

LOVE Membership

Club membership is integral to the golf sector with over 105,000 New Zealanders choosing to belong as members of golf clubs.

This LOVE Membership COVID-19 Response Edition is designed to help you engage and support your members through this period of uncertainty.

In this document you will find guidance on:

- Research and retention
- Member engagement strategies
- Communications: Good practice through a crisis and uncertainty.

Research and Retention

As New Zealand moves out of Alert Level 4 and a nationwide lockdown, retention of members will be critical to the sustainability of most golf clubs. Member retention will support your club financially and it will play a key role in developing and shaping the culture of your club over the next few months. A focus on member retention early on will allow you to make important decisions around investment and the operations at your club in the future.

Positive Club Member Experiences

Investing your time in retention involves keeping your current members happy.

To help you focus on what you can do to deliver a positive club member experience, our research of 12,591 respondents over the last four years outlines the nine key drivers that are most important to golf club members.



How can our golf club approach member retention?

Understanding different groups within your golf club and being responsive to their needs and requirements is critical as it moves beyond a one-size-fits-all approach. Combine our positive club member experience research with your deep knowledge of your members to identify the various groups within your golf club. This way, you will be able to create an action plan based on the needs of your membership.

For example, consider the following groups:



Long-standing members

These members are regular players who have been supporting your club for many years. They are likely to be very engaged in golf and the loss of golf during the lockdown will have been significant.

Action: Look for ways to surprise and delight these members, recognise or reward their loyalty to your club. Consider adding loyalty credit or a member's guest green fee to their accounts or opportunities for coaching.



New members

These members have joined your club within the last 12 months. The excitement they initially felt when joining the club may have been replaced by feelings of uncertainty given the current climate.

Action: Look for ways to reassure these members their decision to join was a positive one and create interactions to ensure they are fully integrated into the club. Their sense of belonging and community within the club at this challenging time will foster their continued investment in the club for many years to come.



Less-engaged members

These members are at-risk and may be considering leaving the club and may have become engaged in other things due to the lockdown.

Action: Do your research and identify in the last three to six months those members whose engagement and/or play has been declining.

Action: Reach out to them and find out if there was a reason for their declining engagement. A phone call can provide a personal touch and make them feel valued. Remind them of the value of membership beyond just playing the game and thank them for being a member.



Families

When making purchasing decisions, typically have to consider the entire family as part of the decision-making process and may have less discretionary income post-lockdown.

Action: You may want to consider different pricing or payment options or find ways to value-add so that your offerings are affordable, flexible and allow everyone in the golfing community to take part once lockdown lifts.

Action: Look to create opportunities for families to participate together and promote the value of golf as one of the safe sports to play.



Super Fans

These members are the highly engaged, social connectors at the club. They play an important part in developing the club culture and social environment and are likely to speak highly of the club and refer other people.

Action: Keep these members excited as they are the heartbeat of the golf club. Look for ways to use them to continue their role as advocates to promote your golf club retain and recruit new members.

Summary

By moving beyond a one-size-fits-all approach, your targeted approach will help personalise communications and actions to meet the needs of different groups with the golf club.

Members will appreciate they are valued as you are prepared to go the extra mile have them part of the future of the club.

Member engagement strategies

While COVID-19 and the lockdown present large challenges for golf, it also provides a unique opportunity to remind members of the value of membership outside of just playing the game. Remember, your club's purpose has not changed, you just need to do your best to adjust your offering to suit the current climate.

Below are some considerations for your club regarding member retention during this difficult time.

Action 1: Continue to provide value and connection

Our research tells us that the top two reasons members belong to a golf club is to access the course and clubhouse facilities and to have fun. We also know that people play golf for the health and well-being benefits. Now is the time to be innovative in the value we provide to our members while our core product, the golf course can't be accessed. What can you do now that provides value to your members while they cannot access the golf course?

Ideas

- Pick up the phone - call your over 70s members to check in and keep the social connection going
- Give weekly at home golf tips from your PGA Pro or volunteer coaches
- Have your chef/caterer or a talented member share weekly recipes
- Engage your sponsors to bring new offers to support your members during this time
- Set up interactive quizzes and challenges
- Share relevant podcasts and blogs.

Action 2: Be proactive and get personal

By taking the time and talking to your members, you will start to get an idea of their current situation and what you can do for them during this time. Once you know what value you can add, communicating this is your number one tool and your biggest opportunity to nurture member relationships. Through your communication you can be informative on facts and create clarity in an uncertain time.

Ideas

- Profile your own staff and your members to humanise your business and keep members and familiar faces connected

- Use your staff to contribute ideas, updates and checking in with members
- Keep it interactive, set at home challenges or member competitions
- Be transparent, address frequently asked questions and manage your members expectations.

Action 3: Be flexible and adaptable

You may not require any adjustments to membership. However, you will know the feeling of your members and their personal circumstances better than anyone and if you are required to make some adjustments, here are some ideas:

- Have empathy and be accommodating, this is a difficult time and many people are faced with financial hardship or declining health
- Add credit to loyalty accounts
- Loyalty vouchers for the bar
- Extend the membership by a month
- Add member guest green fees to the members account
- Include courtesy coaching sessions
- Avoid crediting back a month of subs as you have had your own expenses during this time. Use this as a last resort or as a support to members who have lost their jobs
- Stagger or defer payment options.

