



The Art of Discounting....

By Bay Paul, Golf Course Marketing Specialist, Course Logix, Member MGCOA

With the economic challenges here in Michigan, golf courses are expected to further discount their tee time inventory in order to attract more customers. Discount Golf in Michigan is a 20 million dollar a year business, so why not go after a piece.

The problem is that many golf course operators are not educated in marketing and consumer buyer behavior. If a golf course decides to dabble in the discount golf game, they better know what they are doing. If the golf course does not have a sound plan, they can cause a ripple effect, which could definitely damage their business and likely to trade quality dollars for less.

I was at a golf course the other day and they were promoting a special that included 4 rounds for \$99. The idea was good, but the Pro advertised the special in the golf shop. You already have a captive audience and he did not put any restrictions on the promotion. What happened? Foursomes would come in who would have paid rack rate (\$39), noticed the sign and ended up buying the \$99 special. This promotion should have been mailed out to a certain database of golfers who live in a different area. This happens every day at golf courses throughout the United States.

I just want to make everyone aware that poor decisions made by a few operators, can cause the downfall of their course and have a ripple effect throughout Michigan. Identify your weak spots on the tee sheet and target specific promos to develop additional revenue. Do not however take away from the areas that have players, especially when those players are "paying" an acceptable price for that specific tee time. Gone are the days of "one size fits all". Today savvy operator is likely to offer a variety of products based on supply and demand. Blanket treating is likely to take away from the good you have already established. Know your peaks and valley and design programs to help in the valleys. You might be able to increase prices if a consistent peak is noted. Fully utilization of the tee sheet requires one to analyze the business. Having an email program to improve weak spots on your tee sheet is essential.....not to mention it rewards customer loyalty.

There is a way to capitalize on discounted golf, but you have to know how. If you are interested in learning more, please call us at 800-599-6310. Effective solutions are cheaper than you think.

Minimize Your Susceptibility to Lightning Hazards

Summer is peak season for one of the nation's deadliest weather phenomena lightning. The average lightning strike is six miles long, reaches 50,000 degrees Fahrenheit, and contains 100 million or more electrical volts. In the United States, an average of 62 people are killed each year by lightning, and it is estimated that somewhere between 5 and 10 percent of those deaths have occurred on golf courses. It is also estimated that lightning accounts for more than \$4-\$5 billion in damages annually in the U.S.

Where lightning hazard is concerned, the priority for course owners is undeniably the safety of patrons, crew and staff. The open space of a golf course, with scattered trees and often limited places to seek effective shelter, makes it a particularly dangerous place when lightning strikes. The focus here, however, is on the potential damage to expensive irrigation systems. Irrigation systems are particularly susceptible because they have large amounts of wire buried in the ground that can attract lightning. While you cannot protect against a direct lightning strike, you can protect against its indirect electrical energy with surge protection, proper grounding and other measures.

There are many options available when it comes to lightning protection - from simply remembering to electronically disconnect sensitive equipment to elaborate devices and irrigation protection systems. Budget, location, experience and personal preference are all factors that play a role in decisions concerning which lightning countermeasures are best for your course. A lot of valuable information can be found by doing some research online. Two good places to start are the National Lightning Safety Institute: www.lightningsafety.com and the Lightning Protection Institute:

www.lightning.org. (the latter offers a listing of qualified contractors). Articles on irrigation system protection can also be found on the Grounds Maintenance website: www.grounds-mag.com (search the keyword "lightning").

Other Lightning and Power Outage Problems to Consider

In addition to repairs to the irrigation system, surge damage and power outages of any cause affects turf quality by interrupting finely tuned watering schedules. ***Lack of water can put your golf course out of business!***

- Contact your local well repair contractor to be sure you are on the top of their list. Have them inspect and discuss the potential storm repair process. Are parts available? How long for delivery? Call the supplier to confirm.
- Do you have the ability to water your key areas without the irrigation system in operation? What if you are without power for several days? **Develop an alternate watering plan for your greens and tees.** Water tank? Trash pump?

Insurance can replace and repair storm damage to your greens equipment, but it will not protect your grass from lack of water. ***Having an alternate watering plan is the key.*** Please contact us with your alternate plans and in our next article we will share your ideas and experience with other members of the MGCOA. Contact John Seiser at john.seiser@kapnick.com or 888.263.4656 x1300.