

Norwood Park Golf Centre: Membership Options

Norwood Park Golf Centre in Nottinghamshire is a proprietary-owned, parkland golf course. Still a young club, Norwood Park was established in 1999. Developing it since then into the successful Golf Centre it is today has involved a number of financial challenges and sound decision-making on the part of the Club's manager, owner, golf professional and Golf Development Manager.

The Issue:

As a young business, Norwood Park needed to maximise income through green fees and – in particular – membership subscriptions. The club was developed from scratch and in order to ensure it would thrive it was essential to entice members with a range of different membership options.

The Solution:

From day one, the Centre has offered a wide range of membership packages, including Full, Weekday, Pay & Play, Intermediate and Cadet.

This modern club is aware that today's golfers often do not have the free time available to play more than once a week and are unable to justify the financial commitment of a full membership. Very few other clubs in Nottinghamshire offer a Pay & Play style membership option, which is likely to explain the popularity of this membership category at Norwood Park. Indeed, many members have moved their allegiance to Norwood Park from other local clubs simply because of the flexibility offered by Pay & Play.

At a Glance ...

- Norwood Park Golf Centre has grown quickly to become one of the area's premier golfing destinations in just 16 years from its opening.
- From the beginning, the manager and owner established a range of membership options, including Full, Weekday, Pay & Play, Intermediate and Cadet.
- Pay & Play is an unusual option in Nottinghamshire and attracted members from other more established clubs.
- The Club's membership remained solid throughout the recession, a success believed to be due to its lower-priced flexible membership options.

Over time, the Centre's manager, owner, golf pro and Golf Development Manager have worked closely together to fine-tune the conditions of the various membership categories and to achieve the successful mix of membership options that are now offered. For example, the Intermediate Membership was originally available only to golfers aged between 22 and 25 years. This has now been extended to 29 years, with the Full Membership fee applying only to those aged 30 and over, a change that is believed to have helped attract and retain younger players to the Centre.

The Challenges

Norwood Park offers great membership options and fantastic courses! With this winning combination the club has been fortunate in suffering no difficulties in its membership department and is proud of its success in offering its members what they need.

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Impacts:

The Centre opened in 1999 and has already built up a strong membership. The manager is pleased to report that membership stayed strong throughout the economic recession of recent years. Since then there has been a steady increase in membership numbers. In Autumn 2012 the club had 689 members, and the latest available figures, relating to February 2015, show that 770 people were enjoying a membership of Norwood Park Golf Centre, across all categories.

In February 2015, the Centre had 30 Intermediate Members (age 22 to 29 years, inclusive) and 80 Pay & Play members. The Manager believes that if these categories were not offered there might be 110 fewer members of the club today!

Next Steps:

Norwood Park Golf Centre does not have any current plans to make further changes to its range of membership options: it has a healthy membership believed to be fuelled by the existing variety of membership categories on offer. However, the Centre continues to monitor its membership levels in each category and the manager doesn't rule out minor changes or improvements in the future, if this proves necessary to maintain a strong membership and continue the Centre's successful growth.

Tips & Advice:

Norwood Park's General Manager has been with the Club since the beginning and has learned some valuable lessons over this time, which he shares with us:

- ★ Golf clubs have to give their customers what they want, otherwise there is always a risk that they will leave and find another club that does so.
- ★ To attract and retain members, clubs need to address the main factors why people stop playing golf, such as lack of time, finding the game too difficult, or not feeling welcomed by their club.
- ★ Ultimately, they need to remember that they are sports clubs, which above all must be welcoming and friendly.

“ We are giving people options and there is an option for everyone. ”

*General Manager,
Norwood Park Golf Centre*

A final word from Norwood Park Golf Centre:

The Club's General Manager is clearly proud of the way Norwood Park has grown over the past sixteen years. Based on the Centre's success, he strongly believes that offering alternatives to traditional golf club membership is the way forward for all golf clubs.

“I can't imagine us not having all these membership options and other clubs must do the same,” General Manager, Norwood Park Golf Centre.

Based on surveys and follow up interviews, the UK and Ireland's Golf Home Unions have identified and showcased examples of “what works” in golf club management in a series of case studies. The focus has been on clubs that have been successful in achieving more players, more members and stronger clubs. The intention is to share information and guidance on effective practices in business planning, customer service, membership, and women's and girls' golf. For further information about this and other case studies and for further support, please go to www.golfcasestudies.businesscatalyst.com.



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