Improving the bottom line of the golf course food and beverage department is always a focus for operators of any golf facility, and there are a multitude of small items that can have big impact, when changes are implemented properly and followed through. The following is a review of several program ideas to feed your bottom line.

Taking measures
It is vitally important to set a goal for any profit improvement action program, because “When you start measuring, you start fixing”. When you break out year-end figures and tally up your rounds played, why not add a statistics page of relevant calculations to not only determine where you are weakest, but to set benchmarks for the following season?

Determine your current revenue per golfer, and do not include social banquets. Keep track of this figure on your monthly statements. Set goals for each season, and reward staff for reaching the benchmarks. If done correctly, the implementation of new programs should contribute to increasing the revenue per golfer.

Power of suggestion
A simple example of suggestive selling would be to offer “Fries with your burger?” while up-selling would be to clarify an order by asking “Large order?” Set up your menu offerings so that there are many up-selling opportunities. Add-ons such as cheese, chili, fries, fruit, and snacks should be available, and be sure to have various sizes available.

The key to success in developing and sustaining an effective suggestive selling program is the training of the staff. Isn’t it amazing how the 16-year-old counter worker at the movie theatre manages to convince you to ‘super-size’ your drink? Suggestive selling must be considered a requirement of the job, not an option. Emphasize it in your training program and constantly monitor it. “Small” should be a dirty word - the guest can speak it, but never should the salespeople. Increasing revenues is a lot more fun than decreasing costs…

Food for Thought ...

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Fountain foundations
Fountain drinks are much more profitable than bottled and canned drinks, although there is still much resistance to this idea. I call it the Great Canadian Debate, as I have discussed this sure-fire profit improver with many Canadian owners. Fountain drinks are easier to manage from an inventory perspective, storage is less of a hassle, and fountain drinks also offer up-selling opportunities, where there are none with pre-packaged beverages.

At the snack counter, at least three sizes should be offered. In the United States, the cost per ounce for fountain drinks is 1.3 cents versus 2.3 cents for the 20 oz bottle. A 24 oz fountain drink will cost 30 cents with cup and ice for the equivalent bottle it is 48 cents.

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Pack it up

The hospitality industry employs packaging or "bundling" whenever possible. Many hotels now include a cocktail reception and/or breakfast in the morning. Tournament groups should be sold value packages that include food and beverages, so why not consider adding a food element to individual play? Remington Golf Club in Orlando markets itself as an all-inclusive course by including all the food, cart, greens fees, and range balls for one price, guaranteeing them a level of revenue per golfer that reaches new heights.

If a course’s prime-time golf tee sheets are consistently booked solid, your only way to increase revenues could be to create a prime-time package deal. Fill it with value added elements, but charge more and see how the golfers enjoy their ‘golf experience’. Even just adding a hot dog or golf ball into a small added element, but charge more and see how the golfers enjoy their ‘golf experience’. Even just adding a hot dog or golf ball into a small added element, but charge more and see how the golfers enjoy their ‘golf experience’. Even just adding a hot dog or golf ball into a small added element, but charge more and see how the golfers enjoy their ‘golf experience’. Even just adding a hot dog or golf ball into a small added element, but charge more and see how the golfers enjoy their ‘golf experience’. Even just adding a hot dog or golf ball into a small added element, but charge more and see how the golfers enjoy their ‘golf experience’. Even just adding a hot dog or golf ball into a small added element, but charge more and see how the golfers enjoy their ‘golf experience’. Even just adding a hot dog or golf ball into a small added element, but charge more and see how the golfers enjoy their ‘golf experience'.

Take it to ‘em

Today’s golfer demands on-course service. To today’s golfer, the range from $30 to $40 per labour hour.

The beverage cart route should include the driving range and 1st tee, and an investment into a course order system should be considered. Whether a cart is there in the morning selling muffins and coffee, or in the hot afternoon sun as golfers hit ball after ball on the range, a beverage cart that takes the time to find out if the customer needs anything makes the golfer believe you care. More bang for the buck, more value added.

Pricing the Product – Be aggressive. Set your prices to achieve a 25% cost of goods. The course will not lose players if the beer or hot dog costs 25 cents more than the competitors – only the conditions of the greens will make or break you.

Purchasing – Use your NGCOA Canada sponsored national purchasing program. Bid on meat and produce during high demand periods, serve up bulk condiments, and purchase portion controlled items whenever possible.

Labour Saver – Set standards for labour hours needed to service certain levels of sales, and monitor accordingly. For the average bar & grille, sales per labour hour should range from $30 to $40 per labour hour.

Beverage Cost Control – Portion control is essential to manage beverage cost. Consider using a pour control system. The Posi-pour spouts are reasonably effective and not costly, while auto pour systems can be expensive and are not usually cost effective for most golf venues. Price wine and spirits to reach the desired pour cost, usually below 20% for spirits, 28% for beer, and 30% for wine. This will vary with your market. If you operate a banquet facility, set different prices for banquet events, and mark your bottles to identify yours and to categorize call, well, premium, and super premiums, so that there can be no mistake and so that your bartender does not bring in his/her own bottles.

Banquets – To confirm events, require a 25% non-refundable down payment (perhaps called a ‘Space Reservation Fee’ for a clear understanding that it is not a returnable deposit), as this will improve cash flow. Select a location on site for weddings - This is an important amenity and is easily paid for in up-charges.

Yield maximization – Set minimum expenditures for high-demanded days and times. For example, an $8000 expenditure may be appropriate for a Saturday night in June for a 200-seat banquet room in a suburban location. Packaging is also effective for special events to obtain a higher yield. Bundle food, beverages, venue, and other services such as music and decorations, and offer alternative packages for guest choices. Action plans are only as good as their execution. Plan your profit improvement program with timelines and responsibility assignments and monitor each action’s effectiveness to realize a ‘fatter’ bottom line at the end of the day.

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