

# MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT & RETENTION RESOURCES

## 7. Hosting an Open Day



### Introduction – Why Host an Open Day?

Open Days are a popular, tried and trusted method for clubs recruiting new members, providing an event platform to showcase your club, course, facilities and people - often in tandem with an exclusive membership offer and the chance for potential customers to 'try before they buy'.

The concept of an Open Day is where clubs 'open their doors' to let prospective customers see what you have to offer and deliver a more personal touch to a would-be member who may never have been to your club before. Whilst they may take a significant amount of planning to ensure a successful event, Open Days have a proven track record of delivering results and a positive return on investment. Digital marketing may have taken over, but there's no better way of allowing someone to experience your club culture than consuming it first-hand and speaking to your members.

Our guide takes you through a step-by-step process for planning and delivering your Club Open Day.

#### The Plan

1. Plan				
Audience	Objectives	Selling Points	Timetable	Internal Support
2. Promote				
Targeting	Key Messages	Channels	Internal	Community
3. Delivery				
Atmosphere	Facilities	Activities	Data-Capture	Conversion
4. Evaluate & Follow-Up				
Results	Engage	Commercial Return	WWW EBI	Retention

#### Step 1: Planning

Consider your target audience and who it is that you are trying to reach. Is the Open Day aiming to sell all types of membership or are you focusing on a specific offering? If you are focusing on families for example, then this will influence the look and tone of your marketing material, what member benefits you highlight and the activities you deliver on the day.

It is important to highlight what the club's key selling points and member benefits are. There is detailed guidance in our #4 Guide on Member Benefits. Don't assume that new customers will know about all the services your club provides. Many may seem obvious to you but to people experiencing the club for the first time, these are all reasons to join that they won't know about.

Deciding on the date and time of the event is important. This may need Committee approval so make sure you consult with the relevant club officials and senior staff. Consider having it on a day

that more people will be available to come such as a Saturday or Sunday afternoon. Hosting at a time when people are at work or late in the day will limit potential attendance and sales. The Open Day should be a high priority event for the club to sell memberships and so make sure the members are well informed for the reasons you are hosting the event. Moreover, it is important that the members expect to see non-members who may not know their way around or all the 'standards' of the club. In turn members should be encouraged to expect this and to engage with potential members to give a positive first impression and a warm welcome!

**"What's the best time of year to host the day?"** is an often-asked question. There are benefits to having it at different points and you should focus on what suits you best in terms of existing commitments, current time of year, urgency, renewals etc.

- Late winter / early spring – people not currently in membership and looking to join a club may be enticed at this time of year.
- Post US Masters in mid-late April can capture the 'Wimbledon effect' of those inspired by watching the first major of the year.
- Summer – your course is usually in its best condition and clubhouse firing on all cylinders. Also, you can offer a lower price option since some of the season has passed and many competitions have already taken place.
- Autumn – You can price an aggressive deal e.g. '18 months of the price of 12'.
- Winter – if you have indoor facilities or covered bays then group coaching and introductory memberships may be appealing or promoting it as a Christmas gift.

**Pricing Structure:** Another often asked question is "*should we charge people to attend?*". This will depend on number of factors including the culture of the club and resources you have at hand. There are generally 3 types of format club can choose from:

**1) Free to attend and golf:** This option should attract the highest number of people given the lack of any financial barrier. This structure requires a dedicated and effective sales and data capture on the day.

**2) Pay to golf, fee deducted if you join:** With this structure clubs can cover costs and even make a profit. It may reduce numbers attending and be seen more as an inexpensive game of golf.

**3) Play with a member:** In this structure the participant must play with an existing member who is briefed on their responsibilities on the day. This will often have a low turnout but high conversion rate.

The **people that welcome** potential new members on the day will be key to the days success and so involve people that will thrive in this environment and will be good ambassadors for the club. Consider establishing a short-term working group / sub-Committee to plan and manage the event.

Once you know when you are hosting the day, who you wish to target and what you are selling then set some SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound) objectives. See our guide **#3 on Objective Setting**. This will help you focus on what you need to do to achieve your targets.

**Setting objectives** will also help you set your budget for the day and inform what internal support you need from staff and volunteers. Setting a budget is important to enable you to effectively promote the day and deliver a good experience on it. For example, if setting a budget to the value of one membership enables you to bring in 10 members then this is a 10:1 return on investment.

**Consider applying for Scottish Golf's Club Development Fund to subsidise promotional and delivery costs – ask your Regional Club Development Officer for details.**

As a fall back ensure you have a ‘plan B’ if there is inclement weather committed to print. Some people will still likely arrive even if it is raining. Even if you cannot use the golf course but do have a clubhouse this will allow you to still showcase some key services, people and provide a warm welcome and make sales! Also, it will avoid confusion on what you will do if this situation arises and you can simply enact it on the day.

