GOLF ADVISORY PRACTICE

A Blueprint for Successful Golf Course Development

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Developing a golf course as part of a resort or integrated residential community is a major business decision.

From a purely investment perspective, there are typically four principal motivations to include a golf component within your broader development, namely:

- Golf courses have a strong track record of providing an increase in selling price and sales velocity of adjacent residential real estate
- Golf can help drive demand for on-site hospitality functions such as hotels and serviced apartments
- Golf courses can act as a useful “positioning tool” for upscale developments
- If designed, built and operated in a professional manner (and with favorable market characteristics), golf courses can provide a viable return on investment in their own right.

However, success is by no means guaranteed and, unfortunately, the golf industry is littered with developments that have failed because they have been poorly conceived and do not meet market requirements. Perhaps the financial planning has been flawed, or they have not benefited from a professional team approach.

The pages of this document contain everything you need to know to make your golf development a success. It is designed as a step-by-step guide to the development process.

The intelligence contained in this report gathers together the combined experience of some of the leading specialist companies involved in the golf development process today – the kind of quality advisors you need in your development team.

Here’s what you’ll learn – and the contributing companies that have lent their know-how to this guide:

1. Market and financial feasibility – how to deliver the right type of development for the market and put the correct financial processes in place (contributor: KPMG Golf Advisory Practice)
2. Master planning – how to optimize your land to enable your business to perform at its best (contributor: WATG)
3. Golf course design – how to create a course that will stand out from the crowd and add value to your development (contributor: Nicklaus Design)
4. Clubhouse design – how to optimize your customer’s experience, and your bottom line (contributor: Marsh & Associates, Inc.)
5. Golf construction – how to avoid costly mistakes and ensure your course offers long-term value (contributor: Southern Golf)
6. Water management and irrigation – how to invest early, so that the efficiencies will pay their own dividends (contributor: Rain Bird)
7. HR and recruitment – how to attract the best people in the business to your development for outstanding results (contributor: Colt Mackenzie McNair)
8. Golf course operations – how to manage your development to deliver an exceptional golfing experience (contributor: Troon Golf)
9. Marketing & PR – how to drive business by communicating the right messages to your target customers, and create a positive reputation for your development (contributor: Landmark Media)
10. Sustainability – how to future-proof your golf course and business, building high environmental standards into your development. Our expert here is the Golf Environment Organization (GEO), and such is the importance of sustainability throughout the golf development process that GEO has contributed its insights to every chapter of this guide.

While every golf development is different, and the timing of each expert’s input may vary, the key factors that shape a successful project remain consistent – and they are all covered in detail in this Blueprint.
While every project is different, this graph illustrates the 10 steps of golf development and indicates the typical phases and stages at which the various professionals are active. We recommend that all parties are involved in the initial planning stage to create a cohesive team and a clear vision for the development process.
1. Market and financial feasibility

At the early planning stage of any golf development it is imperative to answer certain basic questions including the following:

- Is your site suitable for a golf development in terms of its location, accessibility and proximity to demand generators?
- What is the competitive environment in terms of current and future supply of golf facilities?
- What is the market potential of your project in terms of current and future demand?
- What is the optimal project concept in terms of the market characteristics, your financing capabilities and your risk/return expectations?
- Is the project financially viable?
- What is the expected return on investment from the project?

Engaging an experienced economic/financial advisor at the early planning stage of your development will help to ensure that you are provided with the answers to such questions. Moreover, the preparation of an independent market and financial feasibility study will assist you in accessing project finance (both debt and equity) and engaging future project partners e.g. resort operators.

Typically, a phased approach should be adopted in the preparation of a market and financial feasibility study. It is however important to the success of the project to be flexible regarding the timing and sequencing of each phase throughout the development process.

Phase 1: Site and location analysis

The first step is a thorough analysis of the existing site, evaluating its strengths and weaknesses in terms of location and accessibility. In this respect, it is important to consider issues including:

1. Proximity to major road networks and airports
2. Proximity to likely demand generators e.g. hotels, tourist resorts, commercial centers and residential areas

This investigation – ideally prepared in tandem with the land planner and golf course architect – is an important first step in indentifying and assessing the future concept and position of the project.

Phase 2: Market analysis

Following the site appraisal, it is important to establish the market potential of the project.

This typically includes a detailed analysis of both supply and demand.

Review of supply:
- evolution of supply and overview of existing courses
- review of competitors (product mix, market positioning, operating model, KPI’s etc.)
- overview of future supply (timing, location, development concept, etc.).

Review of demand:
- evolution and profile of demand (domestic, expatriate, tourism, corporate)
- analysis of demand for green fees/memberships
- pricing analysis
- analysis of seasonality
- future and latent demand projections.

A market analysis usually relies on both primary and secondary research – the former might include surveys of potential members and in-depth interviews with local authorities,
golf course owners/operators and other industry stakeholders. If your golf course is being developed as part of a broader resort/community development, the market research should naturally be extended to cover the key functions and revenue drivers.

**Residential real estate**

Here, the market review will also focus on the current and expected supply and demand for resort real estate and second homes. Based on both primary and secondary data, an advisor will comment on the potential demand for a housing development at the location. They should recommend the most appropriate pricing strategy and advise on the velocity of sales. The ultimate objectives of this analysis will be:

- To determine the market potential of the real estate development, locally and internationally
- To determine the average selling price of real estate of different quality and type (e.g. villas, town houses, apartments, plots), and suggest an appropriate pricing strategy
- To quantify the expected demand, including its timing (i.e. sales velocity)
- To gauge buyers’ preferences in relation to the planned estates and amenities.

**Hotel and hospitality facilities**

When golf is to be part of a resort development, it is crucial to assess the current and future market conditions for the potential hospitality facilities (i.e. hotel, F&B, events). The focus of this should be as follows:

- To obtain relevant market and operational data on the hotel industry, locally and internationally
- To determine the current availability of accommodation facilities serving the target markets, and obtain all available data from authoritative sources on other planned hotel developments in the area
- To determine the existing and projected characteristics of relevant markets, and quantify the demand in terms of volume and price
- To review seasonal trends in hotel demand and pricing regimes, and establish the potential market penetration level of the proposed hotels.

**Phase 3: Project conceptualization**

Having completed the site appraisal, reviewed the competitive environment and made an assessment of the market potential of the golf facility, your advisor will be able to provide recommendations on the golf concept that can help to ensure the final product is attractive to the target market.

The creation of synergies between project components and the achievement of critical mass are key success factors. It is important not to view the various components of the planned development in isolation. The emphasis of the research should always be on original and creative approaches.

In reviewing the project concept, your advisor will consider the preferences of target markets, matching them with the physical opportunities and constraints of your site. In the case of mixed-use developments, they should also make recommendations on the following:

- The characteristics of the golf operation (its quality level, practice facilities, clubhouse size, minimum investment required etc.)
- The number, type and suggested quality standard of residential units (e.g. the number of villas, their size and specification, their amenities, etc.)
- The characteristics of the hospitality facilities (e.g. the number of rooms, their grading, and the size and quality of F&B outlets, meeting spaces, wellness facilities etc.)
- Estimates for Capital Budget Expenditure (together with the architects and construction companies)
- The project phasing and potential project risks.

Although the market research may only focus on the key drivers of the project, during this third phase of the project your advisor – together with the overall project team – should consider the cost/benefit of having ancillary facilities on site that can help to differentiate the resort. These could include attractions such as retail outlets, a conference center, marina, external pools, children’s playgrounds and specific sports academies (e.g. for golf or tennis).

Recommendations on the concept should cover quality and positioning; the target market; the operational business model; and suggestions about the eventual residential offering, possible hospitality functions and the synergies between golf and any other functions.

**Phase 4: Financial appraisal**

The initial development concept should now be refined, based on the findings of the financial feasibility assessment. This financial analysis should identify
the expected level of use and potential revenue accruing from the facility (including green fee and membership revenues; clubhouse, driving range and pro-shop revenues). It should also estimate all operating expenditures (e.g. the operational and maintenance costs of the golf facility). Pro forma profit and loss calculations, plus cash flow analysis, will ultimately provide pointers on the expected level of return on the proposed investment.

For all operating annuity projects, your advisor should prepare statements of estimated profit and loss for the period up to and including the stabilized year of operation, using assumed rates of inflation and based upon an agreed opening date. For any eventual residential component, they should prepare estimated profit and loss accounts, based on the expected market absorption of residential units and a pre-agreed phasing of the construction.

Your advisor should also prepare statements of estimated annual cash flows for the first years of business operations. These will be based on estimates of the following:

- The capital costs of the various project components
- The most appropriate management vehicle for the proposed project
- An agreed financing structure for the development
- An assumed terminal value for the operating business.

Finally, in order to comment on the viability of the project it is essential to comment on its expected rate of return. We recommend sufficient emphasis is laid on the preparation of different sensitivity analyses on different key input assumptions (e.g. operating model, development of pricing, estimated development costs, etc.).

The key questions

What should I look for when selecting a market and financial advisor?
Having the right market and financial advisor on board is integral to a successful development team and can add significant value to your project. Your choice may depend to a degree on your specific needs. However, the key qualities to look for when selecting your advisor include the following:

- Genuine knowledge and understanding of the golf industry
- A solid understanding of real estate development and the hospitality industry
- Local market knowledge and credentials
- International experience with the ability to draw upon successful case studies
- A strong project team, with experienced individuals assigned to your project – ask to see CV’s

- A reliable and well-known brand name – especially important when a bankable document for financing purposes is required.

What should I expect my financial advisor to deliver?
The scope of the work will depend on your specific requirements, but can range from producing a stand-alone market study to delivering an integrated market and financial feasibility assessment. Ultimately, they are equipped to make recommendations on the development concept, determine the expected return on your proposed investment, and deliver an independent, bankable document for financing purposes.

### Executive Summary
- A market and financial feasibility study is crucial in determining whether your development is viable and what return on investment you will likely achieve
- It will tell you if your site and location is suitable
- Potential future demand and supply for golf will be established
- The size, price and positioning of your real estate will be recommended
- Market penetration and seasonal trends for your hotel will be predicted
- The recommended project concept will detail the factors that will make your development attractive to the target market
- A financial appraisal will forecast profit and loss, cash flow, the rate of return and, eventually, the project value.

“The creation of synergies between project components and the achievement of critical mass are key success factors. It is important not to view the various components of the planned development in isolation.”
KPMG’s Golf Advisory Practice
KPMG’s Real Estate, Leisure & Tourism team possesses in-depth know-how and experience of the business side of the golf industry. The practice has provided professional services to tourism bodies, owners and operators of existing golf courses, as well as developers of new golf courses across the EMA region. We are regarded as an industry leader in this field.

Typical services provided by our practice include:

- Market demand studies
- Golf resort and estate conceptualization
- Financial feasibility studies
- Business plans and operational reviews
- Valuations, investor search and transaction services
- Golf development strategies for individual countries or regions
- Economic impact studies.

