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**MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT & RETENTION RESOURCES**

**10. New Member Orientation Guide**

**Introduction: Make your first impressions count!**

Research shows that the first 90 days of being a new golf club member are some of the most important in the retention of members so it is vital that you do all you can to help your new members settle in and feel welcomed in their new golf club. Some of your new members will have friends who already play at the club but don’t assume they do. Take the time to walk and talk them through key aspects of the club, ensuring they become familiar with their new surroundings, the people, the processes and the culture.

We recommend building a structured induction process, with our good practice template as guide, to help deliver a consistently positive experience for all new members. Joining a golf club is a big commitment for many and the average lifetime value of a member means it worth spending the additional time at the start of their journey to ensure the long-term benefits of high customer retention.

Within our Guide, we provide good practice advice and templates on the following components, designed to help you build a good quality induction programme for integrating your new members, based on a 3-stage process. Following the steps below will help new members have a great start at your club.

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| **1.** | **Club Welcome** | Captain’s Letter  Welcome Pack |
| **2.** | **People Integration** | Induction Meeting  Buddy System  New Member Event |
| **3.** | **Regular Communication** | New Members Survey  Club Newsletter  Social Media |

#### Many clubs are seeing a high turnover of members, particularly in the first 2-3 years of membership. Whilst most clubs have a programme of activity designed to acquire members, very few have activity in place specifically designed to integrate a member into the club and retain them in the long term. Retention starts from the moment a member joins a club.

**1. Welcome Letter / E-Mail from the Captain**

*Sending a welcome e-mail from your Captain or Club Manager provides a nice touch for new members. It sets the tone for a ‘warm embrace’ and immediately suggests the club wants to build a positive relationship with them. The template copy below can be tailored with a more personalised message from your own club, but covers the key messages required in your initial contact.*

**Proposed Copy**

Dear {*insert member’s name}*

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to *{Golf Club Name}* and thank you for choosing to join us. We hope that you will enjoy being a member and make the most of the many benefits on offer as being part of the club.

Our team of staff and volunteers are on hand to ensure your joining experience is as smooth as possible so please do not hesitate to speak to any of the staff if you have a query. I am pleased to enclose our New Members Welcome Pack, which features everything you need to know in your first year as a member, and would encourage you to sign-up to our newsletter and follow our Facebook page so you can keep up-to-date with news and activities from the club.

We want you to feel part of our club’s community and hopefully you will have the opportunity to take part in our wide range of events and competitions taking place at the club over the coming months. We offer something for all ages and abilities and I’m sure you’ll find something which suits and helps you make the most of your membership.

If you see me at the club, please pop over and say hello and I would be delighted to have a drink with you and introduce you to a few other members. We pride ourselves on being a friendly and welcoming club and we would also encourage you to bring your friends and family to the club to enjoy our facilities with you, whether for a game of golf, a drink or something to eat from our excellent catering team.

Once again, welcome and enjoy your experience as a member of *{Golf Club Name}.*

Yours sincerely

**Name**

**Club Captain or Manager**

**2. New Member Welcome Pack**

*Your Club’s New Member Welcome Pack should contain all the key information a new member would need to know to get familiar with how your golf club operates. Some of your new members will have been members of a club previously, but each club is different so don’t assume they will know.*

The pack could be a printed version if you want to make it more tangible, or you can send a digital pack if you don’t want to spend money on print. If you have good digital content on your website already, we recommend an electronic version, however there may be some aspects which will still require physical handouts, such as your Membership Card, Bag Tag and Fixture Book.

Your pack should be well-written, easy to follow and contain sufficient information without being overwhelming. The tone should be welcoming and friendly, with signposts to your website where relevant content exists, to avoid duplication of writing and to help you keep it concise. If you have a Marketing Convenor, we recommend they are involved in the process to keep it consistent with your overall brand look and feel

It is also worthwhile inviting input from recent new members to cover any aspect of the new member experience that didn’t work well for them, or that was missed during their own induction. Their feedback will provide a fresh perspective from someone who is very familiar with the club and who may make wrong assumptions about how much a new member might be aware of.