Finally, for the first stage of your plan create an action plan timetable for preparation activities and promotion of your event. **See the template Action Plan Timetable resource.**

#### **Recap on Key Actions:**

1. Define target audience
2. Create club selling points and member benefits
3. Agree date of event
4. Agree exclusive deal for the day
5. Decide pricing structure for playing golf
6. Consult club officials and senior staff
7. Establish short term working group
8. Communicate reasons for the day to members
9. Set objectives / targets
10. Establish a budget (SGL grant may be available)
11. Decide on ‘plan B’
12. Create timetable of actions

## **Step 2: Promotion**

Effective promotion is key as without this no one will show up and you can't make any sales! Once you have decided on your target audience and defined your club's mission / unique selling points / member benefits, special offer and date then create an attractive advert that you can use across various channels.

So how will you reach your target audience and tell them about your Open Day? With your sub-team brainstorm promotional activities and marketing channels (e.g. Social media, local press, flyers, junior parents, businesses, internal email) that you think will work in your locale and for the type of day you want to have. It is also then important that these are costed and build into the budget and action plan. For more detailed guidance you can reference **Scottish Golf's Marketing Guide**.

Social Media and particularly Facebook has become a tried and tested way to get a good return on a marketing budget. This is because it allows you to very effectively target specific types of people in terms of gender, age, interest and location. Review the Facebook Advertising Guide <https://www.facebook.com/business/ads> and also Scottish Golf's Social Media Guide that is in our **Marketing Guidance**.

Creating a **Welcome Pack** for participants to distribute on the day will provide a tangible resource that you can use to discuss options with those who come along. It should contain key club information including membership options and benefits and be easy to read. For more detailed guidance you can see our **New Member Orientation Guide**.

The best source of new members in any club are your existing members. They are the most passionate about the club and know what the key attributes are. They can also play a key role in integrating new members so that they re-join into the second year and beyond. Encourage members to invite non-member friends and attend themselves on the day. It is an option to have a ‘member get member’ incentive that gives the existing member a kick back for introducing a new member that joins on the day. For more information on this see our [\*\*Member Get Member Guide\*\*](#).

Consider carefully what existing local community groups you can target to help you with marketing such as other sports clubs, shops, non-sporting groups, newspapers/magazines. It is not uncommon that individuals or clusters of people in other groups are looking to try something new. If you are planning a community event you may be able to get the local paper to run a news piece or ‘advertisorial’ on your event that has more impact than a paid advert. If there is a cost involved golf clubs can consider offering tee times as a bargaining chip to offset direct marketing expenditure.

#### **Recap on Key Actions:**

1. Create an attractive advert for use across multiple channels
2. Brainstorm promotional activities
3. Learn or delegate Facebook advertising campaign
4. Create a New Member Welcome Pack
5. Communicate internally to members
6. Target community groups
7. Budget for all costs
8. Update timetable action plan

### **Step 3: Delivery**

Ensure you create a welcoming environment and warm ambience at your club. You want potential members to receive a positive embrace and in turn get the impression this is a place they want to spend their time and money.

To achieve this, you should recruit active members as ‘Ambassadors’ to be onsite and welcome your prospects. It is important these Ambassadors have a defined remit and they should be given this concisely in print and a verbal briefing at the start of the day. There may be a general remit or a specific one depending on the role that they play in the ‘Customer Journey’.

Defining the Customer Journey once they arrive is important as it can help you position your Ambassadors in the most effective spots to assist prospects. Envisage what the average prospect will do once they arrive based on your club layout and planned activities, for example:

- 1) arrive in car park →
- 2) sign in desk →
- 3) lounge for morning roll →
- 4) golf 9 holes →
- 5) clubhouse for light bight and drink →
- 6) club tour →
- 7) join / decide not to join / discuss more details →
- 8) depart →

You should ensure that all staff are briefed on the atmosphere you wish to create, customer service standards, the customer journey and what packages/deals are on sale on the day so they can also contribute in the most effective way possible.

Decide what facilities you are showcasing and ensure that all staff / volunteers are in place for each e.g. Catering, Bar, Practice Area, Course and Lockers.

Decide what activities you are going to do on the day to engage and entertain prospects. Do not try to do more than you have the capacity to as it can be a risk to do too much and in turn lead to a poor coordination and a negative impression. In addition to standard services you may wish to have additional activities to bring the day to life. Ensure the activities are resourced with personnel.

#### **Example activities:**

- Golf – full round, 9 or 6 holes
- Beat the Pro / Assist Pro at a Par 3
- Long drive and/or nearest pin
- BBQ
- Putting clinic or putting competition with the Pro
- Mini lessons with the Pro – group or individual
- Welcome presentation and Q&A from Captain / Manager
- Skills challenges (drive, chip, putt)
- Fun competitions (use a simulator if you have one)
- Prize draw
- Soft play in the clubhouse / inflatable outside
- Rent a hole – this is where a group / family can rent a hole for a period of time (e.g. 1 hr) and play on it as they wish for that time. This will lend itself more to family open days.

