

Dunning Golf Club: Business Planning

At a Glance ...

- ▶ In a tough economic climate, the Dunning recognised a need to be more proactive in business planning.
- ▶ The Committee initiated a comprehensive business planning process, commencing with a full SWOT and PEST analysis.
- ▶ The process was facilitated by attendance at a useful SGU planning meeting.
- ▶ Priority areas and scorecard targets were identified.
- ▶ The Plan covers 2014 to 2016 and will be reviewed on a regular basis.
- ▶ Input from the general membership is invited and encouraged.
- ▶ Concrete benefits of implementing the Plan are already being realised by the Club.

Dunning Golf Club is located in rural Perthshire. The course and pavilion are set on land managed by the charity The Rollo Trust. The Club is run very much as a business, and the Committee is keen to ensure that its expenditure does not exceed its income.

The Issue:

The number of active golf club members in Scotland is falling and many of Dunning's competitors have gone out of business. Despite having a good track record of healthy membership, Dunning Golf Club wanted to ensure that it could survive the economic downturn and continue to thrive. More generally, the Committee became aware that they needed a more systematic process for identifying the Club's business priorities and taking these forward.

The Solution:

The Club Committee initiated a comprehensive business planning process, commencing with a full SWOT and PEST analysis, the results of which were used to develop priority "core" areas and objectives for the Business Plan.

A Scottish Golf Union (SGU) representative visited the Club to advise on this process, and Committee members attended an SGU planning workshop. This event was found to be particularly helpful, not just because of the formal training provided but, just as importantly,

the opportunity to network with representatives of other clubs and learn from their experiences. The workshop helped the Club in the process of identifying and formulating specific targets for inclusion in its Scorecard, for use in reporting performance against its Business Plan.

Covering the period 2014 to 2016, the Plan provides clear guidance and targets for the Club's future direction and lays out details of its intended managerial and operational structure. It identifies proposed improvements and changes to the Club, how they will be implemented, their relative priority and financial requirements. It also sets out roles and responsibilities for taking forward various elements of the plan, and any training requirements.

“ Attending the SGU Business Planning Workshop was very useful in helping Dunning to formulate its business goals, and enabled the Committee to learn from the experiences of other participants. ”



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The Plan will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis, though there is still a need to develop a systematic process for this.

The Challenges:

All members were invited to contribute their ideas and opinions of the Club early in the business planning process, and at a Members' Forum. However, very few members took part in this exercise. Encouraging members to engage in key meetings and provide feedback has been onerous, and an on-going challenge is how to involve the members more effectively. Club members have full access to the Business Plan and their feedback is welcomed at all times.

Impacts:

At the time of developing this case study, it was too early for the Club to report quantifiable impacts of their Business Plan on finances or membership. However, the Secretary reports that clear benefits have already been achieved through its implementation. These include improvements to the quality of the course, and providing a more comprehensive package to members including, for example, subsidised coaching. An expected future benefit arising from the Plan is the stabilisation of Club catering costs through converting the current non-profitable arrangement to a franchise. Most importantly, the business planning process has enabled the Club to be much clearer about its future priorities and the resources available to fund these.

Tips & Advice:

The main advice of Dunning Golf Club's Secretary to others embarking on a business planning process is to stay focused on the main issues facing their club, and not get bogged down in details. The main challenges are often those shared by most clubs, such as quality of the course, staying competitive, and attracting members, and much can be learned

from the experiences of others. But it's also important, says the Club Secretary, to find out and address the concerns of current members in the planning process. Giving members the opportunity to be involved at an early stage of business planning is important to avoid any recriminations that the Committee is taking the Club in the wrong direction.

A final word from Dunning Golf Club:

Dunning's business planning process has proved greatly beneficial, providing the Committee with much greater clarity about future directions and greater confidence that the Club will continue to prosper. But the Secretary highlights the importance of keeping the Plan under constant review and ensuring that it is regularly updated to reflect changing circumstances and new opportunities – a point that other Clubs should certainly take note of.

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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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