

27 Ways to Increase Your Revenues

There may be 50 ways to leave your lover, with a tip of the hat to Paul Simon; we have listed below 27 ways to immediately increase your revenues.

Club revenues in most categories are down in 2008 from 2007 levels. Many clubs rely upon home sales for membership growth. With stagnant home sales and a dormant economy, new membership sales and use-of-club revenues are in a tailspin at many clubs. As is always the case for certain categories of private clubs, it is wise to consult tax experts when one contemplates non-member revenue sources.

These 27 tactics suggest possibilities that sort themselves into three broad categories on which an aggressive club manager can take action:

1. Viral Marketing Tactics
2. Customer Loyalty Expansion
3. Club Traffic Promotion

Viral Marketing Tactics

The elemental premise of viral marketing engages the customer audiences in promoting your goods and services. The foundation of viral marketing is in creating effective customer referrals that cause your members to participate in selling the services of the club to their networks of friends and associates. How can you cause your members and their guests to increase use and demand at your club?

1. My Best Friend: Create events – golf, social, fitness – that encourage your members to invite friends to the club. You will increase guest fee revenue, add positive energy to the club and recruit new members simultaneously. Let members bring their best friends to the club in a manner that does not cost the member or the club too much. This is your most targeted marketing program.
2. Club Reciprocation Programs: How assertively do you and your golf professional solicit and serve reciprocal relationships with clubs that can send you new demand for your club's services? Now, as never before, you need to expand the reach of your club for golfers, for diners and for other users of your club's services. Revitalize your professional network and reciprocate.
3. Mystery Tour: Coordinate 'mystery' events for your competitive golfers, tennis players, swimmers and runners with scheduled events at 'away' clubs, the identities of which are not known to the participants until the bus is on its way. You are promoting fun-for-fun's-sake events and enabling your members to experience other venues.

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4. New Membership Categories: Re-engineer your membership program to customize membership categories for market conditions. Introducing new non-equity memberships, for example, adds new revenue for the club without downgrading the historic equity membership categories. These membership categories can be convertible so that they can be integrated into historic categories when the economy improves.
5. Shared Memberships: Ever consider letting people or families share memberships? Maybe one spouse plays tennis but the other spouse is out of town most of the time. Allowing the club-active member to share the membership with another person or family may enable you to increase traffic, to encourage new memberships and to retain the single member who might otherwise resign in a down market.
6. New Business Networking Events: Business networks abound – Facebook, Linked-In, Twitter – as business people everywhere seek to expand their economic reach. Your club can be a live professional networking site where members and non-members, alike, can expand their networks. Make your club proactive in business networking and the network will call your club 'home'.
7. Upgrade Membership Categories: Add value to your existing membership categories. Most people have a sense of lost value in the stocks and equities, in their homes and in their careers; enable your members to upgrade their memberships. Invite non-members to sample these more-robust membership categories through their member-friends.
8. GPS Technology as Revenue Platform: Many clubs have dismissed GPS technology due to the costs that are involved or due to the assumption that the member-golfers do not need the visual yardage information. These are valid reasons and may trump all others. Today's manager should reevaluate GPS options as a source of new revenue. Many businesses would like to target your golfing members with rifle-shot accuracy for such services as auto sales and service, financial and insurance services, and retail. Determine how much demand – if any – may exist in your market; you may find that nearby businesses represent a new revenue source for the club.
9. Invitational Referrals: Your best sales force is your existing membership base. Have you asked for their help lately? Members want to have a stable club where they have friends. Create programs that fit your club and that empower your members to invite their friends to experience the club on an off-season or temporary basis. Have you asked your older members and the social member group if they need a ride to or from the club? Sometimes older members stay at home because they are reluctant to drive at night or after cocktails.

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10. Retail Co-operatives: The Mill River Plan made its way through the club business a number of years ago. At its foundation was the premise of a retail co-operative no different than Costco or Sam's Club or the Harvard Co-op. Let your members pay an annual fee for the privilege of purchasing retail goods from the club at wholesale-plus prices. You will improve the cash-flow of the club by using member-fees to purchase retail inventories, increase at-the-club interest in new equipment offerings that are now only available at the off-course retail stores and retail revenues through increased volume. Plan well and consult retail experts who will help you to avoid mistakes that others have made. This is no time to dismiss old ideas out of hand.
11. Yield Management Programs: Most clubs seldom think of the yield that they generate with the club's assets. Measure your utilization rate for banquet and party rooms. Think of these spaces as overhead areas unless they are in use. Be aggressive at putting all of the clubs assets to work all of the time. When rooms are in use they generate food and beverage revenue and room rental revenue, in some cases. When the rooms are empty, they are only overhead costs. Work your physical assets harder than you work yourself.

Customer Loyalty Expansion

Think of Southwest Airlines and its free-ticket-for-10-round trips promotion. This is a 10% discount for loyalty. Most consumers like added value. Add value for your members while rewarding their loyalty. Many clubs confuse discounting with loyalty rewards. Discounts are given in advance with no assurance of reciprocation. Rewards are given after revenues are generated for the club. First, generate new revenue and, then, reward your best customers.

