



HOW TO IMPRESS A NEWCOMER GOLFER IN A GOLF CLUB?

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All of us had the first time in a golf club. If you read this article it means you had some kind of positive experience and became a golfer and a golf club member. Often we ask ourselves what motivates golfers to visit your golf club to play or even becoming a member of your golf club. In short, the answer is the experience they get in your golf club.

In the connected economy, customer experience has a special role since people tend to share their experience online (e.g. on Foursquare, Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook etc.). These moments stay on the internet and they don't go away. After a while, shared experiences built upon one another form a collective ensemble of people's sentiment toward a company, in our case towards your golf club.

The Innovation and the Earned Brand survey of Edelman (a leading global communications marketing firm) found that 90% of customers expect from brands to innovate with societal impact in mind. Furthermore, customers want to get real, contextual value where and when they demand it the most.

That is why golf clubs should think about the mobile mindset, how could we use mobile technology to provide essential information about our golf club (so they can feel comfortable with the golf course and its surroundings), personalize our offers (e.g. membership offers, services, products in the pro-shop etc.)

These experiences are not created alone by the marketer/golf club, but together with the customer/golfer. These co-created experiences form the basis for a golf club's/brand's image. Therefore, we can say that customer experience is the brand, that is your golf club.

The customer experience is a sum of each engagement a person has with a company/golf club, at every touchpoint, throughout the customer lifecycle. I must add that golfers are not leaving your golf club only because of a single problematic/unpleasant event. Churn results from series of events. This is why we should focus on the entire customer journey.

Syngenta in 2013, conducted a survey in the UK ("Growing Golf in the UK") to gauge what factors are important to golfers. Among the TOP5 expectations we can find 4 customer experience related demands:

1. Friendliness of members,
2. Comfortable with the golf course and its surroundings,
3. Golf club is welcoming regardless of gender,
4. Friendliness of staff.



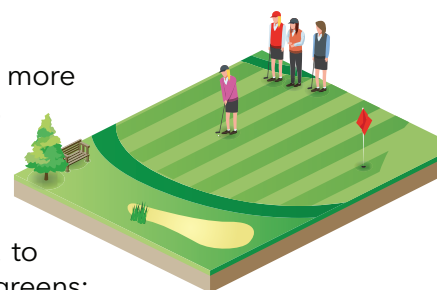
In this survey we also find that 34% of respondents would recommend the golf club if they find the golf club staff helpful and accommodating.

Since these experiences are associated with a series of emotions, they will lead to the most influential and effective advertising. The meaningful and shareable experiences became the new forms of marketing.

HOW CAN GOLF CLUBS PROVIDE FAVORABLE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE?

I would differentiate between the experienced golfer who comes to a golf club and a totally newcomer/"want-to-be golfer". Although apparently they have the same or similar needs, but they come with different attitudes, backgrounds and needs. Their customer journeys will be different.

In the past, we focused more on such touchpoints to improve customer experience like the reception area, the pro-shop, the golf course (e.g. to provide smoothly rolling greens; golf course that blends naturally into its environment etc.), restaurant etc. What is changing now is the focus will be more on the total, end-to-end customer journey (that shapes the customer's view of the business) as a total rather than on touchpoints.



Customer journeys include many things that happen before, during, and after the experience of your service in the golf club. Journeys can be long, stretching across multiple channels and touchpoints, and often lasting days or weeks.

They start well before they enter your golf club, when the golfer gets a stimulus (e.g. saw an important championship on that golf course on TV, heard that somebody he knows is playing in XY golf club) and as a result of it, he or she starts to learn about your golf club by reading reviews (e.g. Golfwrx.com, TripAdvisor, Golfboo.com), asking questions in social media communities or simply searching on Google. Google calls this activity the Zero Moment of Time (or ZMOT).

To improve customer experience, golf clubs must develop an understanding of the fractured, real-time customer journeys that connected consumers undergo to foster personal and shareable experiences. This is why it is important to provide free Wi-Fi on the golf course and in the club house as well. For the same purpose we can utilize beacons in our pro-shop to bestow personalized products (see: <http://www.golfbusinessmonitor.com/golf-equipment/2015/12/when-will-pro-shops-exploit-beacon-technology.html>).