Action 4: Think outside the box

We can learn from others during this time and unite in our creativity and innovation. Here are some examples of organisations sticking to their purpose, whilst adjusting tactics to add value to their customers.

Les Mills is the biggest brand for gyms in NZ. Their purpose is all about improving health, happiness and helping people to become the very best they can be. During the lockdown they have stayed true to their purpose and innovatively adapted to the current climate. They have a wide range of easy accessible at-home classes through a partnership with TNVZ. They have also created blogs, podcasts, Instagram live workouts and kept their staff visible through #lesmillsunited posts about how both their staff and members are keeping active during this time.

French Revolver Hair Studio have been sending regular emails of care to their customers. The emails are informative, but more importantly personal, creating an ongoing connection between clients and staff. Their social media platforms remain strong with "hello from" sessions, whereby staff are letting clients know how they are and what they are up too, as well as sharing their 'at home' hair tips!

Studio Box is another example of business continuity during this time. Community is a true value for this organisation, and they have continued to maintain this during the lockdown, adding value to their participants and keeping everyone connected. They have done this through Instagram live videos, online boxing classes and messages of love and happiness from their trainers.

Royal Auckland and the Grange Golf Club are currently taking a personal approach to adding value and keeping connected to their members. They are doing this through a variety of methods such as profiling staff, weekly recipes from their chef, coaching tips from their head professional, competitions and even gardening tips from their head greenkeeper! A current competition they are running involves images of each hole from the course, and the member with all 18 correct at the end of lockdown will win a prize. Their communication is interactive, and it encourages action from both members and staff keeping the connection and community alive.

There are many ideas to add value to your members and keep them engaged. Why not connect with other local clubs to share your ideas or contact your Regional Support Manager to put a plan in place at your club?

Communications: Good practice through a crisis and uncertainty

This section aims to support your leadership during the COVID-19 crisis with ideas on how to communicate clearly, compassionately and confidently through these uncertain times.

We've summarised six simple actions to help guide you for the future.

Action 1: Identify your key messages

For example, you may want to:

- Inform your members of the impact of COVID-19 and what your club's operation allowances are under each level and how it will affect members.
- Update on new health and safety practices to create a safe environment for members, such as promoting good hygiene and physical distancing measures.
- Share your approach to continue supporting members through this challenging time, whether it be socially, checking in on their personal well-being, or being flexible financially.

Action 2: Be consistent and reference credible sources

- Use information that is already out there – for example, the COVID-19 and NZ Golf websites have regular updates available.
- Cut and paste this information or use links.
- Do state the facts. Don't try to alter the narrative.

Action 3: Maintain a regular frequency

- Have a regular newsletter cycle and use templates to help save time.
- Stick to the same day and time – have processes in place to allow this.
- Don't over communicate – unless a "newsflash" can't wait.

Action 4: Use multiple communication channels

- Use multiple channels to get the message out – email, social media, letters, posters and club notices. Consider picking up the phone (particularly for your older members).
- Identify your stakeholders and understand the gaps in your membership communications.
- Create fool proof communication – everyone gets informed.

Action 5: Be prepared to vary the tone

- Identify the tone of the communication.
- Does it represent the club and the vision well?
- For example, set clear expectations for health and safety practices, but consider keeping it light-hearted when connecting to maintain personal relationships.

Action 6: Select the messenger

- Decide who is sending the email and identify in the communications.
- Is it the club manager, chairman, president, board or committee?
- Involve others in the process but be clear with your team/board to maintain consistency on key issues to avoid mixed messages and promote the flow of information.

You've put in a lot of work to develop your communication materials so before you press send, complete this simple checklist.

- Identify the font, size and layout.
- Look to avoid inconsistency in font, size and colour.
- Get assistance in proofreading.
- Proofread it from bottom to top – doing this alters your perspective.
- Don't rely on spellcheck.

Example: Communications Plan

Stakeholder	Objective	Messaging	Channel	Date
Members	Update on COVID-19	Impact of COVID-19 is having on our golf club and our planned response	Email	Wed x Apr
Members Visitors	Update on COVID-19 alert levels	Our operation allowances under each level and how this impacts on members participation	Email, social media	Fri x April
Members	Update on turf maintenance	Our approach to regain course conditions and expected time frame	Email	Tue, x April
Members Visitors	Update on health and safety	Good hygiene practices and physical distance measures	Email, social media	Weekly on Mon
Members	Social connection	Challenges for members to complete, well-being check in, quizzes, golf tips	Email, phone, social media	Weekly on Sun

Communications planning

Take this opportunity to create a communication plan.

- For a communication plan template, click [HERE](#).
- For a social media toolkit, click [HERE](#).
- For a marketing toolkit, click [HERE](#).

Leading your club's response

As a leader, be prepared to adopt a learning mindset that enables you to adapt to what is needed and be willing to adjust the game plan as new facts emerge. Address the challenge with openness and optimism and have empathy for how people may feel. It's not only what you do that matters. How you do it is just as relevant, and in times of crisis, even more important to get right.

For more information or queries, please contact your Regional Support Manager, or:

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