In addition to our wide range of professional services, KPMG is active in the golfing sector in many other ways, including:

Golf Business Forum
The Golf Business Forum is a unique platform for professionals involved in the golf industry to meet, learn, exchange ideas and do business in an exciting and memorable setting. KPMG’s Golf Advisory Practice set out to create a unique international event that focuses on the business side of golf. The Golf Business Forum concept was developed in 2004. Since its foundation, this annual event, which attracts participants from five continents, has been supported by many of the leading market players in the golf industry.

For information on forthcoming events, visit: golfbusinessforum.com.

Golf Benchmark Survey
The Golf Benchmark Survey is one of the largest research projects ever undertaken in the golf industry. From our involvement in numerous projects in the golf sector, we identified a clear market need for structured information on the operational and financial performance of golf courses. We believe the golf sector will benefit from a set of industry benchmarks that will allow individual courses to compare their performance with the industry high, average and low in their respective markets.

For more information visit: golfbenchmark.com.

Golf Business Community
The Golf Business Community (GBC) is a platform for individuals within the golf industry who are interested in building and maintaining relationships, and accessing golf research and golf industry news.

For more information visit: golfbusinesscommunity.com

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2. Master planning

The master planning discipline is a mystery to many, but in a complex project like a golf development, it plays a vital role. Master planners generally work at a greater scale than architects: they look at the bigger picture. Master planning is all about pragmatically fitting the pieces of the "land puzzle" together and carefully considering the inter-relationships between uses. It is also about telling a story. If your project has a good financial story, a unique selling point and a strong environmental narrative, the design will reflect that.

The best master planners are great storytellers. Master planning helps to set the scene and brief the architectural, landscape and interior designs. It helps clients understand the best use of their land to maximize the potential return on their investment.

What many developers don’t understand is that a golf-based development will be lucky to make money from the golf course itself – often people who live in such communities don’t even play the game. What makes money for the developer are the amenities – the residential and hotel products adjacent to the course.

Master planning in a golf context is about understanding this integration between facilities and maximizing the value of the real estate adjacent to the “views” (usually of the golf course itself). Gone are the days of lining up all the residences alongside the course. Planners are now looking to create communities or villages within their projects, to give them more character and hence make them more attractive to buyers.

Integrated golf community design is all about creating, marketing and selling a lifestyle. It is particularly attractive in developing countries, where the game carries much prestige. And a good master planner will keep abreast of market trends. Until recently, most resort communities were comprised overwhelmingly of second homes. Now developers are looking to apply master planners’ hospitality expertise to primary residences. Who wouldn’t want to live in a beautiful and green resort-like community?

Developers sometimes think that the master planning element is just “cake decoration” for a site that already has planning permission and all the golf laid out. This is not the case. The best projects carefully integrate their components to take advantage of the relevant synergies. For example, developers often try to squeeze too much development into a small space. This really detracts from the quality of a project. It is important to look at the price premiums that come with restraint, rather than just packing them in and stacking them high!

Creating a plan

Several phases are involved in creating a master plan, as follows:

- The first step is to see the land and understand how the site feels. Good master planners have great software at their disposal to analyze physical, climatic and geographic features; but it is really important to get an understanding of what it truly feels like to be there. Planners sketch ideas and discuss concepts with stakeholders while on the site, typically at a ‘charrette’ or design workshop.

Creating a team

Often developers don’t get the right people sitting around the table early enough. If you have the right input before pen is put to paper (often before the site is purchased), huge savings can be made further down the line.
project means in terms of areas – built versus open space. For most projects, these numbers can then be translated into return on investment. At this point planners also work with artists to visualize the “feel” and develop the styling of the project.

• Next, planners produce plans and sections that begin to illustrate how the buildings, open space, golf and amenities could sit on the site. They then model the plan in three dimensions, so that clients can see how the project will take shape.

• The finished master plan usually takes the form of large format drawings and a book – typically a ‘coffee-table’ style piece. These should be beautiful as well as informative, because they need to serve a number of different purposes – most importantly, to market the project: either to local planning authorities or dignitaries, to potential investors or hotel operators, or even, in some cases, to end users.

Technological advances
Over the last five years, technology has radically changed the way master planners present their design. Traditionally it was a big, colorful hand-drawn plan, with an Excel spreadsheet to support the vision in financial terms. Now companies save paper and time by using touch screens to draw. They take every client’s project and place it in Google Earth, so they can see how it will appear topographically, spatially and geographically in the context of its surroundings. It is powerful to see a golf resort master plan come to life in three dimensions!

First-time clients are often surprised by the cutting-edge technology used both to create and to communicate the design.

The bigger picture
A successful master plan isn’t just about looking pretty on paper. It considers the triple bottom line of sustainability – economic, environmental and social. Sustainability is a buzzword at the moment. Regardless of fashions and bandwagons, good master planning has always considered sustainability as the prime concern. We are not talking about sticking a few solar panels on the roof of a building; it is much more profound than that. There must be a genuine balance to ensure that a project has longevity and viability.

For golf developments the sustainability issue invariably concerns water – particularly, but not exclusively, in dry climates. For this reason, master planners should examine the re-use of grey water and look to minimize irrigation wherever possible, as well as making sure that the golf designer’s scheme is appropriate for the setting. Other important factors on the course itself include the use of chemicals, embedded carbon in the construction of the development, and habitat creation on the course. It’s crucial to ensure that your buildings and landscapes measure up to the highest standards of luxury and sustainability.

The key questions
Why would anyone plan a golf development during an economic downturn?
Planning in the bottom of the cycle allows developers to have everything in place when there’s money to spend. Smart clients know this. Moreover, it’s not as if developers suddenly stopped working when the crisis started. They just became more acutely aware of when and where to spend consultancy fees. That is where master planners come in – helping clients to define a broad vision can be a very cost-effective investment.

It’s a mistake to think a big project can be designed and completely sold to buyers in a year. The logistics of land permissions and local politics – which are very complex and challenging to navigate – have to be dealt with before you even put pen to paper. Good master planners have people from many cultures and backgrounds working with them. It is essential to engage with clients in their own language and with a real understanding of their culture.

How much land do I need?
This is very difficult to answer. An 18-hole golf course, with clubhouse and practice ground, often covers in excess of 800,000m² (80 hectares). If clients want a return on their investment, they also probably need to build a hotel (to help ‘brand’ the real estate); some villas, townhouses and apartments; and other facilities. Sites tend to range anywhere between 120 and 1,000 hectares, but often include large unbuildable areas and setbacks. These natural features can give the site its unique character – perhaps there’s a woodland, some dunes or a mountain peak.
“Gone are the days of lining up all the residences alongside the course. Planners are now looking to create communities or villages within their projects”

Executive Summary

- Master planning is all about fitting the pieces of the “land puzzle” together
- Developers often try to squeeze too much development into a small space, detracting from the quality of a project
- Software helps analyze physical, climatic and geographic features; but it is really important to get an understanding of what it truly feels like to be there
- The land is measured to understand what the project means in terms of areas and return on investment
- The finished master plan usually takes the form of large format drawings and a book which can be used to market the project
- Using technology, master planners can now take each project and place it in Google Earth to see how it will appear topographically, spatially and geographically in the context of its surroundings
- Successful master planning considers the triple bottom line of sustainability – economic, environmental and social.
Sustainability in master planning

In today’s development framework, getting specialist social and environmental input at the earliest stage of your project will be of tremendous value. A sound understanding of natural and cultural capital is the best starting point for spatial planning, physical mapping and zoning of development areas. This enables you to get the very best out of a site – to physically match development to land, and to deliver a project with authentic cultural and aesthetic connections to surrounding landscapes and communities.

A thorough understanding of your site’s constraints and opportunities will inform your physical planning and conceptualization decisions, and one major priority should be to use climate and geomorphology to your advantage. By integrating aspect, microclimate, shade and shelter to best effect, valuable on-site resources such as good soil and natural drainage channels can be conserved and utilized.

Ecological hotspots and habitats should be conserved and integrated, becoming signature features that help define the character of the golfing landscape. This will help bring immediate maturity to the site, and smooth the interface between development and product launch.

WATG

WATG (Wimberly Allison Tong & Goo) is the world’s leading destination design firm.

We have worked with clients on six continents to create some of the world’s most successful destinations, including more than 60 golf resorts.

The firm’s policy is to respect and enhance the unique qualities of each locale and to celebrate its environment, history and culture. Our mission is “designing destinations that lift the spirit.”

WATG has had the privilege of helping pre-eminent owners, developers, operators and governments to achieve critical balances between the needs of clients and the expectations of visitors; between the wishes of the local community and the preferences of the international marketplace; and between the desire for design innovation and the reality of economic restraints. Pioneers in conducting research and thought leaders in generating innovative resort concepts, we were the first to prove the relationship between a property’s design and its bottom line.

From offices in London, Honolulu, Irvine, Seattle, Orlando, Muscat, Singapore and various project sites, WATG offers its clients strategic consulting, master planning, architecture, interior design and landscape architecture services. According to Travel + Leisure and Conde Nast Traveler magazines, WATG has created more of the world’s great golf resorts, hotels and spas than any other firm on the planet.

Our work spans more than 160 countries and territories and is highly acclaimed for excellence in design and creativity. Some of the internationally recognized destinations we have designed include: Emirates Palace, Abu Dhabi; The Palace of The Lost City, South Africa; Hotel Bora Bora, French Polynesia; Amirandes Grecotel Exclusive Resort, Crete; Hilton Sanya Resort & Spa, China; Grand Hyatt Kauai, Hawaii; The Venetian Resort-Hotel-Casino, Las Vegas; Atlantis Paradise Island, Bahamas; The Ritz-Carlton, Bali; and Four Seasons resorts in Maui, Mexico and Mauritius.

Regardless of the project type or location, WATG offers clients a cost-effective system for expediting the development process and producing award-winning designs that are consistently ranked among the best in the world by the most discerning travelers.

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3. Golf course design

In recent times golf has become the chief amenity for luxury communities, placing the golf course architect right at the heart of new residential and resort facilities worldwide. In most cases, the architect must artfully weave course design into the residential component of a development.

It pays to hire your golf course architect or designer as early as possible, preferably in the first stages of the project. The architect’s advice on site selection and its cost estimating and co-ordination with other project consultants could save the developer time and money overall. The architect can help guide the project from start to completion.

While the design process varies greatly from project to project, a basic plan of action generally applies:

- Which areas are best suited for uses other than golf?
- Where are the best views – and the poorest?
- Which slopes (if any) are too extreme for golf?
- What is the character of the site’s existing vegetation?
- How do the site’s natural drainage patterns work?
- Where will the irrigation water come from?

These questions and many more help an architect to design the course as naturally and efficiently as possible. It’s at this stage that an architect will likely prepare several routing concepts for review by the owners and the master planning team. This initial phase typically takes up to 30 days, sometimes more.

**Phase 1: Site analysis**

This is the first phase of every design. The golf course architect will carefully examine the site, initially on paper and then by visiting the property to assess its opportunities and constraints. An architect will ask himself numerous questions:

- Which areas of the site are best suited for golf?

