

Business Record

Beyond the Green

A New Year's Resolution

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Profile

The CMAA's James Singerling —

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Going to a Logo

Want to make a name for yourself? Stamp it on your club's shirts, caps and everything else inside the golf shop

BY BRUCE ALLAR

The first place to look for ways to improve golf shop sales might be right there on your shoulder. Or on your chest. It's your club's logo, and it has the power to stimulate business — or dampen it.

"I think that's the only edge you have over a discount," says Joe Rehor, director of golf for the five Bethpage State Park municipal courses on Long Island. He beats the major golf discount chains by offering three different logos on a variety of products — one for the famous Bethpage Black course, one for the 2002 U.S. Open (which it hosted) and a third for the upcoming 2009 Open. "I have nothing in the shop that doesn't have a logo on it, except for shoes," he says.

At the Cardinal Club, a University of Louisville-affiliated private course in Simpsonville, Ky., an insignia highlighted by a red



THE CARDINAL CLUB uses seasonality as a merchandising tactic in its promotions.

cardinal evokes the mascot of the college's sports teams and draws souvenir collectors to the golf shop's merchandise. Head Pro Chris

Hamburger recognizes the value of this logo appeal. "If you have it, it's a wonderful thing," he says, "and we're fortunate here, with being

tied to the university, that we do have that appeal.

"That's your brand. You sell that brand."

Hamburger and John Sobiecki, the general manager, have introduced variations on the original logo, which features a large black "C" interlocked with a large red "C" (the school's colors) and the head of a cardinal, with "Cardinal Club" embroidered beneath it. At times they'll order items that feature only the insignia with no underlying words. Other times, they'll have manufacturers move the logo to different spots on the clothing.

"With 400 members, if you look in their closets they've got one of everything," Sobiecki says. "You have to try to change it up a little bit. We're actually looking at doing another logo for next spring."

There has also been some discussion of introducing a members-only logo, which guests would not be allowed to purchase. Hamburger previously worked at nearby Valhalla Golf Club, which has hosted two PGA Cham-

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Resolve to Show Members That They're Important

BY HEIDI VOSS

With the New Year come resolutions. We all make them. They usually involve some way to make us better. Working out, eating fewer carbs, spending more time with loved ones and less time at work. They are all good things, and we tend to be model citizens for at least the first two weeks of the New Year.

I know that when I talk with members they are also in tune to these resolutions. That is why it is the responsibility of the club to help to reinforce their resolutions. This can be done in many ways.

The club may want to first look at its menu. Are you serving items that enable the members to eat at the club several times a week and stick to their diets? With low-carb competing with low-fat, this can sometimes be tricky. Is the menu changed often to incorporate fresh foods and encourage members to dine on a regular basis without growing weary of the menu

items? Is your club all about graciously accepting the special requests of members? A few months ago I was at a club in Las Vegas,

and I ordered onion rings with my sandwich. Without batting an eye the waiter took my order and politely left the table. Then my lunch companion whispered

to me, "Well this should be interesting." The club did not have onion rings on its menu. Ten minutes later my sandwich arrived with some gorgeous homemade onion rings. This type of personal service without a hassle makes club membership valuable.

In addition to granting special requests, many clubs are starting to offer cooking classes that teach members how to incorporate healthy foods into their cooking at home. We obviously have a penchant for cooking classes or Emeril, Bobby Flay and — my husband's personal favorite — Rachael Ray would not be household names. Get your chef out of the back kitchen and get them involved with the members.

Next, take a look at your facility. Do you offer a fitness facility and is it up to par? You may need to consider a revamp of tired equipment, or consulting with a fitness expert at how to better arrange your fitness facility to maximum usage. If you don't offer a fitness facility, do you have a ladies' walking group that meets at the club? Some clubs in the mountains that offer golf, alpine and fitness are taking to the outdoors for mountain hikes, snowshoeing, rock climbing, mountain biking, kayaking and many other activities in which members can participate as a group outside of the club. All it takes to make this type of thing work is someone to properly organize the event and encourage attendance.