#### **Data Capture**

It is key that you capture the data of everyone attending on the day as soon as they arrive, in a GDPR compliant way. This is important for health and safety reasons, to help to acquire sales / follow up business, gain intelligence on who came and any feedback they have.

You should draft a simple sign up form capturing key data such as: name, email, phone number, post code, if they are a beginner / improving / experienced golfer, how they found out about the open day. This can be done either via printed forms, laptop or and online form.

#### **Conversion**

**Sell, sell, sell!** This is the number 1 objective for the day and should be at the forefront of everyone's mind. No one should leave without making a buying decision. Making sure everyone who attends is personally asked to join can be the difference in making a high number of sales.

It is a common failing that prospects can simply come off the golf course and leave without having to make a decision. Ensure that a club ambassador is stationed at the 18th green (or wherever the final activity ends) and that people are channelled into a post activity area where a sale can be made in. This is not about trying to make 'high pressure' sales that can put many people off, but that they are simply asked to join in an appropriate way. Consider stationing ambassadors who are comfortable having this conversation in this area and even asking members who have experience in sales to volunteer for such a role.

## **Getting Ahead of the Game**

You can, if you deem appropriate, use the data you have captured to pre-populate a membership form for the prospect finishing golf (or whatever activities you are delivering) that you can hand to them. This can be done in conjunction with giving them a Welcome Pack and helps show how much you want them to join and to ease the process for them. For someone who came wanting to be welcomed to join this is can be a very positive experience.

### **Recap on Key Actions:**

- Create a welcoming environment
- Recruit Active Members as 'Ambassadors' and define their remit / stations
- Define 'Customer Journey'
- Set staff standards and expectations for Customer Services
- Decide what facilities you are showcasing
- Decide and plan what activities you are delivering
- Data capture on arrival
- Concentrate on conversion and membership sales
- Update Action Plan

## **Step 4: Follow-Up**

Analyse your results by working out your return on investment (income less expenditure) and your conversion rate on the day (number of attendees vs conversions). A positive result can help you leverage more support, resource and budget from future Committees and members alike.

Using the data captured analyse who came (age, gender, postcode), where did they find out about it (Facebook, website, flyer, newspaper) and what factors influenced their decision to join or not? Consider contacting those who didn't join with a follow up deal e.g. a reduced price 4-ball voucher. This will enable you to leverage more income and stay connected to the customer.

Please thank your team and make them feel valued. This will give them the credit they deserve and will encourage future volunteering by them and the wider membership. It is also important to thank your members for giving up their course and clubhouse for the betterment of the club.

Invite your Open Day team to an informal debrief on what went well (WWW)? even better if (EBI)? This will enable you to capture thoughts while still fresh and what you should keep/improve for the next time you plan and deliver an open day.

If you have success, then publicise it to your members and the local community. Positive news is always helpful and may lead to more people showing interest.

Lastly and very importantly, don't forget about your new members! People will go where they are wanted but will stay where they are valued. It is key that these new members are integrated as well as possible into the club and made to feel welcome. To do this you should initiate a 'new member 90-day strategy' to ensure as many as possible stay as members. It is also worth inviting your new members onto a sub-committee for future membership recruitment activity, as they can offer feedback from their first-hand experience and offer a fresh perspective on the club.

You can use our [\*\*New Member Orientation Guide\*\*](#) and [\*\*Welcome Pack\*\*](#) for more detailed guidance and templates on how to do this.

### Recap on Key Actions:

- Return on Investment and attendance vs sales
- Team evaluation debrief: What Went Well (WWW)? Even Better If (EBI)?
- Follow-up with those who did not join on the day – email, phone call, return invite
- Analyse data
- Thank volunteers for their help and members for giving up the course
- Initiate a ‘First 90 Days Retention Strategy’
- Publicise success to your members and your local community
- Invite new members onto the sub-committee – learn from their first-hand experience

### **Best Practice Examples:**



**Crieff Golf Club OPEN DAY**

Sunday 12th May 12.00pm - 4.00pm

BBQ (£3.00) & Pitch and Putt

Golden Golf Ball Treasure Hunt

Face Painting & Junior Golf Games

Archery

Inflatable Assault Course

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INTERESTED IN JOINING OUR CLUB? COME ALONG TO OUR OPEN DAY TO EXPERIENCE LIFE AS A MEMBER! ENJOY 9 HOLES, MEET THE PRO, SAMPLE OUR FOOD AND SEE WHAT WE HAVE TO OFFER...

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