

Case Study

**Questions for Leaders - Chris Davies
Remuera Golf Club**



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Introduction

Learning comes from a variety of sources. Some of the best lessons can come from those succeeding within the golfing community both inside and outside of New Zealand. As part of the New Zealand Golf Case Study Programme we will look to create opportunities for leaders within our

industry to answer a number of questions and share their knowledge and experiences.

The opportunity is to look at the information provided and adapt to your environment.

Chris Davies - General Manager Remuera Golf Club

Tell us a little bit about yourself?

I am married with 2 children aged 13 and 7, I have been involved in the golf industry for 25 years initially starting in the UK. My golf journey started after completing a 4 year leisure management degree, further opportunities allowed me to experience a number of different leisure facility experiences then a chance came up to manage a small 9 hole municipal golf course and driving range where I stayed for 5 years.

A further move to the Sheringham Golf club, 3 years, was followed by the opportunity to manage the Ferndown Golf Club in Dorset, recognised as one of the Top 60 clubs in the UK, a 27 hole traditional private members club. Emigration became a topic of conversation as our first child was on the way and after fulfilling all the criteria New Zealand said yes. As part of the process the club were informed all the way through and we worked through a 12 month transition period. We arrived in New Zealand with 2 weeks accommodation sorted and a 2 year old. Initially I did consultancy work and then fulltime employment, it was at this stage the Remuera Golf Club Manager role was advertised.

Tell us a little bit about your club?

The Remuera Golf Club was established in 1934 with a current membership of 1500, with a total of 50,000 rounds of golf a year. 90% of this golf is played by the members and 80% of the member rounds are interestingly played by 20% of the members. We have an annual turnover of \$4.9 million.

What do you see as your greatest opportunity?

To lead the club forward and to create a hub for the community. We have to be more than just golf and make the most of the recreational and social hub opportunities we have. We see ourselves as the destination club in the heart of Auckland.

What are you most proud of?

Personally I am most proud of the decision and the courage we showed to leave the UK and create the lifestyle and opportunities for our children the UK could not provide.

Professionally in moving the club forward, the difference in the club from when I started is chalk and cheese, slow gradual improvements over time. We are always looking to open up and maximise any potential revenue streams, a prime example is the new New Zealand Golf offices. Wouldn't it be great to have a hub of businesses located in one area all utilising the facilities and opportunities the club can provide.

What are your biggest challenges?

The changing membership dynamic with the move away from traditional membership options and how this is transitioned respecting those engaged in the traditional model.

The demands on all staff members to be higher skilled and capable regarding the demands of compliance, legislation and reporting all the while understanding the need to deliver high quality experiences.

How are you overcoming these?

Regarding the membership model we are constantly looking at our options and potential solutions, we need to communicate this well to our existing membership to allow for any potential transition to be smooth and stress free. The model will change however, there is potential to change this alongside the traditional model and let the trends move the dynamic over time.

In our case re the staff we are looking to develop our staff through training experiences, we now have a total of 4 staff completing the GMANZ BMI courses and we also run in-house workshops. We all work in a dynamic environment and have to have the confidence to make the right decisions and not rely on others.

What does golf look like in 15 years' time?

In 15 years golf will be run by the Millennials and Gen X who will be involved at a board and club level and we will start to see their needs being met, flexible membership options, pay as you play and a more casual golf environment. The opportunity will be there for people to play as many or as few holes as they wish.

What have you read or who/what has influenced you as a person and a leader? And what was the key learning?

In my position I have been lucky enough to attend a number of golf conferences both in New Zealand and overseas and have always enjoyed the messaging from these events, most importantly the opportunity to talk to and learn from leaders in the game worldwide.

One key message from the conferences has been "don't play to the extreme views, 5% versus 95%" I have also been very privileged to have a large number of great board members with a great amount of skill, business experience and knowledge who have had a great influence on me as a Golf Club Manager and person.

Best advice

One piece of advice that resonates from a board member has been regarding dealing with people is to make 'love' and not 'war'. Most people just want to have been well

listened to and their opinion considered, following on from that, work with people to find a solution, usually there is a common ground.