**Phase 2: Preliminary design**

Once everyone agrees on a final land plan, the architect moves on to the preliminary grading/contouring of the golf course. The preliminary contours are used to help define how much earth will need to be moved, help define how the golf course will work from a construction standpoint, help define construction costs and budgets, and allow the architect and owner to understand how the golf course will work and function as it relates to the overall project. The particular style of the golf course (parkland, links, desert, etc) will start to become more refined in this stage.

The chosen style can be further influenced by the contours of the land. If the site is flat, with poor vegetation, will they move a lot of earth to create interest? If the site is naturally undulating, will they do less earthmoving and try to work with what nature has provided? There are many combinations and possibilities, but answering questions like these will help the architect shape the character of the golf course they intend to design.

**Phase 3: Strategic design**

The next phase is designing the final grading/contour plans. Now the architect can plan the strategy of each hole on the course, determining how each hole should be played. The architect’s goal is to create the greatest possible variety in the types of golf shots the course demands – and similar variety in terms of the hazards, the aesthetics of the course etc.

What’s paramount is that the architect makes each hole challenging and interesting for the better golfer, yet playable and enjoyable for the higher-handicap player too.
This stage typically takes 60 to 120 days, and it’s now that the architect will prepare the following plans:

I. A strategy plan, which should include the proposed location of the cart paths and provide details for staking the golf course

II. A clearing plan, showing the extent of clearance of trees and other vegetation

III. A final grading/contour plan and a cut and fill plan showing the amount of earthmoving to be undertaken, hole by hole

IV. A grassing plan showing the limits of the turf, and taking in fairways, roughs, tees and greens

V. A bunker study plan depicting the style and philosophy of the bunkers chosen

VI. A conceptual golf course drainage plan (to be reviewed and approved by the owner’s engineer)

VII. A conceptual landscape plan showing the proposed limits of landscaping within the golf course corridor

VIII. An irrigation plan, prepared by a third party but supplemental to the designer’s plans and made a part of the overall plans for bidding purposes.

In addition, the designer should provide construction specifications and details. These define the acceptable methods and standards required in building the golf course. These specifications may vary depending on the construction budget or site condition.

The designer will also consult with all the other consultants involved in the project on matters relating to the letting of contracts and the soliciting and review of price bids. They should also assist the owner in developing a realistic construction schedule for the course. The designer will prepare a spreadsheet comparing each bidding contractor’s unit costs, to identify where any major cost disparities exist.

**Phase 4: Construction**

Depending on the depth of personnel at the design firm, the lead designer or a design associate will be assigned to the project to work with all the owner’s consultants throughout the construction process. This designated designer will attend regular planning meetings and visit the golf course when necessary during construction, to review the contractor’s work and their adherence to the designer’s plan documents.

Typically, an architect or designer will have no responsibility to prepare plans, specifications or drawings for the golf course clubhouse, half-way house or adjacent real estate structures incidental to the golf course. Often, though, a designer will advise on the conceptual location of such facilities in relation to the golf course.
The key questions

**What kind of land is best for a golf course?**
Gently rolling terrain that requires minimal earthmoving is best. You ideally want nice vegetation and well-drained, sandy soils with plentiful good water. Good quality turf is easier and less expensive to grow and maintain in these conditions. Quality turf can be achieved on just about any site using proper construction and agronomic practices, but it may be more costly to do so.

**Do I need a championship course?**
This depends entirely upon the developer’s needs, the local or regional market demand, and the property’s characteristics.

**How long will the design process take?**
Typically it should take between three and six months, assuming all topographic and property boundary information is available for use. The construction and grow-in phases vary in length, depending on the region and climate.

**Executive Summary**
- It is recommended that your golf course architect is involved at the earliest possible stage in your development.
- Several course routings will be proposed for the developer and master planner’s consideration.
- The character and style of the course and its features – parkland, links, desert – will be determined in the preliminary design phase.
- The strategic design phase results in multiple detailed plans for clearance, earthmoving, grassing, bunkering and drainage, plus construction specifications.
- Your course designer will work closely with the constructor to realize plans for the golf course, and can play a part in other aspects of the golf development.

“What’s paramount is that the architect makes each hole challenging and interesting for the better golfer, yet playable and enjoyable for the high-handicapper too.”
Sustainability in golf course design
Unlike harder forms of development, golf projects offer unique opportunities to safeguard sensitive ecological, landscape and cultural features, or to creatively enhance degraded landscapes and ecosystems.

The key to maximizing the environmental quality of your course is to allow the design to be guided and influenced by its site. That means integrating golf into the landscape, rather than imposing upon it. This doesn’t mean golf design should not also be ambitious and individualistic. Some of the most valuable environmental enhancements in golf have stemmed from the drive to combine golfing drama with large-scale landscape change and ecosystem regeneration.

What’s critical is how the vision for golf is connected to the vision for a functioning environment. How can inspiring golf be presented in an authentic, beautiful and ecologically viable landscape? Great golf courses emerge when the creativity of the designer is in tune with the site’s natural and cultural attributes, leaving a long-term legacy of memorable golf within a resource-efficient, ecosystem-rich, high-quality landscape setting.

Golf Environment Organization

Nicklaus Design
The Nicklaus Companies is the private and family-owned business founded by golf legend Jack Nicklaus. For close to 40 years, the mission of the Nicklaus Companies has been to enhance the golf experience, and to deliver golf-related businesses and services that mirror the high standards established in the life and career of Jack Nicklaus. These services include golf course design, the development of golf and real estate communities, and the marketing and licensing of golf products and services.

Nicklaus Design, a division of the Nicklaus Companies, is recognized as the world leader in golf course design, with 345 courses open for play in 34 countries and 39 states. Jack Nicklaus, now in his fifth decade of designing golf courses, has been involved in 275 designs open for play worldwide. At least 65 Nicklaus Design courses have been ranked in various national or international Top-100 lists, and close to 90 have hosted a professional tournament worldwide. We currently have close to 40 courses under construction, and projects under development in 43 different countries.

Jack Nicklaus’ impact on the global growth of the game through design and development has led one leading publication to name him the “Most Powerful Person in Golf” for a record six consecutive years. Nicklaus Design was also named Architect of the Year in Asia for a second consecutive year, and Top Architect in Mexico for a fifth straight year. Jack is a former winner of Golf World’s Architect of the Year award, and the Robb Report once named him the “Leading Power Player” in the golf market.

Jack Nicklaus and Nicklaus Design have also been credited with elevating the relationship between golf and luxury home communities. Since independent research began more than 15 years ago, communities that feature a Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course have gleaned the highest real estate value, the highest average home price, and the greatest velocity of home and lot sales. When all data was combined, a “net present value” was determined for each golf course designer, and Jack Nicklaus was the overall and overwhelming number-one choice.

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A Blueprint for Successful Golf Course Development
There are many right ways, and countless wrong ways, to design a golf club. The clubhouse is the golfer’s first and last impression when playing a round. Certainly the golf course is why people come, but a poorly designed clubhouse can ruin their overall experience. Care must be taken to ensure it complements the course and is an enjoyable place to be - which in turn should drive increased revenue.

Unfortunately, the complexities of running a typical golf clubhouse are often overlooked at the design stage. This can lead to mistakes such as underutilized space, inefficient operations and a disconnection between the clubhouse and its surroundings or golf functions.

A successful golf clubhouse is not too big, nor too small; not cavernous with wasted space, nor constrained and lacking in amenities. It should be a home away from home; a place of comfort, security and community. It represents architecture in harmony with its setting and purpose; it should appear both timeless and enduring.

As with the golf course, a successful clubhouse design always starts with a qualified architect. The architect’s role moves through three essential phases:

### Phase 1: Site and location analysis

Successful architecture takes its cues from the site. Developing context and character from the building’s site and its purpose, and drawing inspiration from the spirit of the land, are key to blending the clubhouse with its surroundings. Integrating your site’s topography and landscape features creates harmony between the building and the land. And using local building materials is a logical and cost-effective starting point for a sustainable, “green” facility.

But thinking about the clubhouse’s operational factors is just as important. This initial design phase should consider elements such as the club’s golf and pedestrian traffic flow; concealment of the service yard and staff functions; and the relationship between the buildings and the golf course itself.

The arrival experience – the immediate visual impact of the building and its surroundings – is crucial. Often, what you don’t see is just as important as what you do. Imagine arriving to unpleasant views of endless grey asphalt, odors from the service yard or unsightly utilities – clearly these can spoil the arrival experience.

Similarly, well-designed exterior spaces like verandas, fire-side terraces and event lawns can become valueless unless wind and sun patterns have been properly researched.

Outdoor spaces are just as important as indoor rooms, and can greatly increase revenue generation at less than half the construction cost. A well-designed clubhouse will provide an assortment of outdoor spaces – sunlit and sheltered, private and social – that take advantage of welcome breezes while shielding guests from undesirable weather.

A flourishing clubhouse must tell an engaging tale – from the arrival sequence and the exterior courtyards and loggias, to the inviting gathering spaces within – taking the user on a journey of diverse and stimulating experiences.

### Phase 2: Amenities, adjacencies and functionality

A solid understanding of golf operations, food service requirements and other clubhouse functions can save you thousands of square feet, delivering significant savings on your investment. Additionally, a sound, efficient design directly affects long-term costs, by
eliminating excess staffing, maintenance and utilities expenditure. Here are some things to keep in mind when planning spaces for your clubhouse:

- Users today want more for their investment: more social opportunities, a family atmosphere and an emphasis on wellness
- It pays to create multiple dining venues, with the flexibility to function separately or together. That way you can accommodate large parties, but also provide a more intimate atmosphere during non-peak times
- Building clubhouse facilities in a village format enables construction to be phased to match sales flow, which can be beneficial in down markets
- The men’s locker-room lounge is second in importance in private clubs only to the golf course and can account for one third to one half of your overall food and beverage sales
- Kitchens and restroom facilities are the most expensive spaces to build. Where possible, provide a single centralized kitchen, and avoid over-designing these “wet areas”
- Women have become more involved in golf and golf clubs, and though their dedicated space may often be proportionately less than men’s, they should always have equivalent and desirable amenities.

The optimum clubhouse design will obviously depend on the nature of your development:

Residential properties and gated communities
This project type typically involves building a new golf course and club to enhance real estate sales or lot prices.

There are also projects where an established club’s location has become more urban over time, bringing the residential component into play. The culture and functional requirements of these residential estates often differ greatly from a new core golf project, and that’s usually reflected in the clubhouse design:

- Overall square footage requirements are higher, to accommodate gym, pools, spa, tennis, multiple dining venues, kids’ camps etc.
- The building’s focus shifts from purely golf to family/social pursuits – family facilities often become the top priority
- There are wider membership options (golf, social, fitness, junior)
- It is necessary to separate quiet, “adults-only” spaces from noisier family activities without creating segregation.

Hotels and resorts
If a hotel or resort has a golf club with a membership component, the interaction between the two markets must be skillfully handled in the clubhouse. Members understand the financial benefits that resort play brings, but they still expect some exclusivity and privacy. In the clubhouse, this often means:

- Overall square footage requirements are lower, since many amenities will exist at the resort or hotel (spa, gym, pools, tennis, banqueting)
- The focus on golf is higher, but locker-room requirements and dining and menu options are fewer than at a traditional golf club
- Separate spaces may be necessary for resort/hotel guests, which afford the same services without imposing upon members.

