

Improving Your Handicap

At a recent golf lesson with former PGA pro Jerry Aldredge, I realized that some of the strategies used to improve your golf game might also help you create a better marketing plan for your business.

Golf is a basic game. All you really need to play is a club and a ball. And yet, it is often considered one of the most difficult games in the world. The concept of marketing is equally as basic: Just find a way to get your name known in the marketplace. Instead of struggling to make that happen, learn the basics of marketing and execute.



Look... No lines

Golf is one of few sports without lines. Too often, when marketing ourselves, we formulate our own imaginary lines by the way we look at a situation, boxing ourselves in and restricting our ability to be creative. Think outside the box by brainstorming. Write down your ideas. What could you do if you had no boundaries?

Two steps forward

Move forward rather than backward and remember to follow through. We often soak up information from seminars and how-to articles, yet fail to exercise the things we learn. We are inspired by fresh ideas but tend to procrastinate when translating them into action. From now on, let inspiration move you. Make a list of the steps you want to take — and make them happen.

Trust your instincts

Use methods you trust. Not all methods work all the time. Know what methods work for you, and let them work naturally. For example, seminars prove to be effective for some professionals, while advertisements in local magazines may work for others. Recognize these differences and plan your strategy accordingly.

Don't limit your options

A tennis player has only one racket to play many different shots. Golfers, however, can use 13 different clubs — one for each shot if we so desire. In marketing, there are numerous available tools such as direct mail, speaking engagements, periodicals, advertising and mentors — all there to assist you in accomplishing your goals.

Be flexible

Identify and evaluate segments of your business you would like to change. Put down on paper how you would like to stretch each area. Something as simple as adjusting your time management skills or travel schedule could have the greatest impact.

Golf-inspired strategies to help you execute a better marketing plan

Relate to things you know

Putting is a natural motion. It's the simplest of all strokes. When you have a three-foot putt, you aim at the line to the cup, not at the cup itself. This same principle applies when you allow yourself to see your business from a different perspective. You may get too enmeshed in the mechanics to focus on the more valuable marketing purpose, so step back and take a look. A small change could make a significant difference.

Practice, practice, practice

Turning your back to the sun and watching your shadow is an effective way to review your posture, and good posture is a key factor to becoming a good golfer. In marketing, continue to refine your approach as well. Learn from your mistakes. Straighten up and correct yourself; always keep your strategy in focus.

Relax and swing

In golf, you play numerous holes before obtaining your final score. You may make a mistake on the ninth hole and think it's over, but it's important to shake that feeling and go forward. The same holds true with your marketing plan. Don't focus on what went wrong. Relax and concentrate on the tactics that prove successful. Enjoy the moment and make it count.