

Facility Design and Renovation

By Frank Vain

For club facility improvements to be truly successful, they have to be designed with one purpose in mind, to achieve each club's mission. So it gets back to, does your club have a clear mission of what its purpose is? Only by fully understanding this can improvement programs achieve your club's full potential.

The often-seen approach of a club board in regards to addressing facility needs is, go out and hire the architect. Solve the problem at hand, but don't worry about anything else. And while this may well solve the problem at hand, it often creates wasteful expenditures of poorly thought-out initial projects, which have to be revised or demolished in the future. The best facility projects result from clearly identifying a club's strategic needs like attracting the next generation of members under age 50, fixing a dining problem which is facility or kitchen caused, upgrading recreation facilities, making a club a more year-round value, etc. In other words, before planning facilities, a club must know what it wants and needs to achieve in member satisfaction, membership growth, operation efficiency, dining quality, etc.

So, before your club jumps ahead and hires its facility architect, do a little or even a lot of strategic planning with the board and club's management. By doing so your club will achieve its strategic goals and get maximum benefit for every facility dollar spent.

As Alice will tell you in Wonderland, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there". Be sure you and your leadership know where you must go before drawing a single line on a facility floor plan. **BRB**

For Millennials Golf Alone Is Not Enough: Referrals, Family Access, Non-Golf Amenities Matter

By Bennett DeLozier

The Millennial generation contains the golf industry's future consumers, customers, and members. Millennials are integral to the future financial sustainability of golf operations and will want to 'belong' if the facility matches their values and logistical needs (time, costs, activities, loved ones, etc.).

However, unlike previous generations of club members and regular golfers, Millennials have different priorities and are predictable in different ways:

- **Agility** – Millennials are mobile and will change levels of engagement more than previous generations.
- **Loyalty/Infidelity** – Given their agility, Millennial golfers require more robust and meaningful engagement to sustain their business.
- **Relationship+** – Millennials want to "connect" with the club/course to develop a sense of 'ownership' of that facility and cultivate a relationship that is more relational than transactional.
- **Inclusiveness** – Millennials want inclusivity and often do not consider themselves to be 'traditional people'. They are willing to try new experiences and co-create with golf businesses.
- **Affordability** – Costs are the biggest barriers between them and golf.
- **Relevance** – Traditional membership, payment, amenity, and service options/offerings are not as appealing to Millennials as to previous generations.

"For golf facility owners, operators, and managers, this means establishing relevance to Millennial lifestyles by rethinking membership programs, privileges, and amenity offerings" explains Michael Gregory, GGA Senior Manager. "Our research on Millennial golfers indicates that socialization is highly important and existing relationships can be leveraged to influence their engagement with golf facilities."

REFERRALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS WORK

More than four in five (83 percent) Millennial golfers regard recommendations from friends, family, or colleagues as the top factor influencing their decision to join a private club. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) might join as a result of a positive experience attending an activity or function at the club (such as a golf tournament or wedding – events typically attended with friends and family).

FLEXIBILITY AND CUSTOMIZATION ARE KEY

"Cost is a major concern for Millennials," Gregory emphasized, "They would prefer to pay more annually rather than invest a large sum on joining fees or upfront costs." Of the 1,000+ Millennial golfers asked, 51% said the most appealing membership offering is a flexible membership through which they can pay a low social fee and receive full access to the club and play golf on a pay-per-use basis. In other words, they would choose social outlets over golf access if put to the choice.

GOLF ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH

When it comes to joining a private club, research indicates that golf alone will not recruit the next generation. Millennials are seeking an experience that is, or can be, more than golf. As a result, non-golf amenities matter, particularly those relating to fitness (71 percent), access for the entire family (65 percent), swimming (62 percent), and social events (57 percent).

While all clubs must continue to explore methods of establishing relevance to Millennials, golf can begin to address their evolving lifestyles and changing priorities by conceptualizing the facility as a conduit for lifestyle and socialization rather than sport alone. **BRB**