Phase 3: Aesthetics and atmosphere

Often a clubhouse’s architectural character is part of the client’s vision, or inspired by the site or the local vernacular. But once the style is determined, it is the architect’s job to turn the vision into spaces that embody casual elegance – spaces that are sophisticated, yet exude comfort, warmth and timeless appeal. The aesthetics and atmosphere of the club are born from the architectural style, and there are several design principles you can apply to create an ambience as comfortable as your home.

Oversized doors, columns, timbers, chandeliers and furniture will all add to the club’s grandeur. Foyers, dining rooms and locker rooms are often over-scaled – not all spaces need to be so grand. The goal is to create a variety of spaces to convey different moods: perhaps an intimate setting in a cozy fireplace nook; a space where the sun plays upon a room’s textures and surfaces; a stately library or a sumptuous wine room.

In recent years, thanks to a renewed focus on the golfer’s priorities, clubhouses have once again become a key part of golf developments. A well-designed clubhouse will address these priorities with beauty, grace and purpose, while still supporting the golf course.

The key questions

What should be my prime considerations when planning my clubhouse?
All golf courses require an appropriately sized structure from which to operate – but just how big should it be?
Bigger is not always better, and the following questions should help you ensure your clubhouse has a measurable investment-to-return ratio:

- What’s your product? Is it a resort, a private gated community, an urban (or suburban) country club, or a golf club? They all require very different designs.

- Do you need to provide additional amenities such as tennis, exercise room, banqueting rooms, a family center, swimming pools, equestrian facilities, a spa or even a wine program?

- How will connections to the 1st and 10th golf tees, the 9th and 18th greens, the practice range, golf cart staging, restrooms and refreshments be configured?

- What are the trade-offs between designing for tournaments, weddings or large events, versus designing for day-to-day operations and reasonable up-front costs?

What should I look for in a clubhouse architect?
Selecting a clubhouse architect can involve many factors, including personality, past experience and geographical and cultural considerations. Nonetheless, these are the key attributes to look for:

- Strong expertise in and knowledge of the golf industry
- An established history in golf, backed by a successful project portfolio
- Broad clubhouse experience in varying markets, architectural styles and development types, and experience with all the elements that make up golf and resort facilities
- A strong understanding of golf and food service operations, and clubhouse construction costs
- A reputation in the industry as passionate, team-oriented and willing to provide guidance on functional, operational and construction issues

- A proven history of design excellence, paired with responsible budget management.

What should I expect a clubhouse architect to deliver?
The scope of the work will depend on the client’s specific requirements, and services can range from design consultation and programming only, to full construction drawings and on-site observation. International clients may hire a clubhouse specialist for their design expertise, but retain a local firm to develop construction documents.

An architect specializing in clubhouses should provide world-class design, money-saving insight into club operations, and thorough coordination with other design trades inside and outside the building.

Executive Summary

- A clubhouse should not just be a comfortable place to be, it should drive revenue
- Site and location analysis will consider the customer experience, indoor and outdoor, as well as the operation of the clubhouse
- Understanding the amenities and functionality of your clubhouse, in relation to your development, will help you save space and costs
- Your architect will consider aesthetics and atmosphere to create a variety of spaces that convey different moods
- Bigger is definitely not always better when designing your clubhouse.

“Outdoor spaces are just as important as indoor rooms, and can greatly increase revenue generation at less than half the construction cost”
**Sustainability in clubhouse design**

Architectural innovation has driven new design philosophies that reduce the immediate and long-term environmental footprint of buildings.

Green building principles create healthy indoor spaces with low embodied carbon, which are highly energy and water efficient. A high-quality clubhouse that functions effectively to meet customer needs, that integrates the principles of passive design and is backed by the latest technological advances, will be a long-term asset to any development. This harmony of function, form and technology will future-proof your buildings and have a positive impact on your bottom line.

The environmental and business gains are significant. Research cited by the US Green Building Council suggests that the market value of green buildings is on average 7.5 percent higher, and they consume far fewer resources throughout their life cycle. Energy use is 25–50 percent lower, water use is 40 percent lower, CO₂ emissions are reduced by 30–40 percent, and solid waste is down 70 percent.

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**Marsh & Associates, Inc. (MAI)**

MAI provides architecture, engineering and interior design services for golf clubs, resorts, boutique hotels and spas. The company is recognized worldwide as one of the foremost experts in hospitality design, and is one of the few firms to specialize in clubhouses and country clubs. We have offices in Colorado and Texas, and have completed celebrated projects throughout the United States and the world.

MAI takes a comprehensive approach to a project by designing not only the principal structures, such as golf clubhouses and hotels, but also the secondary structures that shape the personality of a club or resort. Thus we apply the same quality standards for the architectural and interior design of fitness facilities, beach and social clubs, lodgings, sales centers, gatehouses and equestrian amenities, to ensure continuity and harmony throughout.

We take great pride in having been recognized for our design excellence, and our designs have garnered numerous awards, including:

- “Clubhouse Architect of the Year” by Boardroom magazine
- Gold Nugget Merit Award for “Best International Site Plan”
- Three-time winner of the Gold Nugget Grand Award for “Best Public/Private Recreational Facility”
- Five-time winner of Crittenden Golf Inc. magazine’s “Best Private Clubhouse of the Year”
- Two-time winner of Builder magazine’s “Best Community Recreation Building”
- Listed among the “Top 15 Hospitality Architecture Firms” by Hospitality Construction magazine
- Named “Interior Design Firm of the Year” by Boardroom magazine
- Three-time winner of “Golf Clubhouse and Pro Shop Interior Design Firm of the Year”

Both Bryan Webb and founding partner Michael Marsh work diligently to remain at the forefront of industry trends, and as well as designing award-winning golf facilities, they have shared their knowledge by speaking as industry experts at numerous golf conferences, including:

- Hospitality Design Conference in Las Vegas, 2006
- Golf Summit in Moscow, 2007
- Golf Business Forum in Dublin, 2008
- South African Golf Summit in Fancourt, 2008
- Golf Business Forum in Wales, 2009

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5. Golf construction

Quality construction is essential to the commercial success of any golf course business and the advantage of having a well-constructed, well-maintained golf course is immeasurable.

Courses built to a high specification and quality, and maintained to a high level, will develop a strong reputation, benefiting from return visits by golfers and their word-of-mouth recommendations to fellow players of the game. Also, a course that has been thoughtfully designed, well constructed and consistently well maintained will be less susceptible to closure during adverse weather conditions. These factors will ultimately increase the revenue of the golf business.

The key to a successful build is to employ professionals for all aspects of the project, and create a development team that works together to problem-solve, allowing a seamless transition from master planning and design via the construction and grow-in of the golf course, right through to the successful operation and maintenance of the facility.

The common denominator in all really successful projects is a strong and open relationship between the developer, the golf course architect and the contractor, with all parties involved from early on in the development process. Creating this team environment allows each party to understand the others’ requirements, to agree what needs to be done and how long this will take. This helps to avoid conflict and unrealistic expectations and works to keep budgets under control.

A successful project is one that’s managed well from the outset, with a structure that allows problem solving to take place.

Phase 1: Appointing a contractor

The contractor award process normally begins once the client and his chosen course designer have moved through the planning stage. Once in a position to appoint a contractor, the developer will consider whether to go to competitive tender or to negotiate with a preferred contractor, normally recommended by the designer. Once appointed, the contractor will agree a construction program with the developer and designer and then mobilize the site with the relevant resources to complete the project within the agreed time period.

Phase 2: Costing the project

This will vary hugely depending on numerous variables which include location, climate, topography, land quality and the required scope of the works. Let’s look at these in turn:

Location and climate

These issues can create their own cost criteria. For example, consider the differences between a golf project on a Mediterranean island and a project in continental northern Europe. For the Mediterranean island location the developer should expect higher than average build costs, because of the probable need to import specialist materials and resources to satisfy the specification. And the climate will probably demand comprehensive irrigation systems to be installed for a quality course to perform. However, such a course will benefit from being able to offer first-class golf all year round, which may not be possible in a northern European climate.

Conversely it is likely that build costs in northern Europe will be lower, mainly because all the required materials and resources should be readily available, and a less comprehensive irrigation system will generally be required.
Phase 3: The construction process

The timetable for construction will depend on many variables, including location, climate, the scope of the works and more. However, this timeline gives a reasonable estimate for a successful construction program, from contract award through to opening:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tender, tender revision and contractor award</td>
<td>2–3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial construction period, including earthworks, drainage, lake construction, infrastructure etc.</td>
<td>6–9 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second-year construction period, including features construction, grassing etc.</td>
<td>6–9 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grow-in period, to mature and establish the golf course and prepare for opening</td>
<td>6–9 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Topography and land quality

The topography of the site will greatly influence the cost of construction. Some sites will be “golf-course friendly,” requiring far less earth movement. Others will have difficult contours that require a considerable cut and fill process to create a platform for a successful golf course build. The soil type and topography will also have an impact on build costs. For example, a fairly flat, sandy site will be significantly easier and less expensive than one with rock or clay or strong slopes.

Scope of the works

This has a major effect on cost, and will be affected by the location and quality of the site, as described above. The actual size of the golf features (greens, tees, bunkers, fairways) is normally fairly standard, but the volume of cut and fill to achieve these playing areas can vary enormously depending on the topography and, to an extent, the choice of designer. Likewise, the degree of irrigation coverage will impact upon the scope of the works – and the cost.

Beyond all this, the developer and designer can opt to limit the construction budget by controlling expensive additional items – items that can add greatly to the aesthetics and playability of the golf course such as:

- lakes, cascades and flowing water
- bridges and crossings
- tree planting and landscaping
- buggy paths, either from green to tee or full-length
- the size and scope of the practice facility

The key questions

Why employ a specialist golf contractor?

First and foremost because they understand the requirements of the golf course architect and have experience of all the relevant elements of the works. They will take the entire responsibility away from the developer and deliver the project within one contract.

However, there may be circumstances where this is not the most economic option, for example if the developer is itself a construction company, or because of geographical constraints. In such cases it may be more sensible to employ local non-specialist contractors and bring in an experienced golf course contractor to work alongside them. The experienced contractor can offer services to bridge the gap between the local non-specialized contractor and specialist golf construction. This might include providing construction managers, golf course shapers, technicians, finishers and irrigation installers. It might involve sub-contracting golf-specialist elements to the golf contractor.

Developers should always request references from previous clients and architects, to ensure that the golf course contractor produces quality work on time and on budget. Don’t assume the lowest price represents the best value. Invariably it does not. A reputable, experienced golf course contractor working with an accurate and realistic budget will add significant value to your development team.
"Don’t assume the lowest price represents the best value. Invariably it does not."

What mistakes do non-specialist contractors typically make?
The most common mistake is to totally underestimate what’s required to make the construction operation successful. This might include:

- Failing to fully understand the construction specification and the architect’s shaping requirements, and failing to purchase the specified materials
- Lacking the management expertise, the skilled staff and the specialist plant, machinery and equipment required to achieve the desired quality of work
- Failing to understand the overall scope of necessary works, and therefore failing to finish the project within the agreed contract program.

