

Tain Golf Club: Tackling Dwindling Membership

Tain Golf Club is a traditional Scottish Highlands links course in Ross-Shire. This challenging course enjoys stunning mountain scenery and offers an interesting game to beginners and experts alike. However, Tain was struggling to maintain a steady membership and numbers were dwindling.

The Issue:

Membership at Tain Golf Club had been falling in all membership categories since 2004. Action needed to be taken to ensure that Tain would once again thrive and continue to offer great golf.

The Solution:

In 2011, the Club introduced an introductory membership for new members. The “New Members Offer” offers a vastly reduced one-year membership to people joining the Club, including those who have not been a member of Tain for the previous four years. The “New Members Offer” costs in the region of thirty per cent less than a full membership (excluding bar levy) and provides the new member with a full Club membership.

The Challenges

Initially, the Club experienced a little resistance from several existing members. Some expressed the view that it was unfair for new members to be paying less for the same package held by existing members. However, once it was explained to them that this would help secure the future of the Club, they were fully supportive. As the membership increased as a result of the new offer, the benefits to the Club and all its members became readily apparent.

At a Glance ...

- Membership at Tain Golf Club had been falling in all membership categories since 2004.
- In 2011, Tain introduced a “New Members Offer” for new members – a discounted one-year membership.
- In 2014, membership increased for the first time in several years in all categories except Ladies and Girls.
- A members’ feedback survey is currently underway and an Open Day is planned.
- New members are well looked after – the Club arranges games until they get to know other members and also holds social functions.
- The Club is optimistic and pleased with its progress, but recognises there is still much to be done.

Impacts:

The Club keeps a record of how many new members have taken up the new Membership offer, and also whether they renew their membership or leave the Club when their first year of membership expires.

“ 2014 saw the first increase in membership at Tain for several years: the Club enjoyed an increase of eighty members across various membership categories. ”

2014 saw the first increase in membership at Tain for several years: the Club enjoyed an increase of eighty members across various membership categories, with many joining under the “New Members Offer”. Encouragingly, a high percentage of those members joining under this initiative have retained their membership in subsequent years, paying a full price subscription.

The only category that did not see an increase in numbers in 2014 was Ladies and Girls, which instead continued to decrease in number. This membership category remains a significant challenge for Tain Golf Club, and one that they plan to address in future.

Next Steps:

The “New Members Offer” at Tain Golf Club is ongoing, and the Club is confident that it will continue to attract new members, who will enjoy the facilities and be attracted to a full membership in future.

In addition, the Club has implemented a number of initiatives to build on their recent success:

- ★ Feedback surveys are being distributed to both new and existing members to gain insights into their satisfaction with their Club and membership. Based on the survey results, Tain Golf Club

will consider tailoring its facilities and membership packages to the preferences of current and prospective new members.

- ★ The Club is also planning to hold an Open Day to promote itself to prospective new members. The Open Day will be used to showcase its excellent range of golfing and social facilities, provide information about membership packages and sign up new members on the spot.
- ★ Tain has a range of measures in place for welcoming new members. These include arranging games for them while they get to know other members and planning social functions to introduce the new members to the Club’s social scene.

“ There is a very long way to go and much work to be done to try to stop the trend of falling membership. ”
Secretary, Tain Golf Club

Tips & Advice:

Tain Golf Club’s Secretary, Magi Vass, has the following words of wisdom for other clubs facing a similar challenge: “Just keep trying anything you can to encourage more people to play/take up golf and make them feel welcome at your club.”

A final word from Tain Golf Club:

The Club is proud of its progress and optimistic for the future however acknowledges the continuing challenge ahead. “Good, but there is a very long way to go and much work to be done to try to stop the trend of falling membership.”

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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