**Suggested Welcome Pack Content:**

* Welcome letter /e-mail from Captain or Club Manager (as per section 1).
* Membership Card
* New Member Offer from the Club Pro (e.g. Free Swing Check, Putting Lesson or Shop Voucher)
* Club Bag Tag
* Fixture Book
* Member Benefits List
* New Member Buddy System
* Member Referral Incentive
* Club Information Sheet including:
  + Contact Details – Phone Number, E-Mail address, website address
  + Staff Names – Club Manager/Secretary, Office Staff, Bar Manager, Professional, Greenkeeper, Caterer
  + Club Opening Hours
  + Social Media Channels
  + Booking a Tee-Time
  + Booking a Competition Tee-Time
  + Getting a Handicap
  + Competitions Summary – Stroke Play and Match Play events
  + Social Events Calendar
  + Latest Club Newsletter
  + Visitor Green Fees & Members Guest Fees
  + Catering Information – opening hours, sample menu, booking a function
  + Reciprocal Club Offers
  + Club Handbook
  + Committee Members/Club Governance Structure
  + Payment options e.g. Membership Fees, Competition Entries, Bar Car & Top Ups

**3. Induction Meeting**

##### Golf clubs can look at many gyms for good practice when it comes to finding out about new customers in the early stages. Many gyms offer an initial induction meeting to show a new member around their facilities, explain the booking processes and often include a personal trainer meeting or fitness test to discuss their aspirations.

If you have the staff or resources available at your club to do something similar, we recommend you offer an Induction Meeting with your new members. The more you know about your members, the more you can do to ensure they that maximise the value of their membership, while giving you the opportunity to up-sell various aspects of your club, such as the Pro Shop for coaching and retail, bar and catering, as well as your golf competitions and social events.

The Induction Meeting can be done by either your Club Manager/Secretary, PGA Professional, Captain or Membership Convenor, dependent on time and availability. Alternatively, you may have other volunteers who are great ambassadors for your club would be great at this job (and with more time on their hands.

**It may sound like something you think you don’t have time for, but have a think of the potential lifetime value of that member if you can retain them for many years, and think how hard you have worked to recruit them in the first place!**

Your Induction Meeting should include:

* A general chat – find out why they have joined, if they have friends who are members or are looking to pair up with other members, if they want to play competitions or social golf
* A tour of your facilities – clubhouse, locker rooms, pro shop and range if you have them, introducing them to other members of staff such as your bar and catering personnel
* How to book a tee-time – familiarise your new members with your online booking system and/or app, via smartphone and/or if you have a terminal in the clubhouse
* How to enter a competition – talk them through the process, when slots become available, if you need to enter via the club noticeboard, knock-out competitions and team matches
* New Member Buddies – if you Club has a team of new member buddies or social golf groups that your new member might be interested in joining, introduce them to the relevant people
* Booking a Function – encourage your new members to use the clubhouse for socialising, whether bringing friends or family for a meal, or booking the function room for a special birthday, anniversary or occasion. Introduce them to the catering team and invite them to look through the different menus available.
* Meet the Pro – if your Club Manager or Captain is doing the meeting, take the opportunity to introduce your new members to the pro and their assistant (if you have one). They will often be the first point of contact for a golfer at your club so they have a familiar face on their next visit, and it also gives your pro the chance to promote their range of services, such as coaching and retail, including any new member offers they may have.

**4. Buddy System**

Joining a new club where you don’t have friends or connections can be a daunting experience for a new member. If your new member is looking for people to play with, socialize with or simply to ask questions, then a New Member Buddy System can be a great addition to your integration process.

Many clubs have adopted such a system, often using retired members with more time on their hands, recent new members, committee members or ‘club ambassadors’ who have previous experience in taking new members under their wing. Some the more successful ‘Get into Golf’ programmes have used the buddy system to good effect and we offer some guidance on recruiting buddies within our Get into Golf resources.