These problems can jeopardize the overall quality of the construction, and lose revenue for the developer by delaying completion and the subsequent opening of the facility.

Executive Summary

- A well constructed, well maintained golf course is central to your golf development’s reputation and is less liable to closure in adverse weather, protecting revenues
- Successful projects bring together the developer, the golf course architect and the construction contractor in a strong team from early in the development process
- The cost of construction will be determined by the location, climate, topography, land quality and the required scope of the work
- The construction process – tender, initial construction, second-year construction, grow-in – can take 18 to 30 months.
Sustainability in golf course construction

This phase of development will determine how successfully your conceptualization, spatial planning and detailed design are realized as a sustainable facility. It’s also a key stage for managing immediate and short-term impacts to the site and the localized surroundings. Potential environmental risks such as erosion, siltation, chemical runoff, dust, soil damage and wildlife disturbance are particularly pertinent during the construction period.

Responsible construction requires an environmentally focused Construction Method Statement. This should include several key components, such as the location of the temporary compound; the storage, handling and disposal of hazardous materials; cordons sanitaires around ecological hotspots and key habitats; the demarcation of water protection measures such as bio-filters and silt traps; the delineation of haulage and access routes; and a soil damage alleviation plan. It should also cover the timing of works to avoid or reduce ecological disturbance, plus training and briefings for all contractors regarding environmental sensitivities and compliance measures.

Construction should deliver a healthy and ecologically functional golfscape and ensure the best possible legacy for long-term sustainable management of the golf facility.

Southern Golf

Southern Golf was established in 1972, and since then has specialized in the construction of golf courses and associated works, including the supply and installation of irrigation systems. The areas of work we undertake include:

- Setting out and surveying of the golf course
- Site and tree clearance
- Bulk earthworks
- Lake construction and lining
- Shaping of the golf course and golf features
- Supply and installation of irrigation systems, pump sets and pump houses
- Installation of storm and field drainage
- Cultivating, fertilizing and seeding or planting the golf course
- Course maintenance and renovation.

Southern Golf is a very experienced and well-respected contractor and has built fine courses for many of the leading European and American golf architects. We have established a reputation for the very high quality of our workmanship and for our ability to undertake substantial contracts and deliver them on time and on budget and understand the importance of working as team members with the client and associated consultants.

Southern Golf has the organizational ability to cope with large and complex contracts, and in some circumstances we can also offer a construction management service, and provide qualified and experienced people such as senior contract managers, shapers, finishers and irrigation technicians, on the basis of a monthly fee.

Southern Golf has worked in more than 20 countries on a wide range of sites, and has built golf courses in sandy linksland, peat bogs and alpine meadows; on clay, rock, and flood plains – and in widely varying climatic conditions. We are also used to working in environmentally and ecologically sensitive areas.

Southern Golf has offices in the UK and Portugal, and registered companies in Ireland, Cyprus and Oman.

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6. Water management and irrigation

The long-term availability and quality of water for irrigation and water features are critical factors in the development of any golf course. A course needs a reliable supply of water of sufficient quality to irrigate turfgrass, ensuring that playing conditions meet the expectations of the developer and their clients. Early in the development process, water quality and availability must be confirmed by the technical team.

The irrigation designer is highly valuable in the development process. They will evaluate a wide range of criteria, including budget, climate, soil type, grass type, water quality and supply, slope, course layout and design, elevation changes and desired course playing conditions. Based on these, they will develop an irrigation layout and water budget (use/projections) for the golf course.

A properly designed irrigation system should provide a highly efficient network that applies water very uniformly across the course. This ensures that only the minimum amount of water will be used to maintain the desired playing conditions and to maintain plant health. The irrigation designer will consider a wide range of design factors in the selection of materials best suited to the golf course in development and ideally should have knowledge of local best practices and needs.

**Sourcing water**

A reliable source of irrigation water is essential to ensure that the course will have enough to sustain healthy turfgrass. Water sources vary widely depending on the location and geography of the site: they typically include lakes, rivers, streams and wells. Usually, government permits are required to take water from these sources, and the permitting process can be lengthy and time-consuming. Developers should expect to work closely with hydro-geologists and other professionals qualified to evaluate the supply and the impact of seasonal water withdrawals for golf course applications.

In recent years the use of reclaimed water (sometimes referred to as effluent, reuse or recycled water) has become much more common and viable for golf course irrigation. A development generates a considerable amount of reclaimed water from normal human activities. This wastewater can go through various degrees of treatment before being suitable for use for irrigation on the course.

Treated reclaimed water can be an excellent water source for irrigation, and the golf course can be a good place to dispose of it. Careful analysis and monitoring of reclaimed water sources is required to ensure that the water is effectively treated and of sufficient quantity for the course, especially during peak turfgrass water requirements.

It’s estimated that approximately 12 percent of golf courses in the United States use reclaimed water for irrigation purposes. Lack of availability is cited as the main reason why more courses are not using reclaimed water.

**Lake management**

Golf course architects often use lakes not only as design features but also as holding reservoirs for the irrigation water supply. In addition to maintaining water level for aesthetic reasons, it’s highly desirable to have extra water available as back-up to meet potential seasonal drought conditions that can occur during periods of peak high-season demand on the golf course. This ensures water is available during an extended drought or if the usual source becomes temporarily unavailable.

Site topography, both natural and designed, will generally dictate the number and location of lakes on the course. During the golf course design process, one lake will be selected as the primary irrigation source and the main irrigation pump station will be located adjacent to it.
The lakes will often be interconnected by a network of pipes and possibly transfer pump stations to maximize the availability of the stored water for irrigation. This allows water to be moved from other lakes to the irrigation reservoir. If desired, the water level can be monitored and adjusted automatically through this network, ensuring that lake levels and course aesthetics are maintained.

**Pump stations, sprinklers and other key components**

Sprinklers, pipes, wire, a pump station and control components all act together to deliver water uniformly to the irrigated areas of the course. All of these components must be properly designed and installed to provide an efficient irrigation system that minimizes waste and conserves water, energy and labor.

The pump station is the heart of the irrigation system, delivering water through the pipe network to the sprinklers. Pump stations are usually custom-designed to meet the criteria of the site and ensure that sprinklers receive water at the right pressure in sufficient volume.

Sprinklers are spaced in a specific pattern across the course based on the size and type of sprinkler and the course conditions. In a properly designed layout, highly efficient sprinklers can deliver water distribution uniformities of 85 percent or higher. Maintaining a high degree of uniformity ensures that each area of the golf course receives the same amount of water during normal sprinkler operation.

Sprinklers that operate at lower efficiency, or that are not properly spaced or installed, will take a longer period of time to apply the required amount of water. This causes uneven water application – wet and dry spots – and wastes water. High uniformity and control in the sprinkler system is extremely desirable to conserve water and provide quality playing conditions.

In the cooler, wetter climates of northern Europe, fewer sprinklers are needed to supplement rainfall – perhaps only 350 to 400 on an average golf course, depending upon whether or not the course has fairway irrigation. In arid, desert-like climates you may need 3,000 sprinklers on a course of similar size. Careful selection, location and spacing of sprinklers is particularly important. When sprinklers are operating inefficiently, dry spots can appear, causing uneven grass quality and color. This is difficult to manage after the golf course is built.

**Installation**

The golf course irrigation system is a complex network that must be properly designed and installed using high quality components to ensure it operates efficiently throughout its life. Proper installation is a key component for the long-term success of the course. A properly installed, efficient system will operate with minimal maintenance for many years and reduce long-term costs.

The irrigation industry has many qualified professionals, including designers and installers, with years of experience on golf course irrigation systems. Qualified companies will have a strong list of references from their golf course clients. You should not cut corners to save money when selecting an irrigation designer or installer. Doing so is likely to lead to higher maintenance costs that will require more water, energy and labor to operate and maintain the irrigation system over the long term.

**The control system**

The irrigation control system incorporates highly customized computer software that helps to manage sprinkler operation during a watering cycle. On a typical day, the course superintendent will evaluate the climatic and golf course conditions and decide how much water should be applied during the upcoming water cycle. The software takes this information and automatically calculates when each of the sprinklers will operate and for how long.

A modern control system will have an easy-to-use software interface that makes it easy to adjust sprinkler run times. Used by an experienced operator, the control system can be a highly effective tool, conserving a considerable amount of water, energy and labor.

**The key questions**

**How much water will I need to irrigate my course?**

Calculating water use is very important in the initial design of an irrigation system. Water use will vary greatly depending on site-specific factors including geography and climate, soil and grass type, course design and layout, and desired playing conditions. You need to evaluate water supply based on the worst-case drought scenario, ensuring you have enough water to keep the grass alive during peak plan water requirements.

Golf courses in cooler climates like northern Europe, where rainfall is plentiful, use irrigation systems only in drier periods as a supplement to rainfall.
“A modern control system will have an easy-to-use software interface that makes it easy to adjust sprinkler run times”

As a result, the course may only use several million gallons (approximately 70,000m³) of water in an average year.

Courses built in desert-like conditions such as those in Arizona or Dubai, where there can be fewer than 10 inches (254mm) of rainfall per year, may use 150 million gallons (568,000m³) or more per year. Desert golf courses rely completely on the irrigation water source to maintain healthy turfgrass.

An experienced professional can evaluate the site and climatic conditions to develop a water budget for the planned golf course based on the geographical location and other factors.

**Does water quality matter?**
Water quality is critical for turfgrass health and vigor. A wide variety of turfgrass species and cultivars are available for use on golf courses around the world. Each cultivar has a specific water quality requirement, and the irrigation water must be matched to the appropriate grass type to ensure it will thrive in the local site conditions and environment.

Evaluating water quality early in the development process will enable planners to understand the challenges associated with water supply on the site. A number of remedial treatments are available to help manage poor water quality. The cost and viability of these will need to be considered during the planning process.

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**Executive Summary**

- Water quality and availability must be confirmed early in the development process
- The irrigation designer will create an irrigation layout and water budget for the golf course based on climate, soil type, grass type, water quality and supply, slope, course layout and design and desired course playing conditions
- Government permits are usually required to take water from natural sources, and the permitting process can be lengthy and time-consuming
- Treated reclaimed water can be an excellent water source for irrigation, and the golf course can be a good place to dispose of it
- Lakes are not just design features, they can be holding reservoirs for the irrigation water supply
- The pump station, usually custom designed, is the heart of the irrigation system, ensuring sprinklers receive water at the right pressure in sufficient volume
- A computerized control system will help conserve a considerable amount of water, energy and labor.
Sustainability in water management and irrigation

The earth’s water resources are increasingly stretched, with all arid, semi-arid and even temperate regions effectively reporting significant water deficits. With world water use expected to triple by 2060, the next phase of golf’s development will happen against a backdrop of diminishing supplies and increasing public, agricultural and industrial demand.

