

As I sit down to pen this article, I am switching my NGCOA Canada President's hat for my owner's ball cap. As an owner and entrepreneur, LEADERSHIP is near and dear to me.



The Parting Shot

Message From The NGCOA Canada President • Reto Steiner

Is the tail wagging the dog? The question comes down to who is the dog and who is wagging its tail?

Twenty two years ago the NGCOA Canada did not exist. Today it is arguably the strongest voice in golf. Our membership is composed of entrepreneurs, business leaders, and decision makers in an industry that is larger than any other sporting industry in Canada.

So, not only should we see ourselves as the dog in this, we are the top dog. So, how did we become the underdog allowing others to control our destiny? Let's not kid ourselves, we are controlled by history and the adages of, 'it has always been done that way', or 'that's how it works in golf', or 'those are the club rules'. Things have changed - we now own our proshops, determine dress code, and have a better focus on customer service. The quality of the product we deliver for public consumption has improved dramatically.

If you look in the mirror all the basic organizations involved in golf have not kept pace with the game. The RCGA, now known as Golf Canada, by their own admission, has not changed their membership model since 1948. The PGA has attempted many times to reform how they deliver their programs to golf course owners to try and enhance our management team.

Wag The Dog

The intent here is not to point fingers at specific parties or specific problems we face. The question being asked is who needs to wag the tail? Who needs to lead this industry through its slowest growth period in over two decades?

We have lots of challenges that we face as golf course owners. We are business leaders in our communities, raising thousands of dollars for local charities, providing good paying jobs, and recreational facilities that would not exist without our passion for the game.

However, to change or influence the game of golf we need to do it as an industry. Twenty two years ago we had no voice; today we have a very strong and legitimate voice in the form of the NGCOA Canada. This success is in no small part due to Jeff Calderwood's effort and vision. I know some are suggesting that we need to streamline the number of associations in our industry. Some go so far as to hope that it can all be done by one organization. My feeling is that it lies somewhere in between. The interests of everyone involved cannot be satisfied by operating under one roof.

As owners we have the largest investment, the most to lose and the most to gain. So it seems only natural that we need to lead the industry. We need to have our voices heard in Parliament. We need to get the 95% of golfers, approximately 5.7 million golfers who are not members of a private club, using the handicap system, and influencing how Golf Canada delivers this system to them. The list is endless and will grow as we dig for more creative solutions to growing the game, but as owners we have to be the industry leaders.

We are the dog and I would like to think we can wag our own tail. We need to take the lead in this industry, through our strength in numbers and our experience as operators, and there is no better forum to accomplish that than through the NGCOA Canada.

Reto Steiner
Owner, Woodside Golf Course
reto@woodsidegc.com