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MAN WITH A PLAN

Does your membership feel out of the loop? Henry's 5 keys to get them back in.

One important responsibility of any club is also one that receives the lowest ratings from members – communications.

Despite a steady stream of newsletters, email blasts, tweets and Facebook postings, many members feel poorly informed. They don't get the information they need when they need it. And it's often not delivered the way they would prefer it.

So how is this corrected? First, you need a plan. Here are the elements of a solid communications plan:

OBJECTIVES. You want to communicate the most important goals and

AUDIENCE. Do you really know your members, your customers and your prospects? Do you know what they want as part of their club and golf experience? Do you know what they're jealous of in other clubs and facilities? If you haven't asked them, you might be surprised.

Between your current members, lost members and prospective members you might identify 10 or 15 different segments that need to be communicated with differently. For example, women who don't play golf but enjoy other activities are different from those who play golf on a regular basis. Your communications plan

should reflect those differences.

to align your audiences and content ideas, create a matrix that has audience segments in a column down the left side and content ideas in a row across the top.

VEHICLE. What's the best way to deliver your content to the audience segment for which it is intended? There's no shortage of options these days. Newsletter story? Facebook or blog post? Video embedded on the club website? Email? And don't forget the good, old-fashioned letter that arrives unexpectedly in the mail. Some people still prefer that form of communication and it's very effective in some circumstances. Match your media choices to market segments and make the messages resonant with the chosen segment. Talk to people in the way that they listen.

SCHEDULE. Your communications schedule should look at least three months ahead. That's not to say you're going to know everything you're going to communicate three or more months in advance. But if you don't look far enough ahead, you're going to miss opportunities to sync up communications with the needs of your other departments.

When building a schedule, don't be afraid of redundancy. You should say the same thing in different ways using different media. The more times your customers or members hear the message, the more effective you can be achieving the desired response.

Communications professionals sometimes talk about the "stickiness" of a message. The key is developing a plan that incorporates the five elements above and then being disciplined enough to execute it. **GCI**

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objectives of the club itself. Those can be traced to the club's strategic plan, which lays out the long-term direction the club's board and management have proscribed. A long-term objective, for example, might be to increase average revenue per round to \$97 while sustaining 35,000 rounds per year. A long-range goal might also be to become the best-maintained course in your city. You also want to communicate near-term objectives. A near-term objective might be to add 10 new female members this quarter or to increase golf shop sales by 20 percent during the spring season. Write down your objectives and distinguish between long- and near-term.

should reflect those differences.

CONTENT. Here's where it gets creative. For each audience segment, there should be a list of content ideas that also reinforce a long- or near-term objective. For our group of women golfers, for example, a newsletter story about a promotion that encourages women golfers to invite a friend to play and enjoy a 15 percent discount in the golf shop is a content idea that reinforces the new-membership and golf-shop sales goals. Another idea is a video interview with your golf professional inviting women golfers to a combination demo day and trunk sale that includes a discount on clubs and apparel from participating manufac-