



Decreasing Your 'Handicap'

Take a swing at producing a better golf tournament

Here's a secret you may not know about golf tournaments: anyone can put one on. In fact, a lot of people try. There are over 500,000 golf tournaments in this country each year. Not everyone, however, can

produce a first class event that raises a lot of money and that golfers line up to play year after year. The average golf tournament in the US raises about \$5,000.

How does your golf tournament do? Are you proud of it or is there room for improvement? If you have hosted a golf tournament before, you should have some ideas as to what works and what doesn't. But in many cases, we forget the little things that take our tournament to the next level. From such essentials as planning and staffing to such would-be no-brainers as food and beverage, golf tournaments involve a lot of factors both big and small.

Here's a look at the "18 holes of success."

Hole #1: Defining purpose and goals

Ever hear the phrase "without vision, the people will perish"? It is important to have a clear path to your objective. Many groups want to have a golf tournament just because everyone else is. This is not a reason to have a golf tournament. There are several reasons to have a golf tournament:

1. Client Entertainment
2. Fundraising
3. Public Relations
4. Competition
5. Having Fun

Define your purpose and make sure that the whole committee is on the same page. Once you have a plan, stick to it. In your plan, get specific with your goals. If fundraising is your goal, decide how much money that you want raise and where the money will be used. Sponsors and golfers will write checks easier if they know they are writing them to an organization that is organized and has a plan.

Hole #2: Staffing your tournament

Do not attempt a golf tournament alone. You will get frustrated and burn out. Golf tournaments are fun and exciting to be a part of. There may be many people on your team who want to volunteer, they just need to be asked. Committees are essential

for producing a successful event. When working with a committee, here are a few key things to remember:

1. **Finding Volunteers**—Committee members are found within your industry. Call on vendors and businesses in your industry.
2. **Recruiting Volunteers**—Give them what they want. They want to network, serve, make friends, pay dues, see action and get recognition.
3. **Give Volunteers Direction**—Set goals and give instructions in writing.
4. **Hold Volunteers Accountable**—You will be more productive if you give direction and then watch them closely. Have reports turned in weekly.
5. **Reward your Volunteers**—Your committee will be loyal and return year after if you reward them with gifts, incentives, exposure and recognition.

Hole #3: Choosing the right tournament format

The format can make or break your event. The caliber of your players should determine the right format. Beginner golfers enjoy a scramble, good golfers enjoy a best ball format, and a mixed group of golfers enjoy a modified scramble. Consult your local pro for the best format for you.

Think about mixing up your events. Do you feel stuck in the same rut year after year? You can switch to a Pro-AM, Celebrity-AM, Night Golf or a Golf-A-Thon. Keeping the event fresh will keep people thinking that it "won't be like last year."

Hole #4: Finding and negotiating a golf course

The golf course that you choose is one of the most important decisions that you make. The number one complaint that we hear about a golf tournament is regarding the golf course. Find out what your golfers want in a course, new, private, traditional, easy or difficult. The most important thing is that the golf course wants your business. That they will treat you and your golfers like welcomed guests and with the utmost customer service.

Getting the best deal possible is a reality. Golf courses do make deals. When making the best deal here a couple of things to remember:

1. Have a mutual contact
2. Build a relationship
3. Have a good cause
4. Schedule your tournament during the "shoulder" season
5. Monday–Thursday PM



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Hole #5: Selling sponsors

Sponsors are the profit. The more sponsors you have, the more money you will make. Sponsors are companies that want to give to your cause, build relations with your members and, most importantly, have a relationship with you. Call on all of the vendors within your industry, give them value and the opportunity to invest.

Hole #6: Recruiting golfers

Without golfers you have no tournament. Golfers will play in your event if you show them a good time, you give them value and they have a relationship with you. Get your committee involved in personal selling. You will sell out your tournament if you have 9 committee members sell 4 foursomes.

Hole #7: Promoting your tournament

Spending money on promotion is not necessary if you have a good committee and you produce a good event. Golfers and sponsors will return year after year.

Hole #8: Games & contests

Games and contests build memories. Beginner golfers enjoy additional activities on the course. Give them games and contests and they will remember your event. It also gives you an opportunity to announce more winners. The more winners you have, the better.

Hole #9: Quality Prizes

The quality of prizes determines the quality of your event. Give them quality merchandise. Try to trade with sponsors. Prizes include tee packages (given to the golfers when they arrive), contest prizes, winner prizes, raffle items, auction items, as well as many other possibilities.

Hole #10: Tournament operations

Sweat the details. Watch everything from the spelling of everyone's name to starting on time. Keep the committee informed of all the details so that they can be helpful.

Five Misconceptions about Running a Golf Tournament

Misconception #1: Staff should produce your event.
Truth: Volunteers should do your whole event.

Misconception #2: Can't negotiate with the golf course.
Truth: You can always cut a better deal.

Misconception #3: Sponsors want to make a donation.
Truth: They want to sell products and services. If you can show them how to sell more, they will sponsor your event.

Misconception #4: Golfers just sign up for your event.
Truth: A friend must ask them to play.

Misconception #5: You have to pay for gifts and prizes.
Truth: Sponsors will pay for them if you put them in the sponsor packages and put their logo on them.

Hole #11: Timeline

Start 6 months in advance, reserve the golf course 5 months out, contact sponsors as soon as possible, and contact golfers 60 days in advance.

Hole #12: Budgets

Be meticulous with your expenses. Don't spend more than you bring in and your event will be profitable. When setting your price for your entry fees, charge enough to cover your expenses per golfer; golf, food, drinks, tee package, etc. Then add 25%. Don't over charge your golfers and don't order more items and food then you have golfers, and you will not lose money.

Hole #13: Additional revenue

Increase the price of your sponsor packages, fill your field with golfers, add an auction to your event, partner with a big corporation, sell more mulligans, create a gambling hole, add more contests and sell more raffle tickets and you will increase your profits at least 25%.

Hole #14: Food & beverage

They will talk about the food. Take the time to order great food and always pay for their drinks. It will go a long way in the reputation of your event and your organization. In most cases you can get them sponsored to cover your cost. Companies love to sponsor the food and drinks because there is value there.

Hole #15: Lodging

Most tournaments do not need overnight accommodations but when you do, find 5 to 10 hotels within 10 minutes of the golf course for your out-of-area guests. Have high-end and low-end facilities for them to choose from.

Hole #16: Signage

Four-color quality signs show class. The more sponsor signs that you have, the bigger your event will look and it will encourage more sponsors for next year.

Hole #17: Photography & video

Team and individual photos will build memories. Include photos in all of your packages. Consider a video. It is a great opportunity for a sponsor to get exposure.

Hole #18: Wrap up & follow up

Pay your bills, clean up and write thank you letters. Build a reputation of thoughtfulness.

Producing a golf tournament can be fun and rewarding. It can also be a nightmare. Find which ideas work for you and you will have a successful golf tournament.

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