

Fulford Golf Club: Initiating Business Planning Processes

At a Glance ...

- ▶ Fulford Golf Club had no formalised business or marketing planning processes in place and there were concerns that direction and focus had been lost.
- ▶ The first step was to research the local market and customers.
- ▶ The Club then reviewed its own facilities and staff and training requirements.
- ▶ Finally, the Manager and Board prepared a Business Plan.
- ▶ The Business Plan was adopted as a guide for the Board of Directors and sections are reviewed monthly.
- ▶ The Manager recommends the need to get everyone to 'buy into' the plan to ensure success!

Historic Fulford Golf Club is located in heath and woodland within one mile of York city centre. It was the setting for twenty-three consecutive European Tour events in the late twentieth century, and offers an unforgettable golfing experience to members and guests alike.

Whilst remaining a popular golf destination, the Club lacked a structured business and marketing plan.

The Issue:

Following great success during the 'tournament years' in the 1980s and 1990s, Fulford had lost some of its identity as a leading club. Part of the problem was a lack of business planning, and this was hindering progress. There were no long-term plans for the clubhouse or the greens, no Human Resource succession plans, and no long term capital investment plans. In addition, the Club did not understand the local golf market – including its competitors and their prices. Without this market knowledge and without vital business plans in place, concerns were raised that the facilities, services and revenue at the Club might suffer.

The Solution:

Fulford Golf Club initiated a number of steps to address the problem. Firstly, it researched the local market to enable management to understand who its main competitors are and its position in this market. Secondly, it carried out a review of its own facilities, staff and the

training requirements. Finally, the Manager and Chairman prepared a Business Plan, which included:

- ➔ Goals and targets for the Club
- ➔ Details of the human resource structure
- ➔ A Finance Plan
- ➔ A Capital Plan
- ➔ A Marketing Plan

The Business Plan was adopted as a guide for the Board of Directors to follow and is being used by the Board to review the Club's progress.

“ The Business Plan was adopted as a guide for the Board of Directors to follow and it will be used for the Board to review the Club's progress. ”

Impacts:

A major beneficial impact of this process is that the Club has more structure. The Board, Management, Committee, and staff are working towards the same goals, and the Board of Directors has an understanding of all areas of the Club. As a result, the Club operates in a more business-like manner.

The Club has also benefitted financially: in each of the six years since the plan was put into place it has experienced increased turnover, enabling capital investment to improve the clubhouse facilities, greens machinery, and the course. The Club has a low staff turnover and is operating successfully in a very competitive local market.

Next Steps:

The Business Plan is an ongoing initiative. Certain sections of the Plan are reviewed monthly and the Plan as a whole is updated as required. The Plan is communicated to new Board Members and the staff are all working towards achieving the agreed aims.

“In each of the six years since the plan was put into place the Club has benefitted from increased turnover, which has allowed reinvestment into improving facilities, greens machinery and a major golf course project.”

Tips & Advice:

Fulford Golf Club's Manager worked hard with the Board to produce the Business Plan. In doing so, certain lessons were learned which are likely to be of value to other clubs when developing a business plan:

- ➔ The agreement of the Board and Committee is vital to the success of a business planning exercise.
- ➔ Keep on top of your market. Researching your competition needs to be an ongoing process so that you can understand what your competitors are doing and what your customers want from you.
- ➔ Be transparent with the staff and seek their input and support.
- ➔ Celebrate successes with the staff!

A final word from Fulford Golf Club:

The Manager of Fulford Golf Club is rightly proud of the Club's progress. He summarised the experience as “Very successful - it has provided a long term structure and guide for the Club, and our members will benefit from this for years to come.”

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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