



Marketing Idea of the Month

Membership 'test drives' paying dividends at Phoenix clubs

By PETER BLAIS

PHOENIX—You can test drive a \$12,500 car? Why not a \$12,500 golf course membership?

That was the logic behind Ahwatukee Country Club's innovative new marketing program organizers hope will help fill some of the 100 vacant spots on its membership roster.

For \$175 a month — the same monthly dues as a regular family membership — potential mem-

bers can enjoy *all* the privileges of full membership, *without paying a \$12,500 initiation fee* (The price is \$125 at executive-length sister club The Lakes at Ahwatukee).

"Prior to purchasing a new car, a test drive is essential," said Sid White, general manager of Ahwatukee Golf Course Limited Partnership, which bought the course last fall.

"Even before buying new golf clubs, trying them out first is im-

portant. So why should it be any different when making the important decision to join a country club?"

The offer is available for a minimum three months from May 1 through Sept. 30, a five-month period during which half the club's 350 regular members leave the state for Northern climates.

"It's a pretty transient membership, so we had the space available," said Marketing Director

John Malin.

Fifty people signed up for the program, which Malin expects will produce an additional \$50,000 in revenue this summer.

But more importantly, if 30 to 40 percent of test drivers opt to join the club, which Malin anticipates they will, that's another 10 to 20 new members.

"The program has brought in a lot of people who have toyed with the idea of joining a club for the first time or haven't been a member of a club for years, but didn't want to plop down \$12,000 without at least seeing how things work," Malin said.

Ahwatukee is coupling the test drive program with a second promotion, a grand prize drawing for an all-expense paid trip to the 1994 U.S. Open at Oakmont (Pa.) Country Club.

Through the first two months, members responded with 100 referrals for new members. Malin said 30 to 40 are "on the edge of becoming full members."

The trip includes round-trip airfare for two, five nights lodging, rental car, two U.S. Open weekly badges and spending money.

Current members earn chances at the drawing for each new member they recruit. New members are also entered upon joining.

The program runs through May 10, 1994, and includes monthly winners of such prizes as a set of Ping golf clubs, Phoenix Cardinals season tickets, pro shop gift certificates and free monthly dues.

The first month's winner, Edwina Dennis, won a logoed luggage bag, a month's worth of dues and accumulated six chances for the grand prize drawing.

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CIRCLE #122

NCA releases new publication

The *Model Membership Admission Process* — the first of a new, two-part National Club Association publication — is scheduled for release this summer. Part two will be released next year.

Designed to assist club officials in assessing their own admission procedures, it includes guidelines for sponsorship, procedures for extending an invitation to membership, and waiting list options.

Intended to be a summary of practical solutions and guidelines, the material is derived from a mixture of legal precedents, previous lessons and practices learned by NCA clubs, and common sense and expertise of leading club officials and legal experts.

Part two will focus on various membership categories and special membership problems, such as divorce, joint memberships and corporate and corporate-sponsored memberships.

Additional copies will be available to members for \$15.