

2018: A YEAR OF CREATING MORE VALUE



By Andy Hilts, Director

A few weeks into my new role with Proponent Group I've come to a conclusion: There is a tremendous opportunity for all of us to provide value beyond helping our students play better golf.

It's a mindset that will serve any instructor well, particularly as we see the competition for students at an all-time high. More and more golf professionals

are specializing in teaching and coaching the game. Certainly many Proponent members are already well ahead of the competition, but it's still important to reflect on your current skill set and potential for improvement. How are you currently distinguishing yourself from your peers? How are you creating more value—not only for your students, but for your facility?

We all know that the typical golf facility fails to recognize the value a fine instructor provides to the club. We also know that the better people play, the more they play. More play means more revenue to the facility. I encourage you to shout this from the rooftops. Find a discreet way to brag about yourself and the successes of your students. Create awards like student of the month/week/year.

Are you making a big effort to share the successes of your students not only with the world via social media but, more importantly, with your facility leaders? The communication channels are all there—your newsletter, handicap board, dedicated academy email, private social media group, your own bulletin board, and more. Don't be shy.

I have heard stories from more than a few Proponent members who brought new students to the club for lessons and that introduction brought those new students to the membership director—it created new members. Five new members at \$20,000 each is \$100,000 in revenue to the club. Question: What's your club's initiation fee and how many new members have you been instrumental in generating?

By the way, a typical private club member stays for seven years

so the lifetime value of that student who becomes a member could be well into six figures over their membership span.

Whatever type of revenue generation you are bringing to the club, I suggest you do your best to measure it. When facility management comes to you wanting to adjust how much you are making, your hard data will end any potential fallout quickly.

It's also worth evaluating (and increasing) your "lifestyle value" to your students. What steps are you taking to build these relationships? Do you know the names of your students' kids, spouse and pets? Do you know what they do outside of work and golf? What are their passions? Do you host events?

My financial advisor runs a series of "Discover Denver" events that allow me and my family to enjoy experiences outside of the financial world. She hosts trips to the Botanic Gardens, the zoo, art museums and ballgames. Getting to know her and her other clients in a social setting only builds more trust and ensures I will keep my investments with her.

Of course, you don't need to go off-property to provide additional value to your students. Ask yourself: What is the total student experience—from driving in to the academy parking lot to scheduling their next lesson before they depart? Pay attention to all the details. Clean golf balls, uncluttered facilities, temperature-controlled space, free sunscreen, high-quality fresh hitting mats, cleanliness, decor, and so on. Does your student's experience feel more like Burger King or Capital Grille?

Creating a world-class experience doesn't mean giving it away but a little bit of free stuff goes a long way, especially if it helps promote your brand. That bottle of water (with your brand on the label), coffee/tea, beverages... it all makes a difference. I loved hearing Brian Jacobs at the last Summit share the rules and student promises that came with the logo golf shirt he provides them each year.

We are the activators. We are the front line to these super-consumers of golf on a daily basis. We are the tip of the sword that creates more golfers and more golf. Your customers have many options for golf instruction. Provide the additional value required in today's marketplace to your student and to your club and you will be recognized as a more valuable and much more permanent asset. **PG**

PROONENT GROUP CALENDAR

“Big D” to Host Proponent Summit 2018

**Dates and Venue to be Announced at the
PGA Merchandise Show.**