Q&A: von Hagge

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Long after finishing touches applied, von Hagge stays in touch with clients

By MARK LESLIE

SPRING, Texas — Von Hagge Design Associates has developed a marketing program for its clients that extends six years after course opening and which Robert von Hagge calls “an award-winner.”

"Instead of selling a roll of blueprints and showing up now and then, we stay involved," von Hagge said. "It's been a real boost to the guy who's invested his life savings in the project and doesn't know where to go."

With the program, he said, "We've been able to close over 70 percent of the potential members and real-estate buyers in our projects."

The marketing program starts with forming the board of directors, deciding the type of club (equity, non-equity), and forming the charter group. Von Hagge conducts three walking tours with prospective members, speaking on his design philosophy, "so they can become part of that creative effort."

By involving members, he said, "you begin developing the history and heritage of the club, the pride which turns into value which turns into profit."

"The country club is a social statement. The architectural statement is the golf course. But you want them to know you're setting out to create a premiere, world-class facility that maybe does not exist in their area. We share every bit of it with [prospects] every step of the way."

Von Hagge also hosts two events for the media — one, a preview tournament before the members even get to play the course.

Von Hagge Design Associates trains the superintendent in similar circumstances before he takes the course over. "The firm heads up the club's green committee for three years after the course opens."

"We have an arrangement with all our clients that we can do this internship with them," von Hagge said.

Involvement also extends to the landscaping.

"We look at the establishment of the course because we don't believe you should landscape a course before it opens — rather just prior to or at opening," von Hagge said. "You can't design and construct a house and hang the drapes or pictures with any sense before that happens. It has to be up before you can really feel the mood of what is needed in what area. It's stupid to try."

He added: "We've been polishing this strategy because we feel we have to in order to stay in the strata we're in."

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