



# A Management Memo

By **Pat Norton**, Golf Course Superintendent, Nettle Creek Country Club

The following is a memo that was issued recently to our management people here at Nettle Creek CC. NCCC is a public golf course that also sells 'memberships'... which are really nothing more than glorified season passes. Our 'members' have no obligation to us... no assessments, no initiation fee, and no assurance of them rejoining us as members each year. We set the precedent of selling memberships and having members back in 1995... and find ourselves here in 2000 questioning whether or not we really want members.

I personally feel that alienating all of these people... through abrupt elimination of memberships... would not be good business. I do agree with the idea of possibly adjusting some of the benefits/features of our membership classes... still giving the member a good value... but creating an environment in which the club can do better financially! Currently, members here:

- make Sat/Sun tee times without guaranteeing foursomes
- take prime tee times well before the general public has any chance
- play for considerably less... a frequent player (40X/season) averages only \$20.62 plus \$11 (cart) = \$32.00



While I sometimes roll my eyes and question the situation... it is definitely worthwhile to keep in mind their value to us as a public golf club. There are some very serious issues to debate when considering the membership question at any public or semi-private golf club.

We have a solid core of very loyal golfing patrons/members... who have been with us for five years... helping greatly to support this golf course. During this time we have modestly increased their membership price each year... which still gives them a great golfing value if they golf frequently.

Offsetting this... we are also seeing a pretty solid increase in rounds from the general public and an increased demand for golf outings, etc. The outing thing has evolved from a situation of limiting ourselves somewhat in the past to our current policy of taking lucrative outings on just about any weekday... and after 10 a.m. on weekends!

Analysis of it all tells us that our members are definitely part of the mix... place the greatest demands on us... expect more service... and receive the best value of anybody that patronizes us. They do pay their dues pre-season... helping us operate in the winter and spring... which is another consideration.

It has all left us still in the position of wondering just who is getting the best part of this deal!

We have many members who definitely get their money's worth... a few who don't... and a few who approach us for a refund when job transfers, moving, etc. become a reality... another part of the membership question.

Check out a few of these prices against your own... make your own analysis... and arrive at your own conclusions!

	By 12/31	By 2/15	In-season
Single male (under age 50)	\$825	\$875	\$925
Cart fees extra... cart fee discounted			
Preferential tee times			
Golf shop discounts			

The fact is that we now have a PGA professional who is very much a public golf type of guy... great with numbers, income, budgets, and players. The truth is... he is very much in tune with everything here except great member service!

The trouble began a few weeks ago when... some of

our managers sort of jumped the gun with their attitudes toward members... which I found somewhat disturbing... and hence, this management memo! Needless to say, a few feathers were ruffled.

To: JP  
Michelle Wren  
Vickie Shankle  
WBN  
Rosemary Norton  
Robert Patnode

From: PJN  
Re: Customer services  
Member services  
Beverage cart services  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The following **services** are hereby suspended until further notice... I do not want either myself or my golf course staff to be bothered with trying to provide **service** to either fellow employees or, indirectly, to our golfers! I also do not want either them, or myself, to have to get here any earlier than necessary... to work

in any sort of unsanitary, unpleasant conditions... or to work in any sort of rainy, inclement weather. If **service** to golfers/members begins to suffer as a result of this memo . . . let them all eat cake!!

1) Garbage pick-up from the restaurant... my staff members dislike the entire process... so let's find somebody else willing to do it ???

2) Bathroom, restaurant, porch, outside stairway, sidewalks, etc... all cleaning in these areas to be suspended so that innocent clubhouse employees can begin to taste the complaints from golfers... and members... for something over which they have no responsibility or control... which is exactly what happened to me last night when I came out to check out Men's Night!!! I do not like getting ambushed by unhappy golfers because we failed to have a bev cart out there...

Also, Rodrigo has complained to me that he really doesn't like starting up there so early... so we'll go to every other day cleaning to make him happier and to save on labor costs!

3) Steam table repair... and other clubhouse repairs... are very time consuming and frustrating for



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me... so why bother??? Other small repair requests will be processed as time permits...

4) Other items/chores on the golf course will be reviewed in an effort to make our employees and management feel less stressed. Besides, our golfers and members probably won't notice if we decide to streamline operations...

- Bunkers... to be raked once/week instead of daily
- Greens... to be mowed every other day instead of daily
- Change cups and tee markers... 3X/week instead of daily
- Fairway and rough mowing... whenever somebody volunteers or is willing to do it!!!

5) Beverage cart services... to be offered on week-ends only... let's not concern ourselves with keeping a bev cart out there for ladies' league, men's league, or couples league... it's probably not worth it to keep a girl out there until 8 p.m.... we'll just make sure that we tell all golfers to take a cooler with them if they want any sort of drink during the week...

These changes will be implemented immediately and be in effect for the remainder of the 2000 season... it will lessen the stress on management, permit us all to keep shorter hours, and dispel the illusion that we are even somewhat concerned about daily, constant, superior customer service.

I am sure that these changes will not have a negative impact on our sales or our operation... golfers will still keep patronizing our newer, sleeker, streamlined Nettle Creek.

**Good luck to all as we continue on through the 2000 golf season!!!!**

Regards,

Patrick Norton

Golf Course Superintendent & Exec VP

Needless to say... the memo did have the intended effect. We did have a short but rather intense management meeting at which I was asked by our sensitive female food/bev manager... "Could you please not yell so much and get so violent? You make me really nervous when you do that." Others at the meeting were upset at me also... which was fine with me. It meant that they were aroused, angry, and defensive... and really aware that there were problems that we all had to correct!

The interesting thing about this situation is that... with our management team setup... anybody can blow and vent... or more calmly have verbal input... on any area of our operation. If managers notice problems or have ideas for improvement... they are expected and encouraged to bring these ideas out in the open! And isn't it just a major pet peeve when staff members ask

permission before expressing themselves??? I say... let it rip, baby! We are all adults here!!!

In any management team situation... such as a public golf course... it takes everyday teamwork and cooperation to provide good customer service. It takes staff people who are intelligent and willing to express themselves. And... it takes managers who care passionately about their work and create an environment wherein people are encouraged to express themselves and lay themselves out on the line a little bit... it takes tons of effort to keep any golf course looking good and running smoothly.

So, let's work together, people... please help us refrain from letting our dark sides loose... so that we don't rip into people who are somewhat incompetent, make too many mistakes, or just plain don't give a damn!!!

Better yet... let's all wait until the season is finished before we start debating the membership question. We'll then have some private, off-season time to reconsider things and decide just where members fit into our picture! ♣



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