



Whangamata Golf Club

CASE STUDY:

Membership Recruitment:

Innovative approaches to attracting new members

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO ATTRACTING NEW MEMBERS

Whangamata is a small town located on the Coromandel Peninsula with a resident population of approximately 3,500 (35 per cent aged 65 and over). Come summer the population increases to 50-60,000.

The Whangamata Golf Club located on the outskirts of the town runs two courses, the 18 hole Titoki course and the 9 hole Williamson course, a five minute drive from the main clubrooms.

The club relies heavily on the green fee influx in summer with queues starting at 5am, the club always has their fingers crossed for a sunny windy summer to cut down the amount of fishing time allowing for more golf and beverage time. The clubrooms are a well-appointed function venue and well used for weddings and events.

Michael Jurisich, the Club Manager at Whangamata, is always looking to increase the membership of the club and to engage with the local community more.

The Open Day concept was seen as a way to implement this, a committee of six was established and headed by the Club Captain Brian Pittams.

"The main aim of the Open Day was to introduce more locals to the game of golf and the Whangamata Golf Club community with potential new memberships seen as a byproduct of a well-run and organised event," said Jurisich.

While they have a huge number of casual players in the summer months, these were not the target. The focus was on encouraging more locals into club membership.

"Our largest market is summer is casual golfers. They are not in Whangamata long enough to take up any membership options," said Jurisich. "Our members are great and pretty much leave the club to our casual golfers in the peak summer period."

CHALLENGES



HARD TO LEARN

Many of the people the club had spoken to previously saw golf as a hard game to learn.



PERCEPTION OF GOLF CLUBS

Another concern was that golf clubs can be seen as snobby and elitist.



ENGAGING MEMBERS

Getting members involved in promoting the club.

SOLUTION

The Whangamata Golf Club utilised the SNAG (Starting New At Golf) Golf equipment and a number of novelty games to make the experience memorable and enjoyable.

“The SNAG gear made the day very enjoyable for those involved all could achieve and it was great to see them easily hitting the ball,” said Jurisich. They also enrolled the help of a number of golf club members on the day to encourage, support and guide the visitors.

The Whangamata GC finished the day with some tea, scones and a chat to introduce the clubrooms and facilities and to make sure all newcomers felt welcome.

PARTNERS

The Whangamata Golf Club engaged the support of Waikato Golf and NZ Golf to provide the SNAG gear and the delivery of the events on the day. They also utilised the LOVE Golf toolkit with custom designed flyers to promote the event.

“The LOVE Golf toolkit gave us a more professional flyer but still with our relevant images and information,” said Jurisich. “Our first intention was to let the people experience golf and the club and our members were there to encourage and enjoy the day as well.”

RESULTS

25
ATTENDEES

All the attendees' details were obtained and added to the club database.

14
NEW MEMBERS

Nine signed up at the event with a further three shortly after (another two due to join shortly).

**NOW AN
ANNUAL EVENT**

Now the Open Day is in the Club Calendar as an annual event.

**↑
LOCAL
ENGAGEMENT**

Greater awareness of the Whangamata Golf Club in the local community and engagement from locals.

KEY LEARNING LESSONS / SUMMARY

The Member Get Member method, which is part of the LOVE Golf Campaign, was very successful in promoting the Open Day. The Open Day committee had a good representation across the various club groups and the Open Day was promoted heavily at our Mens and Ladies haggles.

“Our membership and the local media were our main promoters of the event and the members were very positive about promoting their club to friends and family,” said Jurisich.

The club also used the local community newspaper, Coastal News, to promote the event at no cost. The Coastal News is very proactive in supporting the local community and the event received great exposure.

The club also incentivised the attendees with a 25 per cent reduction in the first years membership and the existing members received \$50 for each new member they introduced.

The event on the day ran very smoothly with different stations on the putting green and practice area. Each person also took part in a 3 hole very short course and ended up with a 3 shot hole in one competition where a membership was up for grabs.



The majority of the new members are for the 9 hole ladies group but this was not a surprise. The club now understands that their job is to fully engage these members at the club for them to enjoy golf and friendships that the Whangamata Golf Club offers.

Jurisich was very happy with the high uptake of the membership and expects to end up with a total of 14 new members where there initial expectation prior to the event was six. The event will be an annual event.

“We see the Open Day now as an important part of our ongoing promotion of the club,” he said.

“We don't see us making any major changes in how we ran the event, having Waikato Golf and NZ Golf to help was an added bonus.”

For more information visit:
www.whangamatagolf.net.nz



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