Successful golf developments must be highly efficient water users, using the full range of recycled and harvested sources, with minimal dependency on potable supplies. Working with the principles of natural watershed management is key to future success. Natural drainage systems and hydrological processes should be embraced and integrated into development plans. Hard water engineering should be minimized, with energy-intensive pumping and purification systems considered only as a last resort, after gravity and wetlands have been utilized.

Golf developments should harness the highly valuable ecosystem services that percolation, detention and natural treatment provide, using those ecosystems in turn as landscape features that can become authentic signatures for the development.

In arid regions, especially, golf development can only be justified if modeled to minimize demand and maximize recycled self-sufficiency.

Rain Bird Corporation

Rain Bird understands the vital role water plays in a healthy, sustainable environment. We take the challenge of using water responsibly very seriously. That’s why our overarching philosophy, The Intelligent Use of Water™, guides everything we do.

Since our beginnings in 1933, we’ve built a reputation on delivering irrigation systems that combine performance with efficiency. Rain Bird leverages state-of-the-art technologies to develop products that apply water in the most effective and efficient manner possible. From highly efficient sprinkler nozzles to cutting-edge control systems, Rain Bird’s products use less water to maintain beautiful golf courses and landscaped areas.

Rain Bird is widely recognized as the leader in golf course irrigation control system technology. The revolutionary Integrated Control System™ provides innovation at a lower overall cost to golf courses, enabling the user to maximize system efficiency and conserve water. Rain Bird golf irrigation products are used widely on golf courses around the world, including six of the top 10 golf courses in the United States, as recognized by Golf Digest™ magazine.

Our commitment to The Intelligent Use of Water extends beyond our products to initiatives aimed at educating industry and the wider community on best practices. For example – through the annual Intelligent Use of Water Summit Rain Bird brings together some of the world’s leading experts on water, irrigation and conservation to debate water-related issues. Similarly, our Intelligent Use of Water Awards recognize contributions in outdoor water conservation. Rain Bird constantly seeks out new ways to build a better understanding of water’s economic and environmental roles.

At Rain Bird we also believe that building partnerships with like-minded individuals and organizations is a powerful way to inspire change. To promote responsible water management, Rain Bird partners with organizations like KPMG, the American Society of Golf Course Architects, the European Institute of Golf Course Architects, the GCSAA’s Environmental Institute for Golf and the American Public Gardens Association.

We will continue to develop both products and initiatives that have the potential to inspire responsible, informed choices about the way we all use water each and every day.

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7. Human resources and recruitment

Talent is a strategic advantage in today’s marketplace. Nurturing exceptional talent is one of the most effective ways for a company to distinguish itself from its competitors, and retaining executives is crucial to making a lasting impact.

That is why a cohesive and sustainable recruitment strategy is essential for your golf development. It’s vital that the profiles required for key management positions are defined, and that candidates who meet the specific criteria are identified and presented for evaluation. This is the only appropriate way to build the right team – and your recruitment consultant will help you achieve this. But before we look at the most important aspects of recruiting successfully, it is essential to establish who you actually need to employ in your golf development, and to clearly define the skills and experience that are required.

Key management positions

Clearly, resource requirements vary from project to project. However, there will be some key management positions that will need to be covered at the very early stages of a development. These important roles will form the basis of your senior management team and these professionals will work together to lead your project through to eventual opening and beyond.

- **Project Director**
  This role should be one of the first hires in any new development, as the project director will be responsible for pulling together all aspects of the master plan. They will have overall responsibility for delivering your development to plan, on time, and on budget. The right candidate should have a wealth of project management experience, but not necessarily exclusively in golf (project directors who have overseen significant hotel and real estate projects can make good hires), and be able to interpret the requirements of the project owner.

- **General Manager**
  The GM oversees all the different functions of a development – golf, real estate, hotel, spa, food and beverage – and makes them work as one. This is a business management driven role, which is why senior managers and executives from the hospitality industry often make good candidates. So although golf real estate/resort experience isn’t essential, high-quality candidates with an appreciation of golf can be a bonus.

- **Golf Course Superintendent**
  A professionally trained and qualified golf course superintendent or course manager is a prerequisite. The reputation of your development can hinge on the consistent delivery of a world-class golf experience. Liaising with the golf course architect and course constructor to create and then maintain a golf course that stands your development apart from your competitors is crucial and is not a job for those without the relevant experience. Ideally, select someone who has overseen the development of a new course in a similar climate, not just a manager who has maintained courses.

- **Golf Operations Director**
  The best candidate for this role is usually highly commercial, with a comprehensive understanding of the functions of sales and marketing, as well as having a strong knowledge of every aspect of golf business management. The right candidate will have experience of managing a successful golf facility and will be clear about the levels of service required to attract and maintain customers.

- **Food and Beverage Manager**
  This role may be filled later, although well in advance of the clubhouse opening. The food and beverage manager will be responsible for hiring local staff and training them to a required level.
They will also create a detailed plan about how the food and beverage function will be managed on a day-to-day basis, from using the right suppliers through to the creation of menus. The best candidates often have experience of working in global hotel chains or for large brands, which invest heavily in training and personal development programs.

- **Sales and Marketing Manager**
  For some developments there may be a requirement for two people to manage sales and marketing – a person managing the golf and hospitality side of the business, plus a second manager responsible for real estate, an area which is frequently the main revenue driver in the wider business plan. Clearly, these managers will require a successful track record in the hospitality/golf businesses and property trade, respectively.

So, these are the key senior management appointments you will need to make for your golf development. But what is the process to successfully hire outstanding people?

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**Phase 1: Establishing the correct profile**

A clear business plan is at the core of any recruitment project, however large or small. At this early planning stage it is important to allocate an achievable timeline to the process and, as a developer, you’ll also need to anticipate realistic budgetary requirements to attract and retain the best talent. A deep understanding of current market pay scales and benefits packages is an important facet of any search process.

Carrying out a comprehensive review of the business plan and agreeing mutual aims and objectives will enable a recruiter to create a detailed profile of the ideal candidate, and to clearly identify whether golf knowledge or business acumen is most important.

**Phase 2: Research**

Attracting the right people for your team isn’t as simple as placing an advert in the global press. This type of approach, seen all too often, only provokes interest among individuals who are actively looking for a new job, not the best candidates who are often focusing on what they are already doing.

The power of a recruiter’s network along with a vast professional database will help to search golf and other consumer-facing industries for potential candidates. Typically, search processes embrace both traditional and innovative methods, enabling candidates to be sourced discreetly and objectively to establish:

- Suitability of candidate profile
- Personal chemistry and cultural fit
- Appetite to move
- Availability
- Present levels of remuneration.

**Phase 3: Evaluation of candidates**

Exceptional candidates who appear to have the requisite professional background, core competencies and personal characteristics to meet the search criteria will be refined through a process of rigorous evaluation.

The resulting delivery of a shortlist of candidates can vary according to the role, but typically the process would take 4-5 weeks, continuing until such time as a decision has been made to hire. In order to create a high-quality shortlist, 360-degree orbital referencing is often used from various sources, including present and past colleagues, to obtain a wider perspective of a candidate’s strengths and weaknesses.

**Phase 4: Presentation of a shortlist (typically 5-10 people)**

At this stage a final, shorter list of suitable candidates will be given to the client for interviewing. This is a critical stage in the process, and a recruitment specialist will work closely with clients to manage the expectations of both parties.

A recruitment company will assist and advise on final interview structure and the selection process. A “scoring matrix” is often useful for benchmarking final candidates against pre-determined criteria.

**Phase 5: Appointment and post-recruitment**

Once the right candidate has been selected, a recruitment company will often be involved in influencing the person to accept the role, discussing the benefits but also allaying any fears or reservations they might have in switching jobs.

It is also common practice for the recruitment company to be available to the successful candidate after they have taken up their new position to help with integration into their new working environment.
The key questions

What will it cost my business to find the best talent?
To answer that question with another, what will it cost your business in the long term if you don’t find the best talent? Every recruitment business will charge differently, but as a simple rule of thumb it is normal to expect an agreed percentage of the successful candidate’s first year’s package.

Why not manage the recruitment process myself?
Of course, there may be a temptation to use your own network of influence to highlight the right professionals to join your team. But approaches like this consistently provoke problems, especially when the developer and his own people have no knowledge or experience of golf.

They often result in a fundamental lack of objectivity in identifying a cohesive and high-performing team, and instead produce a lackluster amalgam of inappropriate skill-sets that fail to deliver the highest possible standards and values for your development. Do not be tempted to treat recruitment as an activity that can be done without professional guidance. Your people remain the most valuable commodity in your entire project and will shape its success – or failure.

“Talent is a strategic advantage in today’s marketplace. Nurturing exceptional talent is one of the most effective ways for a company to distinguish itself from its competitors”

Executive Summary
- Profiles required for key management positions should be clearly defined
- The Project Director should be one of your first hires
- Senior managers from the hospitality industry often make good General Managers
- A professionally trained and qualified golf course superintendent is a prerequisite
- Your Golf Operations Director will have experience of successfully managing a golf facility
- A comprehensive review of the business plan and agreed mutual aims and objectives will enable a recruiter to create a detailed profile of ideal candidates
- Advertising roles generally provokes interest among individuals who are actively looking for a new job, not necessarily the best candidates
- Delivering a shortlist of candidates can vary according to the role, but typically the process would take 4–5 weeks
- A ‘scoring matrix’ is often useful for benchmarking final candidates
- Your recruitment company will often be involved in negotiations with the successful candidate.
Sustainability in HR and recruitment

Given the increasing importance of environmental and social issues to successful business, you should seriously consider appointing an experienced sustainability adviser for your golf project. This member of the core planning and design team can provide early-stage insight into the opportunities and constraints of your development site. They can contribute to team discussions on the sustainability of master plans, conceptualized layouts and detailed design proposals; and ensure that hard and soft technological solutions are efficiently integrated.

Investment in this area is wise, given the value of putting your development on the ‘sustainability front foot’.

Your sustainability expert should be tasked with ensuring the development concept is aligned with government policy and local community aspirations; maximizing the communications impact of positive environmental outcomes; managing contentious issues; and generally helping to map out a comprehensive and cohesive sustainability blueprint.

Colt Mackenzie McNair

Colt Mackenzie McNair is the leading executive search firm providing recruitment solutions to the global golf industry. With offices in the UK and the Middle East, our team have unrivalled market intelligence and golf industry experience, and have successfully recruited best-of-breed candidates for jobs in golf-related clubs, resorts, real estate, retail and tourism sectors throughout Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia Pacific. We are the trusted recruitment partner of some of golf’s most successful businesses and brands. Our services include:

- **CMM Search**
  CMM Search uses a flexible and focused approach, benchmarked against the client’s brief, to pinpoint appropriate professionals for roles across all functions and management levels. Searches often go beyond the golf industry to highlight individuals from other businesses who have transferable skills that can deliver tangible benefits to the client.

- **CMM Select**
  CMM Select is the industry’s largest online recruitment solution, accessed by a broad audience on a daily basis. Employers can post their vacancies for free, with a placement fee being charged only if an appointment is made via the service.

- **CMM Interim**
  CMM Interim empowers companies to hire quality individuals to fill seasonal, strategic or sudden vacancies. Interim professionals can fill in for absent or holidaying staff, assist with special projects or pitch in during busy periods.

