

Langland Bay Golf Club: Club Marketing

Langland Bay Golf Club is idyllically located on a cliff top high above the Gower beaches in South Wales. It has recently benefitted from extensive renovations and improvements and, in 2013, the Club won the coveted Welsh Golf Club of the Year award. A few years back, however, the Club had experienced a big drop in membership and was running into financial difficulties.

At a Glance ...

- With falling membership and low green fees, Langland Bay needed to generate funds to upgrade its out-dated course and infrastructure.
- A PGA Advanced Pro was recruited to develop and lead a range of marketing campaigns and initiatives.
- Social media, specialist golf publications and other communications channels have successfully been used in marketing.
- Fees were raised slightly, and the Club has promoted itself as a high-end brand with exclusive member benefits.

The Issue:

The number of members at Langland Bay Golf Club fell significantly prior to 2010, and green fees became precariously low, at around £45,000 per year. Urgent action was required to promote the Club and drive it into the public eye in order to boost the membership.

There was a need to update and improve the Club's infrastructure and its course. The perceived risk was that new members would not be attracted to the Club because of the out-dated nature of its facilities. At the same time, the Club was burdened with substantial repayments for land acquisition loans, and needed to make an annual surplus.

“My main focus was to promote the Club and get it into the public eye... Then I had a product to market and sell which I had faith in and believed in.”

The Solution:

In an innovative new approach, in 2010 Langland Bay Golf Club recruited a PGA Advanced Pro as its PGA Director of Golf, in order to tackle the problems and turn round the Club's fortunes.

The PGA Director of Golf has led all the Club's marketing campaigns and initiatives and remains in this role after five years. Under his leadership, Langland Bay Golf Club initially developed a marketing plan, followed by the establishment of a tracking report to monitor progress against membership goals. A programme of sales research has been carried out, staff training has been conducted and initiatives implemented to encourage better communication between departments.

Other initiatives designed to attract more members have included advertisement design and editorials, developing course reviews, the use of social media and adoption of the New2Golf and other membership initiatives. The social media ethos has been to “Engage, Educate and Entertain”. No Facebook or other paid for campaigns have been used, purely



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competitions, photographs, jokes and funny articles followed by offers – and this has been highly successful.

The Club has also engaged with Visit Wales, GUW, GDW and tour operators to help raise awareness and interest among potential new members. It continues its extensive marketing campaign, advertising in a variety of publications including specialist golf publications. Marketing brochures and hand-outs are readily available around the Club, and regular mail shots and emails ensure an

“The key was to do things that other clubs were not doing and make a member’s life easy with abundance of communication.”

electronic database of clients. In addition, all revenue streams now have separate marketing budgets and targets to attain.

Challenges and Solutions

Founded in 1904, the Club is steeped in history and changing its traditional approach to marketing and was initially difficult. When the Club was first embarking on its turnaround-campaign, the concern of some existing members was “Will the Club become too corporate and too cheap?” To address this concern, the joining fee was retained and membership fees were slightly raised. The intention was to promote the Club as a “high-end” brand with a range of exclusive member benefits. The perceived key to making this work was the individual character of the Club combined with the use of exemplary communications.

The Club engaged local companies to provide member incentives and displayed a list of member’s benefits in the clubhouse. It worked with a number of sponsors who assisted with member sponsorship, scorecards, course planners, diaries and other items.

One of the popular new initiatives developed was an online tee booking system, which

allows members and guests to book tee times quickly and at a time that suits them. Reciprocal arrangements have been set up with several local golf clubs so that members are able to play elsewhere for free if no convenient tee times are available at Langland Bay.

Impacts:

Since 2010, green fees have increased by almost 75% to £78,000 and membership has increased so dramatically that the Club will implement a waiting list from March 2015. The social media campaign alone has resulted in more than £30,000 worth of green fees and eight new members to date.

Thirty-one new members signed up to the New2Golf beginner initiative in 2013 and a further eleven in 2014.

At the 2014 Swansea Bay Tourism awards Langland Bay Golf Club won the award for best Attraction & Activity: evidence of an amazing turn-around and successful marketing campaign!

Tips & Advice:

Langland Bay’s PGA Director of Golf advises that the important thing is not to be afraid to do things that other clubs have not done. They should “engage, educate and entertain” clients;

“Get up! Walk your club as if you were a visitor or prospective member. It is key to entertain and give your members an environment they want to stay part of.”

be sure to develop a mission statement and – most importantly – have confidence in their product.

One of the practical lessons learned by Langland Bay is the importance of tracking the source of incoming enquiries; that way the Club only needs to spend time and money on advertising in those publications that actually generate results.

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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