

## AMF BENEFIT HIGHLIGHT

# Golfers Identify Opportunities for Growing Instruction

By Lorin Anderson, Instructor Div. Executive Director

One of the benefits of being an AMF member is getting access to insights you won't find anywhere else. Before AMF teamed up with Golf DataTech last year, no one had ever conducted a nationwide survey of golfers to discover their beliefs and attitudes about golf instruction. Golf DataTech, the industry's leading research company, sent our questionnaire to 5,000 serious golfers across the United States to try and capture their perceptions of and experiences with golf instruction. More than 1,200 current or former lesson-takers were among those completing the survey.

The respondent's mean age was 55, mean handicap was 16.5, mean annual rounds played was 58 and mean household income was \$115,000. Six percent of responses came from females.

Some of the highlights include:

- Serious golfers who have never taken a lesson represent a significant business opportunity as nine in 10 are willing to practice to improve and 84% believe lessons are valuable in helping someone improve.
- Golf professionals are widely recognized and respected for their knowledge of the game and their ability to teach the swing, however serious golfers are significantly more likely to purchase new equipment rather than taking lessons.
- The perception is that lessons are expensive and respondents said they would be more likely to take lessons if they were 20%-25% less expensive.
- Physical fitness/exercises for golfers would appear to be an area of potential opportunity for golf professionals as 82% of respondents are interested in learning about them, but only 33% have ever done so.

Serious golfers seem to be greatly influenced by the equipment industry's marketing dollars as 55% of serious golfers said that golf instruction would improve their game more than new equipment, but only 12% said they spent more money on golf lessons in the past year while 65% said they spend more on new equipment! My thinking on this apparent disconnect is that most golfers are inundated by equipment ads all the time, but not as much about the value of quality instruction. Do a better job of telling your story and promoting your programs to your students and potential students on a regular basis and you should be able to close this gap.

In another section of the study golfers were asked to rank seven statements as to whether they agree or disagree with them. The two statements they agreed with most were:

"I believe that golf pros are very knowledgeable and helpful at teaching the game/swing." and "I would take more lessons if they weren't so expensive."

These revelations suggest that we are fortunate to be in an industry where creating credibility is not a big issue. Golfers are very comfortable with the idea that you are qualified to help them improve their games. Even the golfers who had never taken any lessons most agreed with this statement. This means your marketing materials should focus more on your program options and maybe a bit less on all of your credentials, especially when communicating with people who already are familiar with you such as those on your email database or club members.

Now, the cost issue: As with most luxury items these days, everyone is taking a longer look at the value derived from all of life's extras, and even serious golfers may view private lessons as a bit of an indulgence. My suggestion is not to lower your rates, but to create more opportunities to teach in small groups throughout the season so that you can still make your normal hourly rate, but you can divide the cost among multiple students.

Programs like father/son, mother/daughter, share a lesson, or even using off-peak pricing at times when business is usually a bit slower can get the per person cost down below that perceived cost barrier while keeping perceived value high.

For years while I was at GOLF Magazine we'd survey our readers about their golf habits and when we asked if they were interested in improving their fitness to improve their golf, the positive responses were always under 10%. That didn't change for many years, then recently as the baby boomers neared retirement, we started to see that number rise. The AMF survey shows how much the attitude has changed as more than four out of five golfers are interested in learning more about how improved fitness can help them play better.

Going forward, to be considered a fully-qualified instructor, it will be imperative to have a functional understanding of how the body works during the golf swing and how to address basic deficiencies in your student's physical abilities. Flexor, Titleist Performance Institute and others are offering certification programs for teachers. Based on our survey, this would be money well spent for any teacher who has yet to seriously study this facet of helping golfers improve.

***For the complete AMF/Golf DataTech instruction study results including dozens of additional insights, visit the Instructor Business Templates page on the AMF website and download the entire summary.***

## AMF EXCLUSIVE REPORT