- **CMM Advisory Services**
  CMM also offers a host of support to help build, maintain and maximize the performance of your teams.

  These include:
  - **Organizational development:** we help organizations to create and support strong leadership teams; to set the culture and character of the company; and to create KPIs (key performance indicators) for each part of the business.
  - **Employment processes and procedures:** we ensure that a business has the right processes to effectively maintain a professional team, including a management handbook, appropriate contracts and clear disciplinary procedures.
  - **Talent management:** we ensure that businesses have appropriate succession planning and career development processes in place, to grow individuals for the benefit of the business.
  - **Learning and development:** we offer training needs analysis based on the strategy of the business, including performance management processes, skills audits and leadership development programs.
  - **HR management reviews:** we offer detailed analysis of how a business is set up, supporting managers to deliver improved business performance.

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"Colt Mackenzie McNair’s commitment to the candidates as well as the recruiter is complete, systematic and very professional."

Chris Nargunam, Kuredu Island Resort & Spa, Maldives
Research by management companies has demonstrated the economic advantages of having standardized golf operations. By giving general managers, course superintendents, golf professionals and their staff an operational framework to work in, and the right tools to complete the job, the facility is likely to operate at a higher level of satisfaction for customers and/or members.

Standardized agronomic practices ensure more consistent levels of golf course conditioning, while overarching quality standards lead to better customer service in the golf shop and a superior food and beverage offering. But golf course operations encompass a very wide range of disciplines, and it’s important to consider each in turn – starting well before your facility opens for business.

**Pre-opening and development**

A professional golf management company should ideally be involved from the development stage of your project. They will visit the site, review the master plans and provide evaluations of them from an operational viewpoint. They can also review the golf course architect’s plans, to ensure that operational elements will function well alongside the chosen design.

A good management company will have the expertise to work directly with course designers, clubhouse architects and other professionals throughout every phase of the project. In construction, where each delay typically results in lost time and added costs, the experts should scrutinize every detail of every phase, identifying opportunities to keep costs to a minimum and stay within approved budgets.

This can save hundreds of thousands of dollars and more in potential mistakes that may be overlooked by developers who are not necessarily golf experts. For example, their expertise might be brought to bear in finding space for an additional home site without impacting the golf course in a negative manner, or in suggesting ways to reduce the amount of topsoil a contractor wants to use for building the course.

From initial design through to final sign-off on each component, your management company’s involvement can include extensive budget planning and analysis, implementation of cost controls, and frequent reviews of site, clubhouse, maintenance and other building plans. The result will be a golf facility designed and constructed with constant attention to the developer’s ultimate objective.

**Recruitment and training**

A management company can bring consistency and continuity to the hiring, training and supervision of personnel, promoting a better golfing experience for members and guests. By providing a supportive corporate infrastructure and opportunities for career growth, a recognized management company is well equipped to attract, locate, train and retain career-oriented individuals. That should provide stability in the personnel function.

If they wish, facility owners can delegate day-to-day involvement with personnel, employment issues, and the other myriad components of staffing a complex operation, to a professional familiar with those tasks. If personnel need to be replaced or hired, the management company can usually fill the position from within, minimizing any disruption to your operation.

Prior to the opening of the facility, your management company should train all of the employees – training could encompass guest service requirements, employee empowerment and more. The better companies even have intranet programs that allow staff to receive continuous training online.
Working for a management company means employees are part of a much larger team than one facility can provide, which allows them the potential to move between jobs, maybe even countries, ascending the career ladder as they go.

**Sales and marketing**

The marketing of any golf facility must be based on a well-designed plan. Evaluation of the market, knowledge of competitors and the correct positioning of the facility will all be key ingredients in an effective sales and marketing program. Look for a management company with wide experience of putting together plans for golf facilities – they will know the components that successfully build sales, and how to avoid unproductive strategies. Also, in the case of a select few management companies, facilities can be promoted collectively under that company’s brand, increasing their exposure at a reduced cost.

**Procurement and accounting**

Golf course owners should be able to realize large savings through a management company’s international vendor agreements and procurement processes. Larger management companies will have purchasing programs with the major vendors in irrigation equipment, golf course equipment, golf carts, food and beverage supplies and merchandising. These vendors offer attractive pricing to management companies, which are then passed on to golf course owners.

Management companies with an accounting staff can also offer professional financial oversight of your facility, delivering cost savings as well as convenience. Their team will make sure that accepted accounting principles are followed at the facility level, and will serve as an additional check and balance to ensure the property is functioning properly.

What’s more, centralized accounting systems provide management with information that should help you operate the facility more effectively. Payroll processing is handled internally, which is more cost-effective than outsourcing, and the corporate accounting staff may also conduct regular internal audits, bringing greater discipline to the facility’s annual budgeting process.

However, centralized accounting functions are not always practical – this will depend upon your facility’s situation, especially its country of operation.

**Agronomy**

Course conditioning is a daily, time-consuming effort focused on achieving optimal visual appearance while maintaining excellent turf health. This work is designed to maximize revenues by offering superlative playing surfaces in beautiful settings to golfers willing to pay a premium for their golf experience.

Turf management is an ever-changing field, and the larger management companies should have a multitude of superintendents on their teams, and be able to draw on vast expertise to plan for any adverse circumstances that may arise. As in healthcare, preventative medicine is the best way to avoid problems in the future.

**Golf operations and food & beverage**

If the golf experience is central to your development, it’s important that customer service is impeccable right from first contact with the golf reception desk to drinks shared after the round. Through training programs and operational expertise, a good golf management company should deliver a consistently excellent experience to your customers.

Operations staff and facility managers should monitor revenue and expenses to ensure that a facility’s performance is on target, which in turn will enable staff to respond to changes in market conditions. Several companies now issue standards manuals that explain the ethos and expectations of the brand to their employees.

Food and beverage has become an integral part of the golf business. Experience suggests that the food and beverage service at your facility should be commensurate with the quality of the playing experience.

The key questions

**Can I opt to run my golf facility with an in-house team?**

Yes, but employing an experienced operations company offers expertise and cost savings right from your project’s development stages, and a support network of professionals that is unlikely to be available to a self-managed facility.

Any decision to transition to third-party management requires a thorough analysis of the benefits a recognized management company can offer versus continued self-management. Golf management companies tend to function more efficiently, more effectively and ultimately more profitably than a self-managed facility, not by slashing operating expenses,
but by focusing on generating higher revenues and operating within logical expense limits. They achieve this via the application of proven, proprietary operating standards and programs.

A golf management company’s involvement immediately adds significant value to the development project, by providing owner representation during the construction process; advice on clubhouse design and programming that ensures optimal efficiency; and discounts on significant equipment and supply purchases.

What about cost? What is the typical business model of a golf management company?

Typically, golf management companies sign 10-year agreements and charge an annual base fee from the day the golf course begins operation. A similar fee is charged during the development phase, which usually takes 18–24 months. Most companies also charge an additional marketing fee and a percentage on gross operating profit.

Executive Summary

- Your management company should have the expertise to work directly with course designers, clubhouse architects and other professionals throughout every phase of the project.
- Your management company should provide innovative training and employee development programs - training could encompass guest service requirements, employee empowerment and more.
- The marketing of any golf facility must be based on a well-designed plan – evaluation of the market, knowledge of competitors and the correct positioning of the facility will all be key ingredients.
- Management companies with an accounting staff can offer professional financial oversight of your facility.
- Larger management companies should have a multitude of course superintendents on their teams, and be able to draw on vast expertise to plan for any adverse circumstances that may arise.
- The food and beverage service at your facility should be commensurate with the quality of the playing experience.
Sustainability in golf course operations
The sustainability agenda represents a huge opportunity for successful long-term golf facility management. It should be embraced for the way it can drive the performance, profile and profit of your business.

For a start, environmental management brings with it a great many low-cost (or no cost!) ways of generating meaningful efficiencies. Even simple policy decisions linked to engaging staff and customer communications can drastically reduce maintenance budgets.

This is especially true out on the golf course, where every acre of fairway and semi-rough that can be less intensively managed represents tens of thousands of dollars in the bank. While creatively planned and carefully delivered environmental management saves time and money, it can also enhance the quality of your customers’ experience.

Environmental and social performance is a continuum, not a destination, but common-denominator issues can unite golf facility decision-makers around positive shared goals. And achievements on sustainability drive positive profile – for your facility and for the professionals who manage it.

Troon Golf
Headquartered in Scottsdale, Arizona, with international offices in Hong Kong, Australia, Switzerland and Dubai, Troon Golf is the world’s leading golf management, development and marketing company. Our passionate dedication to quality inspires our exquisite resort, private and daily-fee golf experiences. This dedication is exhibited professionally and graciously at properties worldwide in 26 countries.

During our 20-year history, Troon Golf has earned a reputation for offering pristine golf course conditions, a personalized member service, outstanding food and beverage experiences and world-class retail outlets at its facilities.

Dana Garmany founded the company in 1990, with Troon North Golf Club as its flagship facility. Global in scope, his original vision has guided the Troon Golf mission: to provide a world-class experience to every guest, fulfill their ultimate golf dream on every visit, and make their day so complete that they seek out other Troon Golf facilities on their golfing travels.

This is known around the world as the “Troon Golf Experience.”

While the company maintains a selective portfolio, pre-eminent Troon Golf facilities are within easy reach not only across the United States, but nearly everywhere in the world. The company’s international expansion began with the world-renowned Turnberry Resort in Ayrshire, Scotland. Its portfolio now incorporates prestigious golf courses, resorts and private club developments stretching from islands in the Caribbean to the deserts of Dubai, as well as taking in Mexico, Hong Kong, Australia, Britain and continental Europe.

As the company continues to expand worldwide, our commitment to exceed expectations and spread the Troon Golf Experience will never change. The millions of golfers who have “voted with their spikes” in favor of Troon Golf-managed facilities serve as the true indicator of the company’s position in the golf industry.

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Creating an outstanding golf development – a beautiful golf course, a landmark clubhouse with a professional team to manage your golf operations, plus desirable, stylish residences – does not in itself guarantee business success. You need customers – golfers to play on your course and spend money in your bar and restaurant, visitors to stay in your hotel, and most importantly, buyers for your real estate. Customers are what marketing and PR is all about.

Your marketing should span every stage of the golf development process, from the initial market and feasibility study to the people involved in the day-to-day operations. Here we’ll focus mainly on the promotional aspects of marketing – how to reach your target customer and what to say to persuade them to act. But first, it’s worth looking briefly at the holistic approach to marketing and how it relates to other members of your development team, not just your marketing and PR consultant. As you’ll see, you need to think about marketing from start to finish in the golf development process.

**Holistic marketing**
The key ingredients of modern marketing are often described as the ‘7 Ps’. The first two, product and price, are determined early on, as key results of your market and financial feasibility study:

I. **Product** – producing a golf development that people want and need.

II. **Price** – identifying the price customers are willing to pay and correctly positioning the development for profitability.

III. **Place** – establishing a suitable, convenient place for customers to see your residences, whether it be an exclusive password-protected website for off-plan prospects (to monitor interest) or a show home.