[**Buddy: Role Description & Advert (Editable Template)**](https://www.scottishgolf.org/wp-content/uploads/Get-into-Golf-Buddy-Role-Advert-Job-Description.docx)

The role of the Buddy is to provide a friendly familiar face to the new member, someone to play golf with or socialize with in the clubhouse and to ease their integration into the club. Ideally, the Buddy should be a like-minded person or of a similar age. Given the wide range of membership demographics, the more willing Buddies you can have in your team, the better!

**5. New Member Event**

Many clubs are now staging an annual New Member Event as part of their calendar, which can take the form of a fun golf competition or an informal social get together. If the focus of your new member recruitment is the start of the season, pick a date in your calendar that’s early enough in the season to use it as a showcase for what’s coming up, but late enough that you’re able to invite as many new members as possible. If you have new members who have joined late in the previous season, you should add them to your invite list i.e. all new members from the previous 12 months.

Your New Member Event should form part of your induction process, inviting them along to your specified function. How you shape the event is entirely at your discretion, but a good practice template would include the following:

* A 9-hole scramble with each team of new members hosted by a committee member or buddy
* A ‘Beat the Pro’ hole allowing new members to watch your Club Pro in action
* A few snacks and a drink after the round, hosted by the Captain, Club Manager or Pro
* A short presentation by your host to welcome new members and talk about the club
* A Q&A inviting new members to ask questions of the Captain and/or committee
* If other members of your committee are in attendance, they could provide a short summary on their area of the club, such as Match & Handicap, Juniors or Social
* Networking with their fellow new members, encouraging them to play together in the next competition or allocate specific tee-times for your new member groups in the coming weeks

For most clubs, organising your New Members Event shouldn’t be too resource heavy and often the less formal you make them, the more comfortable your new members will be. They provide a great opportunity for new members to meet fellow new members, get comfortable with the club’s culture and experience various aspects of your club’s offering, such as the clubhouse and course.

It is important to set aside some budget for your event to include complimentary food and beverage, as well as any prizes for the competition element (such as sleeves of golf balls or some club merchandise).

**6. Communication**

6.1 New Member Survey

Gathering feedback from new members at the end of their induction period (e.g. after the first 90 days or 6 months) is a great way of improving the experience for your next intake of new members. Furthermore, it also addresses any specific concerns they may have which may impact their decision to stay on as a member in the future.

As part of our free-to-use **Customer Survey Tracker service (CFT)**, Scottish Golf offers clubs a New Members Survey tool, using tried and tested questions adopted by other clubs. The survey covers the key questions you should be asking your new members and can simply be sent out via e-mail to your new member database.

6.2 Communication

It should already be part of your new member application form, but it is important to capture the data of your new members so you can add them to your database for receiving club e-newsletters (whilst ensuring you are GDPR compliant and offer the opportunity to unsubscribe).

If your club issues a newsletter on a weekly or monthly basis, your new members will hopefully be eager to keep up-to-date with news and events from the club, as well as signing up to forthcoming competitions or buying tickets for social events.

For clubs with more resource or a proactive marketing team, you can introduce a dedicated New Members Newsletter for their first 6 months or a year (it may be on a less frequent basis, such as quarterly), to make them feel a little more special. Content should be tailored to the specific audience, and could include some of the following features:

* Photos and round-up from the new members event
* Invites from buddies or social groups asking to join them for a game or a beer/wine/coffee
* Invites from other new members asking to join them for a game or a beer/wine/coffee
* A reminder of specific events or activities they may not have engaged with yet, such as a dedicated New Member Group Lesson with the Pro
* A special offer with a reward to recommend a friend to join e.g. £50 discount on your next year’s membership fees

**You could also introduce a special ‘One Year Anniversary’ e-mail from the date they joined, congratulating them being a fully fledged member of the club!**

6.3 Social Media

Your social media channels are a great way of engaging with new members on a regular basis and integrating them into the club. By encouraging them to follow your Club on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, they should become more familiar with club activities, the people involved and other aspects club life. Your new members can also become your best ambassadors for a future membership marketing campaign and if they are willing, it is worth capturing them on video to talk about what a great new member experience they have had at your club. This would create great, meaningful customer testimonial content for a social media campaign.