Some clubs utilize an activities coordinator to do this. Others ask members to host events. If a member is hosting the event, he or she is more apt to call his or her friends to guarantee that it will be well attended. You have to determine how many events you would like to have at the club, how often, and who will be responsible for the success of each event. I have found that an event management

form that outlines the day, items needed, the anticipated budget for the event, and the status of its completion is a big help in ensuring a great event. Find out what activities interest your members and then mold the club around those things. If your club has a card room that is sitting empty five days a week, why not get a contract with a Pilates instructor for one or two days and welcome members to bring their mats and stretch together? The club can offer a few complimentary classes to get the members interested, and then charge a nominal fee to cover the instructor once the members are hooked.

So add to your New Year's resolutions by resolving that you will make your club more valuable, more active all year round and more fun for your entire membership. Then try to stick with it for longer than the first two weeks of January.

Heidi Voss is the president of Bauer Voss Consulting, a club marketing consulting company. She specializes in new development, conversions from public to private and member buyouts. For more information, visit www.bauervossconsulting.com.



GOING TO A LOGO

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pionships and will be the site of the 2008 Ryder Cup, and says the members-only insignia caught on slowly there but eventually became a good seller at that ultra-private Louisville-area course.

The Cardinal Club, which opened in 2001, tracks shop sales by calculating retail revenue per round, a figure that excludes any guest or golf car fees. Hamburger reports a healthy \$10 to \$12 per round in retail sales. It has a loyal customer base: The Cardinal Club hosts home matches for the University of Louisville men's and women's teams and

tapped alumni and school boosters for membership. It also accommodates an estimated 3,000 guest golfers per year, many of them University of Louisville fans, either playing with members or attending events. To sell to this loyal audience, the golf shop was purposely sited just inside the front door to the clubhouse, making it a first stop for most who enter.

Hamburger makes his merchandise visible with a variety of techniques. He and his staff assemble frequent themed displays, picking up on such things as springtime's Kentucky Derby, mid-summer's

Fourth of July or the fall football season. The head pro also rotates apparel on and off discount tables. One table on wheels, offering 20 percent to 40 percent off, is posted just outside of the shop or moved to other high-visibility areas such as the patio between the bar and the putting green.

"There's a secret: If you want to get rid of it and put it on sale, if you physically move it out of the shop, it'll sell better than if it's within the shop," Sobecki says. "Whether it's on a rolling cart with hangers that's outside or on a sales table in the hallway, people's perception

is, 'This must be on sale.' You can put it on a rack in the middle of the shop with a sticker that says 20 percent off and it doesn't get the same kind of response."

Mike Hill, director of golf services at Angels Crossing Golf Club near Kalamazoo, Mich., drives sales by handwriting special tags for a select few items in stock. The director of golf services at this public course personally inscribes, "Thanks for shopping Angels Crossing," and then marks the price way down. Those few bargain items — say a \$40 shirt going for \$12.95 — are

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GOING TO A LOGO

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placed back in the midst of the rest of the non-sale merchandise. "It's there to physically reward someone who's actually going through the merchandise," Hill says. "Now I'm starting to get golfers coming in looking for those items."

Hill doesn't promote these deals, but word is getting around and more customers are digging through shirts, sweaters and other goods to find them. "That's what I want to happen," he says, knowing that the bargain hunters will find other must-have items while they hunt for the price breaks.

Hill brought 25 years of sales and marketing experience outside of the golf industry with him when he signed on with Angels Crossing, which opened in May 2004, and placed an emphasis on service. "We try to greet everyone immediately in the golf shop and get to know as many by name as possible," Hill says. "We offer our assistance but don't badger. There's a fine line between being helpful and being oppressive, and we try not to cross that line."

Every piece of clothing is logoed, with the exception of some rainwear. Balls with the Angels Crossing insignia



THE CARDINAL CLUB tracks shop sales by calculating retail revenue per round minus guest or golf car fees.

are also popular because the course — 18 singular holes on 350 acres — is a destination for many golfers. Despite being constricted by temporary quarters of 1,500 square feet in what will become a condo unit once a clubhouse is constructed, Hill describes his shop business as "just starting to grow." He doesn't analyze sales per round but says 70 percent of revenue is from soft goods and 30 percent from hard goods such as clubs, shoes, balls and bags.

