



## SALES & MARKETING

# STAY CONNECTED TO YOUR MEMBERS WITH E-MARKETING

By Larry Gulko

**Y**OUR ACTIVE CLUB MEMBERS ARE JUST THAT — SMART, ACTIVE AND ENERGETIC INDIVIDUALS — OFTEN WITH HECTIC SCHEDULES AND LITTLE FREE TIME. THEY ARE ALSO FOCUSED, ON THEIR CAREERS, FAMILIES, AND ON MANY OF THE SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS OFFERED BY YOUR CLUB. THEIR DETERMINATION TO MAKE THEIR FAMILY AND BUSINESS OBLIGATIONS WORK TOGETHER WITH THEIR DESIRE TO USE YOUR CLUB TO THE FULLEST HAS CREATED A TRICKY MARKETING/COMMUNICATIONS LANDSCAPE THROUGH WHICH TODAY'S CLUB MANAGER MUST NAVIGATE TO STAY IN TOUCH WITH MEMBERS.



E-mail target marketing allows you to easily communicate with members...and prospects...24/7. Not only do you have the ability to communicate with them but now you also have the ability to interact with them, thus establishing long-term valued friendships. The more you click with your members, the more they'll stick with your club. It's that simple.

Your members are committed to your club and really want to do more for — and at — the club. They're waiting to be grabbed, emotionally connected to their club. In many other areas of their lives, they are being grabbed — by smart Internet marketers who regularly alert them to specific goods and services for which they already have an affinity. Your members want added convenience in today's busy world, and while e-mail solicitations are generally everyday nuisances, delivering specific messages that address the key interests of each member is not only convenient for them, but also efficient and effective for you. So ask them not only what programs they are interested in, but take the advice to heart. It's easier to try something new if you can gauge interest before you announce a change. Conversely, track the most well-attended programs and solicit feedback from those participants about what makes those programs so successful and perhaps you can integrate those suggestions into the new programs.

How can you use e-mail to sell memberships, products and services that your club offers? In today's climate, e-marketing is an essential tool that you can use to increase participation and drive new revenues through membership drives, tournaments, social events, lessons, or pro shop sales. Within minutes of starting a new league, for example, or purchasing new equipment for the pro shop, you can alert members who have previously shown specific interest in these areas — via email or an instant message. You can immediately pique the curiosity of these members by sending them a quick note that is easy for them to retrieve and relevant to their interests.

Targeting e-mail messages to your members with special offers on products, apparel or accessories from your pro shop is a proven, effective method to drive sales and create excitement, but you could also try creative ways to spur other, more tangible revenue drives. Why not offer a free month of lessons for every new member they sponsor or provide a standing pro shop



“deal of the month” to keep members interested in the merchandise in the shop?

E-mail can be employed as an educational tool: to announce new programs, schedule changes, offer sports tips, and provide conferences with the golf pros. An electronically delivered newsletter allows you to offer an interactive and proactive tool for your membership. It’s a 21st-century vehicle that allows members to get in touch with you, no matter where they are or what time they need you. You’ll enhance a

sense of community by giving members the opportunity to have an immediate impact on the events that shape the club.

Obviously, you want to establish a forum that will allow you to streamline the operation, keep the membership growing, participating, and buying. Using the immediate, interactive access to your members that electronic publishing provides will work by keeping your club’s news timely, lively and relevant to the members’ lives. They will be most receptive to this added convenience and it will show you truly care about them, thus establishing a greater sense of belonging.

What can e-mail teach you about my club, its operation, and its opportunities? You are not only at the mercy of members’ hectic schedules; these people are wired in every facet of their lives. Have you seen them instant messaging from the golf cart or checking their “handhelds” at the driving range? Why, then, would you pass on the chance

to get into their wired sensibilities? You and your club remain the one place that members can go to meet friends and neighbors, blow off energy from a hectic day, and relax with a drink or massage. You and the club are an important link to their general well being.

Remember, marketing starts in the minds of your members...not of your management. By creating an ongoing dialogue through surveys and interactive communication, you will learn more about your members and exceed their needs. Make them say “WOW!” By doing this, you’ll be able to pull them into the 21st-century of club operations.

Establish a dialog versus having a monologue – saving money on traditional marketing initiatives, and increasing member participation and club efficiency through rapid-fire communication and quicker responses to their needs.

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