for their leisure time, building a strong community of engaged members who enjoy the game and are improving at golf creates a truly healthy business for the facility.

Proponent has done some research on this, documented in our 'Business Value of Golf Instruction' Business Template. It's evidence that a membership engaged in playing better golf spends a lot more money at the facility.

Why not have the leader of the operation be the person most qualified to create engagement? If you're ready... now may be the time to leverage your unique skill set. **PG**

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