



ATTRACTING NEW MEMBERS

Ray Burniston gives advice on how to attract new members to your club now that waiting lists are becoming a thing of the past.

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With the influx of new golf courses over the past ten years or so, today there are many clubs which no longer have waiting lists. Indeed in many cases they are actively looking for new members. Over the past year or so I have seen adverts from not only proprietary but private members clubs stating they have vacancies for new members - something that was almost unheard of a few years ago.

What can clubs do to encourage new members without taking drastic action? A few of the following points are being or have been tried at various clubs.

1. If you do not already offer this facility, the entrance fee could be spread over a number of years. This encourages applications from persons who may move about a lot and are reluctant to pay say a £1,000 fee but would probably be quite prepared to £200 pa on the proviso that if they leave after say two years they do not have to pay the remaining £600.
2. You could do away with entrance fees altogether. If you go down this route you may well find that the number of members resigning annually will go up substantially because those that have not paid an entrance fee will not have the same incentive to remain a member.
3. One club I visited offers members two choices when they join. Firstly they can pay the full entrance fee, or they can pay no entrance fee but a higher subscription, which remains always - in this case £75 greater than the normal annual subscription. This again caters for the member who through work/business may move around.
4. Another club offers existing members an additional £25 to be added to their swipe cards to be spent in the bar/catering for every new member they introduce.
5. The club professional can be a source of new members by having group lessons for those wishing to take up golf. In most cases the professional will have the added incentive to sell new clubs and clothing to newcomers without expecting to be paid any commission by the club. If you consider talking to the professional about adopting this policy then the club could help with advertising. It could also provide good facilities for the professional to work under, as well as some form of covered area for lessons. Proper marketing of these facilities can encourage families to join helping both the ladies and junior sections of the club.

6. If you want to encourage only juniors, then the local schools could be approached for contacts. Also make use of the facilities offered by the Golf Foundation in the various schemes they have available.
7. If you have all the players you want at say weekends but find the course relatively quiet mid week then consider introducing some form of mid week membership. One club decided to carry this out by sending details to local companies in the area, many of whom operated shift working. The result was staggering. Within a very short time the 75 limit was fully taken up which provided the club with much needed additional income at the time.
8. Another club tried by offering potential members a number of green fees at certain times and this was followed by a six-month temporary membership after which, providing they had obtained a handicap, they could continue as a temporary member until a vacancy occurred.
9. In at least one case to my knowledge a club has built an additional nine holes on adjoining land and there are very few restrictions on who can play. The professional keeps sets of clubs, which he hires out with the necessary deposit. The club not only gets most of its new members from this source but also gets a useful additional income from the green fees.

The above suggestions have come from various different clubs but at the same time if you have an idea that has worked at your club please let us know. Try to avoid schemes that are messy and difficult to administer and it is important that all new members are given a briefing on the etiquette and some form of lessons before being set loose on the course. If you have a short nine holes in addition to the main course then this can serve as a nursery to those taking up the game.

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