

## Are You 'Millennial Ready?'

### How the Golf Industry Can Help Prepare You

***By Kris Hart and Glenn Gray, Co-Chairs of GOLF 20/20's Millennial Task Force***

Millennials (ages 18-34) are having a sizeable impact on the golf industry. According to the National Golf Foundation, there are 6.2 million participants from this age group, or 28 percent of all golfers, who are playing about 100 million rounds per year in the U.S. Additionally, they spend about \$5 billion annually on golf. This includes green fees, which have jumped from 12.6 rounds per year in the 1990's to 14.7 in the 2010's.

There are several reasons why golf is attractive to millennials. Many enjoy the opportunity to be outside and the traditional values of the game. For others, rising stars, innovative brands, exciting events, relaxed rules and forms of the game like Footgolf are helping to draw interest by showcasing golf as "fun, young and cool."

GOLF 20/20, the industry's trade organization administered by World Golf Foundation, is focusing considerable effort on encouraging this age group to pick up the game. Recently, the "Millennial Task Force" was created to increase awareness, interest and participation in golf through industry education, non-endemic media outreach, digital campaigns and exciting events where the game has previously not had a presence or been included in the conversation.

This 12-person team represents some of the largest industry organizations – the Club Managers Association of America (CMAA), Golf Digest, LPGA, PGA TOUR, USGA – but also includes organizations who do an exceptional job of engaging 18 to 34-year-olds such as Adidas, Google, GoPro, Topgolf and Twitter. Every member of the Task Force has an interest in golf and fits in the millennial age group.

It's important for the industry to know how to balance the interests of Generation X and Baby Boomers while developing Generation Y ("Millennials") as loyal customers and lifelong players for the continued success and vitality of the game. Golf needs to be prepared for the challenge of satisfying multiple age groups at the same facility.

To ensure golf courses are equipped to provide an enjoyable experience for millennials, it is imperative that owners, operators and employees make sure they understand what's of most interest to this age group and how to communicate with them. The obvious goal is for them to visit again and continue to play or engage with the game in the future.

For this reason, the Millennial Task Force is developing customized strategies for members of the CMAA, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA) and PGA of America with "best practices" and important questions to ask of an operation. Each individual plays a critical role in creating a positive and fun environment for the millennial guest. Ongoing education will assist all facets of golf courses and driving ranges with a modernization of digital and social channels, communication recommendations and on-site nuances which might otherwise be overlooked by employees.

As an industry, there are many questions that need to be asked to make facilities "millennial ready." A selection below:

#### **Before Arriving**

- Does the facility offer a mobile-friendly website?
- Can I book a tee time on my phone?

- Does the facility have an active social media presence and provide special offers from time-to-time?
- Is there a relaxed dress code? Can I listen to music on the course?

### **While On-Site**

- Does the course offer a fun way to get around the course? Am I allowed to walk?
- Is there a 9-hole or twilight rate available?
- Can I try Footgolf or another non-traditional form of the game?
- Do carts have GPS units? How about Wi-Fi?

### **Coming Back**

- How do you thank your millennial customers?
- Are you regularly reading and responding to online reviews?
- Can you segment your database for more targeted communication?
- What fun events are you offering in the near future?

At the grassroots level, it's imperative for the industry to make sure those interacting with millennials – whether on-site or managing digital channels – are set up for success. The Task Force will support the CMAA, GCSAA, NGCOA and PGA of America in training, educating and inspiring members to interact with 18 to 34-year-olds so they continue to participate and invite friends to join them.

So what's next? Members of the organizations mentioned above will be receiving targeted information as to how best to connect with millennials. The goal is to create positive experiences for younger golf facility customers around the country.

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