The goal at The Wilds Golf Club in Prior Lake, Minn., is to exceed \$500,000 each year in golf shop retail sales. Shad Gordon, who has been with the top-ranked public course since it opened in 1995, worked his way up from scrubbing golf cars to head pro before becoming general manager two years ago. He says he stopped analyzing sales on a per-round basis and now looks at them month by month. Most slow days are related to holidays and lousy weather, he says. He responds by gearing holiday sales to the likes of Memorial Day, the Fourth of July and Labor Day. As an example, The Wilds discounted anything red, white

or blue by 20 percent to 40 percent during the July 4 holiday.

The weather near Minnesota's Twin Cities can be brutally cold even in spring and fall, so The Wilds introduced a "Play the Temperature" promotion, which Gordon describes as his biggest hit. Golfers are charged the degree-Fahrenheit reading that is registered a half-hour before their tee times. On a 28-degree day, for example, players pay \$28 for greens fees and a car. "When other courses are not doing anything, we're full," Gordon says, noting that many golfers take pride in seeing how low they can go — temperature-wise, that is.

The promotion has worked so well that The Wilds, according to Gordon, has trademarked "Pay the Temperature" and "Play the Temperature" to keep them as signature offers. Another club in the Twin Cities area has countered with "Play the Dew Point."

Golf shop sales increase on those cold days as well, so it's a win-win for the club. Gordon also uses price reductions to jump-start purchases on bad weather days.

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GOING TO A LOGO

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"When it's rainy out, put your raingear on sale," he advises. "You're going to sell more if they need it that same day and if you put a little incentive in there to buy it."

The Wilds shop will occasionally offer packages that bundle a free shirt and hat with greens fees. The clothing items are add-ons to encourage rounds during slow times, like Mother's Day or some other holidays. "Other courses are

discounting (greens fees)," Gordon says. "We want our full amount and then we'll throw in value-added products."

The typical Wilds golf shop staffer (excluding the assistant golf professionals) is promoted from some entry-level jobs. "You need to get people who are knowledgeable but also who are personable," Gordon says. They receive salaries of \$9 to \$10 per hour and share in some of the tips. Currently, there are no commissions for sales, but Gordon is considering that for next year.

The process of developing a logo can be serendipitous. At Angels Crossing, the new course's management team was struggling, even with the help of a marketing agency, to find an appropriate image that wouldn't come off as too religious or too Gothic-influenced. Only after one of the agency's employees nearly rear-ended a Pontiac on the roadways — and noticed how the triangular-shaped outside of the Pontiac logo resembled folded wings behind an upright angel — did a properly graceful logo present itself. The result has been a very popular insignia.

At Bethpage, Rehor and Dick Smith were searching for a logo concept and found it one day while looking out the window of the clubhouse. Smith noticed an image of a "caddie boy" carved into the shutter boards, which had been on the building since it was home to the private Lenox Hills Country Club and, even before that, a private residence.

However you arrive at a logo, there's no denying its importance in driving name recognition and sales.

"Before they make a decision on what they think your quality is, they look at the logo," Sobecki says of prospective members, golfers and retail customers. "It has to be consistent with the level that you're trying to attain." ■

Bruce Allar is a frequent contributor to Golfdom.

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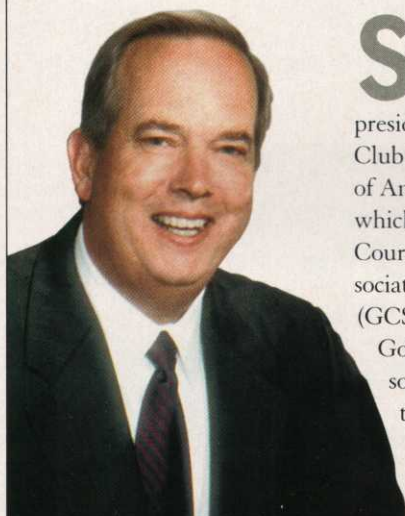
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PROFILE

