

Hit the ground running



Don't be disheartened by the icy weather. Sarah Claridge from Smartpro Coaching, believes there are lots of untapped markets out there for golf pros

It's happened; namely, a repeat of last year's cold weather with the white stuff disrupting the lesson diary and of course the much-needed revenue from Christmas Shop sales.

Much of my consultancy work with professionals is centred on increasing coaching revenue. At the moment many phone calls are from worried coaches living hand-to-mouth wondering if they are going to get through this cold spell let alone the recession.

There is still a concern about the game of golf being spread too thinly over an increasing number of golf courses and there is still the historical belief among many that golf is for the over 60s or the wealthier of our society. To help turn this around many of our governing bodies are putting programmes and initiatives in place.

However, this will be a slow process. So, what can we do to help the process?

Well, I would like to suggest some ideas that will hopefully start the New Year off for you in a positive fashion.

My first belief is that we have to change our historical mind set, traditionally being paid a retainer we have literally glued ourselves to one location, only now and again have we been tempted out by schools and community projects. A relatively untapped market is the big retailers and corporates out there.

Did you know that John Lewis has a golf society at each store that gives each member £100 towards coaching each year? Not to mention the rounds of golf they play and that opportunity to sell them a programme of group lessons. There are over 33 stores in the British Isles.

Is this an opportunity? Yes, as long as you know how to approach them. Let's take B&Q as another example; B&Q employs over 36,000 people in over 320 UK stores, that is about 112 employees per store. Could you set up a B&Q beginners group? A realistic 5% take up and a few

relatives joining in, would give you 10 people. It works out as a possible footfall of 5000+ people per day visiting the store.

How would you convert the idea into real money?

The secret is in the way you communicate your product. Why not try following this process to sell your idea?

Step one

First, create a tangible product that you can sell. Ideally you will need the following:

- A covering letter
- A poster detailing a simple itinerary of the group lessons, venue, dates, times and cost
- Sign-up sheet
- Supporting good practice documents – brief profile form with disclaimer, parental consent for U18s
- Business cards
- In an ideal world, a website to refer to (but not essential)

A word of advice; in this competitive culture you must brand your materials with your logo and make them look as professional as possible.

Step two

It's all too easy to send a letter off in the post to someone you think maybe interested, but that person is usually very busy and a letter from you will

just find its way into an in tray gathering dust so setting up a meeting would be your best strategy.

Step three

The selling is up to you. Keep in touch with your contact but try to be relaxed about it; insistent sales don't work.

Step Four

Be thoroughly prepared. If it's the golf shop that are taking bookings make sure all members of staff know about it, supply them with your marketing materials and lastly be prepared for your sessions - pitch them at the correct level, make them fun, interesting and interactive. Don't tell them everything and make sure you have the next series of lessons up your sleeve.

Remember, a good rapport and excellent communication is the key to building a successful relationship. Once you have gained that customer loyalty the bigger picture becomes easier to see.

You could try a B&Q 'customers' golf lesson promotion, you could start to get more pupils spending more time at your golf club. You will see alternative revenue streams coming in.

The only way you will keep your customers coming back time and time again is to 'improve their golf and keep it interesting', so spend this quiet time expanding your knowledge and the Spring will see you hit the ground running.

- For more information on Sarah Claridge and the Smartpro Coaching Toolkit visit www.smartprocoaching.com

