

The First Tee

Taking Care of Tourism... and your business

by Scott Atkinson, President, NGCOA Canada

It may seem a daunting task to promote your course to the expansive market of travelling golfers and golfing travellers. But it may be easier than you think.

Canadians have golf courses and green fee rates second to none in the world. How many times have you played outside of Canada at highly promoted courses, only to say to yourself after walking off the 18th green: "many of the courses back home are as good or better than this."

What we need is a strategy to emulate what has been done so successfully south of the border in places such as Myrtle Beach.

Already we have many successful examples of the golf course industry getting together in Canada: British Columbia's Lower Mainland in the Vancouver area; the mountain resorts in the Columbia Valley and Alberta, the greater Toronto and Ottawa Valley chapters and Atlantic Canada, to name a few.

I recognize that in a lot of cases these regional efforts are largely for the benefit of the high end courses. What we need is an approach that would give enough exposure for all the playing experiences across the board. What may be needed is a national campaign. A good model would be the "Get Linked" program that has been presented at the Golfmax day programs that were held across the country this spring. This program has a direct marketing plan to introduce and increase the number of rounds of golf played. It is targeted at specific types and groups of people. By sharing the cost of the advertising over a large number of courses the program can be affordable and also effective. This eliminates the individual expense and the risk of a solo hit and miss campaign.

"Going it alone" reminds me of an expression: Advertising is like winking at a stranger in the dark, you know what you're doing, but no one else does. Trying to run your own campaign lacks the cumulative effect that blanket national coverage provides.

I'd like everyone to kick around a few ideas. Rekindle the thoughts that I'm sure have occurred to you from time to time but have been put aside because the cost seemed too great or the time demands too onerous. I encourage you to write your ideas down and fax them to this magazine at (613) 226-4148. We assure you that all responses will be considered.

It's time to plant a few seeds. I can't think of another industry with individuals more suited to growing ideas from seed, nurture them, and see them through to maturity.