Now, golf clubs need to create and cultivate meaningful experiences for their customers. This starts with designing a more intuitive and efficient customer journey that works the way connected consumers want to work. Thanks to the technology developments, our customers became more empowered and they are finding new ways to either hack or completely ignore company touchpoints. We should bear in mind this phenomenon when we are planning the possible customer journeys for prospect golfers and existing and “want-to-be-golf club” members.

The results from investments in a more dynamic customer experience (CX) are more meaningful customer engagements and a notable competitive advantage.

Today, customer experience is governed by each different group that is responsible for their portion of the **purchase funnel**. They use different technologies, are managed by different and sometimes competing metrics, are striving to achieve varying forms of reach and engagement that may or may not complement one another. Therefore, we should strive to harmonize the golf club’s activities.

With this complex customer journey unfolding, great marketing, products and services are not enough to win.

HOW TO WIN THE BUSINESS OF GENERATION C GOLFERS?

For Generation C, experience is everything. Gen C is a generation of people who live a digital lifestyle. They are not Gen X, Gen Y, Millennials or Gen Z; they’re the “Connected Customer”.

To attract and keep connected customers, companies must design for shared experiences. Connected customers influence other connected customers who embark upon a similar journey. If the experiences people have don’t result in positive influence, there is no hope for preference. And, without positive experiences, loyalty or advocacy will never happen. Golf clubs must use customer intelligence to make sure that they understand and optimize these shared experiences.

Achieving customer-centricity in our golf clubs, it requires internal transformation that includes empowering employees to improve those experiences and relationships.

Those golf clubs who want to achieve high level of customer experience will have to perform set of sound practices: strategy, customer understanding, design, measurement, governance and culture.

Strategy practices:

- 1. Define customer experience strategy that describes the intended customer experience;
- 2. Align the strategy with overall company strategy.
- 3. Share the strategy with all employees.

CUSTOMER-UNDERSTANDING PRACTICES:

- 1. Solicit feedback from customers about their experience in the golf club and in its golf course(s) and other amenities (surveys, interviews). The usage of Net Promoter Score could be a good starting point to gauge customer satisfaction. It is the most popular outcome metrics. It predicts how our customers are most likely to behave in the future
- 2. Collect unsolicited feedback from customers about their experience in the golf club (email, social media monitoring, mining calls).
- 3. Gather insights from employees about their experience with customers and their role in delivering the customer experience.
- 4. Conduct observational research studies (e.g. mystery shopping by 59Club: http://www.59club.com/home_53_3.html)
- 5. Share customer understanding with all employees.



To measure customer experience is to measure customer perceptions. You will get these insights by asking them how satisfied they were with various aspects of each experience you are measuring. When you adopt measurement practices you will know:

- 1. How your customers felt about the experiences you provided?
- 2. Understand the drivers of a good or a bad experience.
- 3. Get actionable insight to the relevant people in your customer experience ecosystem.
- 4. Connect the dots between customer experience quality and business results.

These measurements will provide the foundation of your future customer experience initiatives.

Here are some of the most typical outcome metrics that you likely to use:

- 1. Complains to friends about the fault billing,
- 2. Won't purchase from your pro-shop/F&B/PGA Pro,
- 3. Start noticing offers from rival golf clubs,
- 4. Likelihood to recommend your golf club,
- 5. Likelihood to purchase membership/lessons/etc.,
- 6. Likelihood to switch to rival golf club,
- 7. Churn rates,
- 8. Membership renewals.

ABOUT THE WRITER



Miklós Breitner is the author of Golf Business Monitor, a golf business blog since 2009 which covers the latest business challenges and initiatives of the golf industry focusing on golf club management and marketing, golf tourism and golf equipment. Miklos is an official media partner of the PGAs of Europe and the European Golf Course Owners Association. Blog: www.golfbusinessmonitor.com