12. Personalized Memberships: This new trend in private clubs empowers existing members – or regular users of the club – to personalize their memberships to their own lifestyles. You can set the price for new memberships based upon what services the particular member may choose. Think of this as an a la carte membership program.
13. Best Member Recognition: Conduct an annual or seasonal contest for the 'Best Member' award. Reward participation and money-spent in club activities. Make prizes – such as account credits or fun travel choices – attractive enough that many members compete for the title. You will increase the overall share-of-wallet capture in your club when members are conscious of using the club services more often. If 20% of your members generate 80% of your revenues, increase the 20% amount of revenue.
14. Repeat Guest Rewards: Old school thinking limited the number of times members could host the same guest within a time-defined period. New school thinking says that one should encourage repeat patronage. Reward your

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members – and their guests – for increased and repeated patronage of the club services. Grow your revenue line.

15. Guest Advantages: Would you sell guests of the clubs certain member benefits? Guests of the club often will pay market rate for normal club services – like shoe care, club care, court time, charging privileges – for the chance to sample and experience the club. You will control the days and times of availability – think of yield management – and the price for these privileges. This is an easy way for certain membership candidates to experience the club, to integrate the club into their lifestyles and to become converted during a market down-turn.
16. Club University: How can you help your members in a tough economy? Financial advisors? New investment options? Revised insurance choices? Career changes? Make your club a source of new ideas that will benefit your members. Most of the 'experts/teachers' would like to present themselves and their businesses to your members; in fact, most will pay the club for the privilege to do so. You will help your members during tough times and increase revenue for the club while so doing.

Club Traffic Promotion

17. We Will Cook for You: Ever think of sending the 'Blue Plate Special' home to your members? Many members are working longer hours and taking on extra assignments to improve job security. Have ready-to-go take-out options ready for members on the way home. Publish the menu calendar on the club website and make take-out easy for your members.
18. 20/30-Something Party Program: Young professionals, who lack adequate space at their homes or who are more comfortable 'hosting' social and professional gatherings at locations other than their homes, prefer to use a third party location. There is no set-up, no clean-up and less personal risk if they host parties at your club. Target this audience of young professionals and host book club, investment club, martinis-and-manicures and product-based (i.e. Tupperware) parties.
19. Vendor Days: Have you booked holiday and annual celebration events with all of your vendors? Most have some form of special events for their companies, they should have them at your club. Think of it as 'the cost of doing business' with your club. Encourage them and work to make their event at your club more special than it would be elsewhere. Make your vendors raving fans. Know where to start? Look at your accounts payables list.
20. Specialty Events: How do you recruit such events as bridal registries, prom parties and anniversary celebrations? Develop programs that target each opportunity-audience and carve out niches for your club. Pre-planning events in January and February are needed for May and June weddings. Parents want

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- their prom-goers in a safe place for the prom dinner or after-party. Make these options easy for your members. Think of specialties in which your club can take ownership of a market sub-niche.
21. Specialty Days: Most barbers are closed on Mondays. Most fire, law enforcement and medical care professionals work staggered schedules. Many people in the restaurant business have flexibility during the day. Offer special memberships or day privileges that welcome new audiences. Think of the people in your community whose income and lifestyle aligns with your club. How can you make the club accessible to them?
 22. Marketing Partnerships: Do you cross-market with area businesses? The nearby automobile dealerships would like to know your members. The local financial advisors and tax accountants would like to work with you and your members. How can you collaborate to benefit your members, the club and potential cross-promotional partners? These third party businesses will pay the club for opportunities to communicate with its members. One must not sell the club mailing list to enable cross promotions. One must anticipate programs and partners that will benefit the membership. Set the ground rules and take a proactive approach. Do the most upscale hotels and resorts know that you will allow a limited number of players from their hotels to be day guests at your club? Have you talked to the hotel/resort general manager about such a program?
 23. Fitness First Programs: Create programs that encourage increased fitness. Executives – Male and female – who are back in the job market, need to present themselves well in the next round of interviews. Professional people and business owners – your members – are functioning at high stress levels. It is time to introduce new pay-as-you-go fitness programs that reduce stress and make your members present at their best. Encourage your members to invest in themselves first.
 24. Promote Golf: Use the steady popularity of golf to promote the club. Solicit non-member events for the club on any and all days that are available. Consider off-season golf-only memberships to introduce the golf course to non-members. Limit the number of tee times that are available and be very open that access to the tee times at your club is limited. People want to buy that which is in short supply. Sell your non-member golf on a limited basis. The PGA of America is introducing a new *Get Golf Ready in Five Days* program; the program is supported by CMAA and other golf industry groups. Make your club a training ground in support of the program and leverage all of the promotions within the program to build awareness and traffic at your club.
 25. Junior Golf Promotions: Want more business from the mothers in your community? Be kind to their children. Support golf – and any other sports that

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your club can host – and emphasize that your club welcomes families. Moms control most membership-purchase decisions; market to the decision-makers.

26. Charity Support: Develop a comprehensive charity program for your club. Determine how the local charity community can be best served at your club. Can you host the fund-raiser black-tie balls? Can you host the committee luncheons and planning meetings? Can you contribute dinners or activities to the local charities? See that all in your market area know that your club (a) is supportive of charity, (b) has a program in place that demonstrates support, and (c) expects reciprocation for your support. Position your club as a corporate citizen of the highest order. This does not mean that you are 'giving the club away'; it means that you understand that doing good things is good business.
27. Charity Day: When you donate foursomes and/or privileges at your club, restrict the use of those privileges to one specific day of the year. You diminish the frequency of these gifts eroding your revenue potential throughout the year and you create a special day at the club that demonstrates the generosity of the club. It is a media-friendly day and one on which the club can tell its charity program story to promote next year's charity business platform. Remember that the club supports every program that supports the club.