



Waimairi Beach Golf Club

CASE STUDY:

Canterbury Earthquake:
Membership Retention and Recruitment

CANTERBURY EARTHQUAKE - MEMBERSHIP RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

The 4th September 2010 signalled the beginning of the Canterbury earthquakes that devastated many homes, businesses and the golfing community at The Waimairi Beach Golf Club. John Herdman, the Manager and Secretary at the time, was faced with a golf course that had been severely damaged by liquefaction and a clubhouse that was beyond repair.

If all of that wasn't bad enough, the local north eastern community was leaving in their droves, 10,000+ people moved out of the area due to major liquefaction and flood damaged homes.

The club management needed to make some serious decisions about the future of Waimairi Beach Golf Club in light of

some major challenges. John and the management committee decided to take the bull by the horns and to not lie down and die, although many others wouldn't have blamed them.

Karen de Lautour, the new Marketing Manager at the club praised the key role that John Herdman played throughout the difficult times. "I can't sing John's praises enough, he has done an outstanding job of leading the resurrection of the club and took the membership with him every step of the way."

CHALLENGES



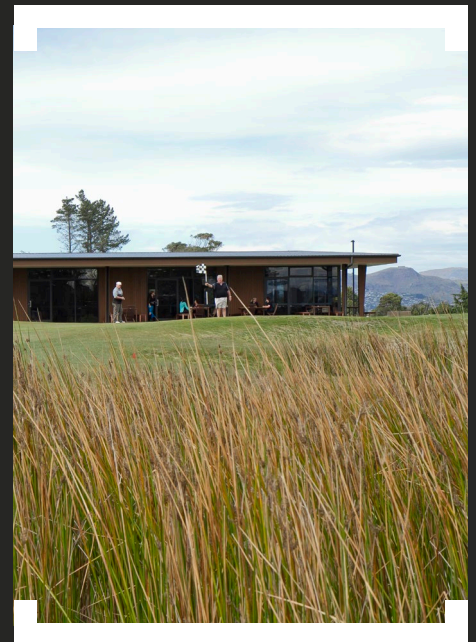
EARTHQUAKE DAMAGE

The earthquake damage meant no income and a major overhaul of the course and clubhouse was needed.



DECREASING POPULATION

The north eastern local community was decreasing at a rapid rate.



ATTRACTING NEW MEMBERS

The need to become market-facing to attract new members to the club.

SOLUTION

Waimairi Beach Golf Club management, staff and members rallied together to search for the solutions. They very quickly realised that this wasn't going to be an overnight fix and that the best plan of action would involve the strategic approach to selling off land, the expert advice of Kristine Kerr to redesign the course and true perseverance from John and the management committee when dealing with insurance claims and building consents.

The selling off land and investing the proceeds to gain interest was to ensure that the lack of income didn't cripple the club before the revamp was completed. "This was a shrewd move by the management committee and meant that they could focus on the rebuilding phase of the course and clubhouse," said de Lautour.

The club also realised that they had to retain as many of their 680 loyal members and arranged reciprocal playing vouchers for them while the \$1.7m rebuild was being completed. As would be expected, they did lose 50 members as many moved out of the area but the open and

transparent approach to communication was definitely one of their most successful retention strategies.

The Waimairi Beach Golf Club management committee also realised that for the club to survive in the current climate, they would need to become more market-facing and that involve the full staff being on board. "I've only been the Marketing Manager for three months but I can wholeheartedly say that the staff became a strong unit and have embraced their roles in retention and recruitment of members."

RESULTS

NEW GOLF COURSE & CLUB HOUSE

Due to the damage caused by earthquakes a new club house and course needed to be rebuilt.

62 NEW MEMBERS

Since August 1st 2014 Waimairi Beach Golf Club have gained 62 new members.

STRONG STAFF TEAM

The full staff worked together and became a strong unit.

KEY LEARNING / LESSONS

It became apparent very early on that Waimairi Beach Golf Club needed to accept their situation and they had to do something totally different to get back on track. No decision was made lightly and they always involved regular and clear communication with their membership.

The club needed to raise its profile within the community. "We got our key messages right for each target market and used all of the available marketing channels to deliver the message that Waimairi Beach Golf Club was back in business," said de Lautour.

The biggest lesson over the four years since the earthquakes was the three P's (Patience, Perseverance, and some more Patience) when dealing with compliance issues in a City that is recovering from a major disaster.



CONCLUSION / SUMMARY

Waimairi Beach Golf Club acknowledge the huge role that John Herdman played throughout the journey and his leadership, determination and dedication to getting the club back on the Canterbury Golf map is the reason they are celebrating this story. John is now taking a well-earned rest and can sit back and be proud of a job well done.

The club was reopened by golfing legend Sir Bob Charles in May 2014 and the current membership and new members are looking forward to a fantastic golfing experience for years to come.

Karen de Lautour and the team at Waimairi Beach Golf Club know that it is very early days and they are taking every day as it comes. "This is a team effort and we all understand that every position has a role to play in promoting the club, recruiting new members and keeping our membership experience at the top of our priorities," said de Lautour.

For more information visit:
waimairibeachgolfclub.co.nz



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