IV. **Promotion** – communicating key messages about your golf development to customers, via its branding, brochure and marketing collateral and its website and public relations.

V. **People** – employing the right team. Customers are influenced by the people they meet and will associate your development with specific representatives or staff. This is part of marketing, too.

VI. **Process** – understanding precisely what your customers experience when visiting your facility and the service they receive, whether it’s enquiring about real estate or booking a round of golf.

VII. **Physical evidence** – giving customers something tangible to help them ‘see’ what they are purchasing. If you are selling real estate off-plan, this might be computer generated images (CGIs) or fly-over video.

**Promotion**
Now let’s focus on the promotional aspect of marketing. Having identified your target customer in the market and feasibility study, your activities should all be focused on a simple marketing premise – getting the right message, to the right person, in the right way, at the right time. The important thing is to put the customer – your customer – at the heart of everything you do.

Based on your market and feasibility study, your business plan and an agreed budget, your marketing consultant or director will write a plan outlining strategy and tactics designed to reach and persuade your target customers. This action plan should be based on measurable outcomes, so that constant testing and reviewing of results can determine which methods are proving most effective.

It is vital not to cut corners in terms of quality. A common mistake is for developments to promote themselves with websites and brochures that are poorly written, often with basic linguistic errors – especially when the text has been written by someone who is not a native speaker of the customer’s language.
Equally, many developments naively hire local photographers who are not experienced in real estate or golf course photography. The lesson is, do things professionally and hire a specialist, even if you have to fly them in from overseas.

**Marketing tactics**

There’s a wide range of marketing tactics and communications you might employ. Here are the major ones:

- **Photography and computer generated images (CGIs)**
  Perception is everything, and investing in the best photography and CGIs will help sell your golf and real estate product. Customers remember images and aspire to experience great-looking golf holes, clubhouses and residences.

- **Brochures**
  This is your chance to put something tangible in the hands of your customers. It’s not just what you say that counts, but how it looks (design) and feels (paper, binding, packaging). Do something different and special. Make it memorable – something customers want to keep or show to their friends.

- **Magazines and newsletters**
  Customer publishing is an effective way of communicating the benefits of your development in a subtle way. A magazine or newsletter that inspires customers via exciting writing and photography, selling the experience of living and playing golf at your development, will draw customers into a sales dialogue.

- **Video**
  Presented as a DVD and streamed on your website, high quality video will encourage customers to spend longer interacting with your brand and key messages. Give them a visual feast and tell the story of what they will experience.

- **Websites**
  Think carefully about the purpose of your website. Real estate customers will have different wants and needs from golfers, so you shouldn’t necessarily lump all your communications into one place. Create private log-in websites, micro-sites and landing pages to monitor and measure the success of your activities.

- **Digital marketing**
  E-mail marketing is cost effective, especially as it allows you to reach many potential customers in a variety of target markets. But focus on building a sales dialogue and a customer relationship, not just blasts of information. Create content-rich e-mails with links to your video offerings. Your PR activities should also target blogs and other online media.

- **Events**
  Events and familiarization trips are an effective way of developing and deepening relationships with potential customers and introducers in a more personal way. For real estate sales, that might mean inviting prospects to special events – presentations, cocktails, dinners, golf days – at suitable venues in target markets, or hosting them on visits to your development.

- **Public Relations (PR)**
  PR is just one of your marketing tools, but it is potentially the most powerful. It’s a solution that the most successful golf developments all use to great effect.

PR is all about creating and managing your golf development’s reputation. The point is, what the wider media say about your development will have more influence on potential customers than anything you say about it yourself. For example, any new resort can book a double-page advert in a glossy magazine and claim to be the best new golf development in its region, country or continent. But it is far more persuasive if a respected media outlet, via one of its editors or experts, gives your development a great review. Its consumers – potentially your customers – trust its views. Your reputation is born.

Whether you target the property pages of an influential newspaper or the top-100 course rankings in a golf magazine, generating media exposure and having good things said about your development creates a buzz. It fosters word-of-mouth recommendations and gives your development credibility. And a good reputation creates sales.

**The key questions**

**How do I market my real estate?**

Once upon a time, marketing real estate was straightforward. Golf developments would either hire a real estate salesperson or contract a real estate agency, often both. The residences would be advertised, and based on the promise of rising values and a sound investment, plots and homes would sell. Simple. But not any more.

The trend now, and into the foreseeable future, is towards buyers purchasing real estate for more than just an investment – frequently as a genuine second home. So your marketing will need to work harder and be more creative.
The key benefits a real estate agent can offer are a list of potential clients, media buying (advertising) experience and a structured process to make sales. Their reputation as a respected local or international agency may bring credibility and reassurance to your customers. Combined with your own salesperson, this may still be the best approach.

However, there are alternatives and additions to this strategy. Some developments are tapping into potential client networks by targeting wealth management and financial advisory firms, incentivizing them to recommend real estate and investment opportunities to their clients. Others target potential customers through special events, reciprocal relationships with other organizations and clubs, and familiarization trips.

How you reach your customers will depend on who they are and where they can be found. But the biggest mistake you can make is assuming that simply advertising your development, like in the good old days, will result in leads and sales.

Is there any such thing as bad publicity?
Yes. Golf has suffered from a poor reputation in relation to its environmental impact and the perceived social elitism of the sport. You need to be pro-active in the planning stages, explaining your credentials for sustainability, water usage and social responsibility, or else face potential adverse publicity and delays at the permissions stage.

Select a PR agent that understands golf and is experienced in working with golf developments. Find out what kinds of media they know and have dealt with, and what their clients, past and present, say about them. Choose well, and your PR agent will be an invaluable asset.

Executive Summary

- Marketing is about communicating the right message, to the right person at the right time
- Create a marketing plan with measurable outcomes to enable constant testing and reviewing
- Perception is everything, so invest in the best photography and CGIs
- Make your brochure special – think about how it looks and feels
- Customer magazines, newsletters and content-rich e-mails draw customers into a credible sales dialogue, yielding positive responses
- High quality video on a DVD and on your website enables customers to spend longer interacting with your brand
- Think carefully about the purpose of your website and how you measure customer response
- Don’t forget the personal touch – host events and familiarization trips to reach out to customers
- PR creates a reputation for your development via the media and is potentially your most powerful and effective marketing tool.
Sustainability in marketing and PR

There is now empirical evidence that consumers connect sustainability with quality and value. The bottom line is that a high-quality, resource-efficient, ethical and eco-minded product is both a more secure investment and delivers long-term marketing advantage and customer satisfaction.

As interest increases from the mainstream media, including travel and lifestyle publications, your sustainability achievements can fuel low-cost, high-return publicity. Credible real-world outcomes, creatively messaged and delivered, will resonate strongly with both existing and prospective customers.

Golf is a landscape, environmental and sporting experience. That means it’s easy to equate sustainable development with key inspirational marketing points like enjoyment, character, atmosphere and memorability. It should be easy to sell great golf in good-looking, well-maintained surroundings.

Golf businesses that fail to engage with local communities and communicate their environmental track record are vulnerable to negative publicity that will damage customer impressions and choices. It can also harm important relations with organizations that control planning permits, resource availability and potential sources of business development funding.

Landmark Media International Ltd

Landmark Media advises golf developments on their marketing and PR, helping you understand the golf market, how to identify your customers, and the best ways to reach and influence them.

We have worked with some of the finest new and established golf developments, creating and managing reputations and generating millions of euros’ worth of media coverage. Our clients – which also include KPMG’s Golf Advisory Practice (Europe Middle East & Africa) and Golfbreaks.com, Europe’s largest golf travel company – are regularly featured in influential media, including television, national newspapers, magazines and online, including CNN, the BBC, The Financial Times and leading international golf magazines, websites and blogs throughout the EMA region.

Landmark Media has worked closely with PGA Catalunya Resort since 2007, helping to position the estate ahead of its real estate project and successfully restoring the reputation of its golf courses, which in 2009 were ranked number three in Europe by Golf Monthly magazine and number seven by Golf World magazine.

Landmark Media is currently working with new golf and real estate developments in Turkey, Cyprus, and Eastern Europe, finding new and effective ways to market and sell real estate, as well as positioning the resorts to be among the finest in the world.

Landmark Media has been an early adopter of digital marketing and specializes in online video and web TV. However, we firmly believe in a mixed approach to marketing and PR, using proven strategies and tactics, measured to show a return on investment.

Landmark Media has built its business on honesty and integrity, and advocates environmental and social responsibility in golf.

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10. Sustainability

Framework conditions for sustainable golf development are rapidly changing. Land and water resources are under pressure as populations grow; fossil fuels are in decline; and consumers, investors, communities, governments and tourism organizations are now very engaged with social and environmental responsibility. Increasingly, the sustainability agenda underpins policy, legislation and public expectations – all of which heavily influence golf developments.

In such times, social and environmental performance cuts to the heart of successful business planning. It should deliver faster approval times; reduced construction costs; long-term resource efficiencies; insulation from changes in resource costs and availability; a higher quality product; diverse and powerful marketing messages; higher visibility; customer and staff satisfaction; and higher asset value.

The key attributes of sustainable golf developments are:

- Profitability
- Economic multipliers
- Fair, long-term and “mixed skill” employment
- Diverse social benefits for communities
- Landscape and ecosystem enhancement
- Resource efficiency and maximum use of renewables
- Respect for culture and tradition.

“Increasingly, the sustainability agenda underpins policy, legislation and public expectations – all of which heavily influence golf developments”

Golf Environment Organization

The Golf Environment Organization (GEO) is an international non-profit organization that partners throughout the golf and environmental communities to establish a clear, comprehensive and realistic framework for sustainable golf. We provide productive guidance and solutions, and recognize high performance.

GEO is committed to the sustainable growth of the industry, and to raising golf’s potential in delivering benefits to investors, communities and the environment.

We are driving forward a number of constructive, partnership-based initiatives that will facilitate and recognize sustainable golf development. The Sustainable Golf Development Handbook is a seminal work that will enable every golf development team to deliver real-world sustainability. Available online, the Handbook contains easy-to-use, process-based guidance and criteria for golf development planning, design and construction. In parallel with this, GEO is developing recognition programming that will enable committed developers to showcase their achievements, supported in the field by the world’s leading sustainable golf advisers.

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The Secret of Successful Golf Development

Creating a successful golf development is a complex and challenging process, but when approached in the correct, professional manner – as outlined in this guide – it can result in significant business reward.

One of the most important factors in the making of the best golf developments is a professional team approach.

As a developer, you not only need to involve quality consultants and contractors, you need to bring your partners together in a close-knit development team where your vision and your plans are shared and then realized by all. In this way, the sum will be greater than the parts.

Inviting your development team to be part of the planning and design stage will be one of the most important steps you will take towards creating a successful golf development. It’s a common mistake to introduce companies and advisors in a piecemeal way, only to find out that details have been lost in translation and avoidable mistakes have occurred.

By reading this guide and acting upon our specialist contributors’ advice, you are already one step ahead of the field and well on the way to creating your own successful golf development.