

LET ME TRY TO SELL YOU ON SOMETHING



By Andy Hilts, *Director*

At the start of 2018 I took on the Director role at Proponent Group with great anticipation. My experience over these past six months has been every bit as rewarding as I had hoped. And that is thanks to Lorin and our experienced staff—also to the quality of the discussions I’ve had

with so many of you. Every day for me is about getting to know Proponent members better. It’s key to more fully understanding the successes you achieve and the challenges you face.

Coming off my years with GOLFTEC as the corporate staff person who had direct contact with a legion of coaches nationwide, I see similarities between issues those coaches encountered and the issues I discuss with Proponent members. A very common theme is how teaching professionals struggle to gauge how much their skills are worth. Said another way: I don’t think we are charging enough for our skills and services.

It doesn’t make sense that a proven, proficient golf coach would undervalue what his or her services are worth. We change lives! We provide enjoyment to people who, in case after case, have succeeded at everything they’ve done in life – except golf. We enhance the excitement and fulfillment of a game that our students spend hundreds of hours, and thousands of dollars, playing each year. We provide unique value to an aspect of their lives that is high-priority. Why is this not worth more?

I gave this question serious thought and came up with a few theories—categorized under several headings:

Upbringing and Cultural Beliefs: Maybe this is just my perspective, but growing up with parents who were teachers I looked at golf as something you had to squeeze into the family budget. The golf we played was usually a late-day round at twilight rates—the faster you could play the more value you got. So, it was a huge leap to think

about charging someone four or five thousand dollars for golf coaching, even if the result was that I took them from a mid-90s shooter to a low-80s shooter.

Conformity to the Past: Instruction rates, to a great degree, are rooted in what the old pros at the typical club would charge. I’m talking about guys who were teaching a lesson now and again. Their pricing habits have stuck with our industry. So has the notion that the student alone dictates the lesson schedule. Both these practices need to change. Very likely, they need to change together, as one influences the other quite strongly. We need to bring a coaching mentality to the process, and make a strong case for seeing our students on a more frequent basis. This starts with building a menu of services that consists of in-depth, progressive learning programs and larger lesson packages. If you are going to take someone from 100 down to 90 it will require that you touch multiple aspects of their game multiple times. One of the guiding stats at GOLFTEC was that, over the course of taking lessons for a year, people took off an average of 7 strokes.

Lack of Sales Training: For years it would baffle me to see how lacking in sales technique the well-regarded instructor seemed to be. But hey—no training in sales means no effectiveness in sales, unless you are a rare “natural.” And lack of sales training will always cause a strong aversion to selling. In fact, most people who train anyone to sell anything spend a big chunk of that time explaining that selling is a productive and customer-assisting service. Taboos against selling are all based on a failure to understand that professional selling = educating. If you’re not educating and explaining, you’re not doing what a professional sales person does.

So think about it: Many of our students spend thousands if not hundreds of thousands of dollars to join exclusive clubs. Why should they not invest considerable dollars with us to make the most of that original expenditure?

The passion and the capacity to help people play better golf are, in nearly all cases, more valuable than the teacher realizes. You do great things for people—It’s absolutely OK to make very good money in the process. **PG**

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