James Singerling

Executive vice president and CEO of CMAA understands the superintendent's world



Since 1990, James Singerling has been the executive vice president and CEO of the Club Managers Association of America (CMAA), which will join the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) and the National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA) at the 2007 Golf Industry Show. Prior to his CMAA appointment,

he was a corporate official in the Robert Trent Jones Sr. golf course design and management companies and served as vice president and general manager of Coral Ridge Country Club in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. Singerling has been a CMAA member for more than 21 years and has enjoyed an outstanding 41-year career in the hospitality industry. He is a certified executive chef with the

American Culinary Federation and a Certified Club Manager with CMAA. He is also president of The Club Foundation (the private club industry's charitable arm), served as president of the Team USA Culinary Foundation from 1992 to 1996 and has been honored as an industry leader of the year by the University of Nevada Las Vegas, Michigan State University and Florida State University.

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Golfdom: *What is the most important issue facing golf course owners and managers today and why is it important?*

Singerling: The most important issue facing owners and managers is the need to structure your business plan to be flexible enough to accommodate the rapid changes to our industry.

Golfdom: *What is the key to a good manager/superintendent relationship and why is that relationship important?*

Singerling: Having worked with Robert Trent Jones Sr. for nine years during the height of his marvelous career, I have always

known of the need for respect and support for the golf course superintendent. The amazing evolution of the profession was generally passed over by the golfing public. However, Mr. Jones loved meeting with the turfgrass and agronomy students from the great programs at Michigan State and Penn State and learning what these young professionals were bringing to the industry. As a manager, I knew I needed a peripheral knowledge of the superintendents' world so that I could work to provide the resources needed to generate the conditions on

"I knew I needed a peripheral knowledge of the superintendent's world."

the playing field of golf. Those resources not only included the budget dollars but also the human resources and equipment. Most of all, it is management's responsibility to assure that the superintendent can have a productive family life, while providing his professional expertise to the golf facility.

Golfdom: *Finish this sentence: "The best thing that could happen to the golf industry would be ..."*

Singerling: ... to eliminate the dragging of the skeletons out of the past and focus on the unbelievably bright future of our industry. Our future is with the legions of bright young professionals who are learning and interning at thousands of facilities around the world.

Golfdom: *What is the best investment you ever made in your business or career?*

Singerling: I committed at the beginning of my career
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PROFILE/JAMES SINGERLING

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to always learn something from every person I would meet or work with, no matter what the position. In my 40-plus years in business I can look back and remember something that has been given to me from every life that I have touched. I owe every success I enjoy to those who have surrounded me.

Golfdom: *Who are the three most influential people in the golf industry and why?*

Singerling: Robert Trent Jones Sr. and his wonderful wife, Ione, would have had the greatest influence on me because they allowed

me to share nine years of his life and to learn their true passion for the game of golf. Valderrama Golf Club's Jaime "Jimmy" Ortiz Patino, who I am privileged to know as a friend for over 20 years. Jimmy should have his picture in the dictionary next to the word "Perfection." He has never settled for anything less. His impact on bringing the world of golf together will be legend. And Tim Finchem, who has continued to think "out of the box" and to focus on delivering a future for the game of golf. The leadership initiatives of the PGA

Tour in taking Dean Beman's dream of the World Golf Hall of Fame to reality, then empowering the Golf 20/20 initiative to bring every entity and component that wants to be involved in the future of golf and orchestrating a collaborative atmosphere to plan for that future is a remarkable accomplishment.

Golfdom: *Who is your favorite golfer?*

Singerling: It would have to be my wife, Molly. Our time together playing or watching the game being played are the happiest moments of my life.

Golfdom: *If you could have lunch with anyone, who would it be and what would be the first question you would ask?*

Singerling: It would be with Barbara Bush and I would ask her why she makes her husband putt those "tap-ins" at this stage in his career.

Golfdom: *What is your favorite movie?*

Singerling: It would be Mel Gibson's "The Passion."

Golfdom: *What club in your bag do you hit the best?*

Singerling: My Nike Ignite Driver. ■

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