

Your Next Career Move: Strategy Plus Energy = the Right Formula

By David Gould, Staff Editor

A decade or so ago, any teaching professional moving up the career ladder had a shot at landing what you might call a cookie-cutter job. The course-building boom had not yet ended and a lot of frankly cookie-cutter golf facilities were opening. They were top-quality construction jobs and many had aesthetic appeal, but these new golf properties—many relying on the “country club for a day” concept—were becoming indistinguishable from each other. Still, they needed staff, so out would come the help-wanted notices for teaching professionals.

At that time, the job description of a staff instructor was highly predictable and the interaction between coach and golfer was not yet

viewed as a key catalyst for the facility’s health. In other words, the tight connection between a golfer getting coached and spending discretionary dollars (and time) at the course was not yet made. Stats to back that up are now emerging on a macro level. Question for today’s job candidate: Can you produce evidence that your students are above-average spenders and state this in your resume and cover letter? If not there is every reason to begin looking at

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your database of clients, studying their habits, scouting out these hard-data correlations and setting it all down in black and white.

Taking the next career step will often mean demonstrating mastery of the teaching sector’s many knowledge areas. (See Sidebar article on the “Certification Game.”) You are trying to show potential employers, investors and partners that your skills and acuity are a provable source of business development for the facility. Today it’s all about coaching-not-teaching, career management, how students are the

best golf customers and how to build your personal brand. That’s a lot to keep in mind as you study the possibilities and ponder your next career move—but still the timing holds much promise.

That’s because the teaching-coaching-training segment of the golf industry is brimming with energy, innovation, technology and smart, creative practitioners. The tail is wagging the dog, with golfers needing shorter, more varied golf experiences that seem—and truly are—more life-enhancing. The golf professional who is used to digging into the player’s game, their swing technique, the fitting of their gear and their psychological makeup is the one with whom they spend those compressed-time-frame visits. That makes the

The One-Two Punch of Resume and Cover Letter

Think of a resume as fairly universal and a cover letter as very personal. The cover letter should match the resume in fonts and paper stock but it’s a different tool in the job-seeker’s toolbox. Although you will tweak the resume for this job or that, it’s seen as a definitive description of who and what you are as a professional. The cover letter is specific, personal and as much as possible represents research you’ve done into the potential employer’s needs. “If you do your research properly on a job opportunity,” says Proponent Group president Lorin Anderson, “you will know the problem

that facility needs to solve and you will find a way to present your skill set as the ultimate problem-solver in this instance.”

Keeping your resume succinct is tricky, based on the one-page versus two-page question. Go onto a second page if your work history simply will not fit one sheet. Honesty and accuracy are a high priority in resume writing. Experts emphasize the need for accuracy (avoid stretching the truth) but also for a tone and feel that mixes a small dose of your personality among the straight, professional language.

Making the resume attractive means using fonts, spacing and symbols to create a fairly easy read.

Cramming text on a page to make certain you “don’t leave anything out” is a shaky concept if the result is a dense, crowded page that repels the eye. A data point such as where you went to high school can be skipped—it takes up space and seldom means anything to a prospective employer. You should be careful of worn-out phrases like “challenging, rewarding career.” They tend to show up constantly, to the point of losing all meaning. Also, if you are unable to save your resume as a PDF file, be careful with special formatting, graphics and unusual fonts. How the document opens after you’ve sent it electronically is pretty much up for grabs, if it’s not a PDF. —D.G.

coach a critical touch point for enthusiasm about the club or academy.

So, the next career move you make comes in this context. In recent consultations with members, Proponent Group's Anderson has been laying out five basic trends:

1) Director of Instruction positions are being filled in a manner similar to the way head-professional positions have long been. There is a more stringent vetting process than ever before.

2) Many positions are not posted. You need a strong professional network and visibility in the market—first to get notification of an opening, and eventually to make the list of viable candidates.

3) As the long lists and short lists get assembled for an open position, you need to try and Skype your way to the front of the line. The Skype or FaceTime interview is a money-saver and a timesaver for people hiring and you need to become comfortable and skilled in these interactions—which takes practice.

4) Measure your successes. Track everything that translates to a value for the people in charge at your golf facility. Data now rules the world.

5) Use the resources of Proponent Group to help create the rungs of that career ladder. There is value for you in the Member Mentors resource, as well as in the tools contained under the Members Only heading of The Job Search.

As has been noted previously, the Proponent Group ratio of employees to self-employed is fairly even at 52 to 48 percent. That's based on the large statistical sample represented by our 2014 Compensation Survey. Are you best off still looking for employment in a traditional setting like a club? If not, should you be trying to strike out on your own as an independent entrepreneur?

Part of the process as you decide what to do next is understanding your own makeup and how you are "put together." Personality tests that reveal how entrepreneurial you are by nature can be found online in many versions. One you might test-drive is now posted at Forbes.com, adapted from the talked-about new book, "Instinct," by marketing guru Thomas Harrison. Possibly you would come to this crossroads believing that entrepreneurs are born, not made. Harrison won't totally disagree, but he contends that many of us fail to recognize our business-starting streak and skills, even though we may be well equipped in this area.

Remember also: In the world of golf instruction or golf academies, you move pretty quickly from the entrepreneur role into the role of the day-to-day manager. So, your appetite for risk is a factor in any entrepreneurial effort, but a rational, comprehensive planning process can help you manage risk quite effectively.

In presenting your qualifications for basically any staff position at an academy or golf club, make certain you cover the following areas of achievement:

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- Ability to manage an instructional program
- The variety of instructional programs you can offer
- Your instructional philosophy
- Notable instructors worked for and continuing education during your career

- Junior golf programs—numbers and outcomes
- Ability to interact professionally with club staff and the membership
- Ability to attract and manage corporate events

Finally, it may sound odd, but you don't hurt yourself or your chances one bit by expecting good things to happen thanks to timing and a bit of luck.

The Certification Game

If you attend a military convocation, you may be fascinated by the stripes, bars and medals on each officer's uniform. At a scout jamboree, you might look to see who has the most badges and which ones they've earned. When it's time to check out a golf instructor's credentials, the current trend is to look at their certifications. From TPI to Trackman, from Plane Truth to AimPoint, the specialized training you can take and the stamps of approval you can earn from these special programs are many. You need a strategy for understanding which of these special areas of training you wish to "get a badge" in, and why. Then you need to be able to explain why you value some highly and others not so much. One sound approach is to take the chart below



... and concentrate on gaining mastery of each, with or without a certification, meanwhile deciding if you feel a certification in that specialty really matters to your performance and career advancement. If it does, set a schedule for when and how you will attain the certification. If you're involved in a job interview in the meantime, explain your thinking and share your plans. --- D.G.