

How to Create the Right Web Site to Market Your Club

BY HEIDI VOSS

I have very bad news for printers. We no longer need you to print big, fancy color brochures for country clubs. People are turning to the World Wide Web to research potential clubs.

I have assisted in designing more than 100 club brochures, and I can tell you some very simple facts. First, the club rarely looks as good in the brochure as it does in real life, unless you have hired someone very talented to take the photos, and they have digitally remastered them.

Second, the brochure is usually out of date by the time all the "powers that be" sign off on it and it gets produced. Third, even though you proofed it one zillion times, the minute that your board president reads it, he will find a typo that you missed.

Here are a few things to keep in mind when you are creating your club Web site:

■ Your Web image should match up with your club. If you are a Tuscan-looking club in California, your Web site should portray this. You

are going to be supplementing a person's Web experience with printed items such as newsletters, scorecards, yardage books and membership applications, and you need to be sure that all images and fonts are the same for a consistent brand.

■ The Web site should be friendly to those on dial-up.

Yes, there really are people on dial-up. Not everyone is surfing at high speed, and your loading times need to be reasonable. Don't let your Web designer create something that will frustrate those on dial-up. Your site should not have membership fees listed. You may wish to list your categories of membership and a "Frequently Asked Questions," but make them call your membership director to discuss membership fees.

■ Clubs that have successful sites have something that keeps members coming back. Photo galleries are a great way to keep them perusing the site. These need to be set up with catchy captions, and many clubs make photos available for the members to reprint.

■ The Vellano Country Club took the gallery a step further and encouraged peo-

ple to take photos of themselves in club logo apparel and send it in to be put on the site. The club called it "Show us your Vellano." You can't beat that for exposure.

Vellano also created an auction site for members to bid on one-of-a-kind items for charity. This is a kind of "e-Bay twist" that keeps members coming back to see if they need to up their bids.

■ Another new private club in Richmond, Va., called The Federal Club has more than 80 members and has just begun construction of an Arnold Palmer signature

well as social nights out for members to meet and mingle. Members are sent an e-mail notification to sign up online to attend one or all of the events. Events are kept to a manageable size and most are selling out at a rapid pace.

Utilizing a Web site helps to conserve trees and stops the dreadful mailing of flyers that cause members to become numb and pitch all mail in the trash. Many designers can work with your club accounting software for easy bill viewing and for automatic billing when the member books the event.

There are so many benefits to putting your marketing dollars into your Web site. It can be kept fresh, and it's easy for members to tell others about their clubs.

Also, members who miss the club can log on while on the road and get up-to-date info on what's happening there. I know when my family misses me, they merely go to www.bauervossconsulting.com to see my smiling face.

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golf course. To encourage camaraderie among members and to also encourage people to join the club during this formative stage the club has set up a monthly schedule of activities. It's offering clinics for juniors and ladies, one- and two-day golf trips to play other fine courses, as

