



PGA pro Alastair Taylor, academy manager at Herons' Reach in Blackpool

In the latest of a series of articles from leading figures within the PGA, its head of member education, **David Colclough**, discusses how the PGA is working to support clubs and professionals in building working relationships with each other

In a sport where your own performance is ultimately reflected by the numbers you write down, it seems strange that a similar strategy is much less commonplace in managing the business of a golf club.

The scorecard is there to give everyone a clear understanding of how the course is laid out and sets an expectation of a likely return for each hole (par). The number you write down at the end of each hole provides feedback on your performance against that par. Whilst you can be lucky (or unlucky) on one or two occasions, the final total at the bottom of the card is usually a fair reflection of your performance level overall.

Taking the analogy a stage further, if you want to improve your performance, you will need to review that scorecard and analyse what went well and what didn't. From there a strategy for improving your performance can be

developed (hopefully all done with a PGA professional!)

So, at your club, how many individuals (employed or contracted) within the business have a 'scorecard' to monitor their performance? Has anyone even considered what the scorecard looks like (the 'layout of holes') and given each of them a 'par'?

If the club is struggling to increase participation, retain its membership or meet any other particular challenge, then without any objective feedback, how does a review of performance take place?

The 'Business Health Check'

To help PGA professionals evidence their impact across some of the key areas of a typical golf club's business, The PGA introduced a 'Business Health Check' (BHC) document in 2014. Frequently, used by the PGA's business

relationship officers; the idea is to promote discussion on areas where a PGA professional might be able to demonstrate, and evidence their impact in a golf club business.

As such, the health check covers the following ten areas:

1. The **recruitment** of new business – new golfers, members and so on
2. The **retention** of current business –in particular members
3. Influencing **guests and visitors** participation
4. Involvement in **playing opportunities** at the club
5. Influencing **non golfers** to use the club
6. Aiding **communication** throughout the club and to **promote** the club
7. **Promotion** of the club and **making links** with business, schools and other clubs in the local community
8. Having **qualifications** / >>

9. Engagement with **other employees and volunteers** at the club
10. The development of **golf club policy**.

By reflecting on what's important to a particular club, key performance indicators (KPIs) or 'par' can be set for the individual areas ('holes') that create the bespoke 'scorecard' for each club. To achieve this, it is vitally important that the club and the PGA professional sit down and agree targets, as well as agreeing the level of resource that is required to function at a specific level.

This is especially important from the perspective of the PGA professional who is contracted for their services by the golf club, because they will not only be trying to align their own business to the demands of the golf club business, but also manage their staff requirements to fulfil the expectations of both parties.

In our experience, this is where progress can be stifled.

The expectations of the golf club to drive results in a number of the outlined areas of the BHC will usually mean that the head / club professional will need to be engaged in activity to drive recruitment and retention of business. That will probably include the raising of the club's profile through engagement with new and existing customers, within the club, but away from the golf shop. It will almost certainly include giving coaching sessions, setting up golf clinics or providing playing opportunities. Equally there may well be business to be won outside the club, out in the local community.

With that level of commitment to the business, it's also very important that the quality of the staff in the golf shop is such that it reflects well on the professional and the golf club when members, guests and visitors use the services provided within the golf shop. So the staffing costs for the professional are likely to rise significantly to cover adequately the time they will need to spend away from the golf shop, generating business.

So the question is **what does it cost to attract new business, re-capture business that has lapsed and, perhaps most importantly, retain current business?**

What is the cost of operating a

business that seeks to proactively engage with customers in the way that the BHC infers, and what is the value to the club of trying to attract more business through the one individual who has the greatest ability to impact positively on the enjoyment, improvement and participation of the golfer (current, lapsed, or new)?

These are big questions, and in answering those questions, it's important to ensure that the desire to increase activity and ultimately revenues is met with a realistic review of the costs associated with that activity?

The simple answer in the first instance, seems to be ... talk.

Discussions between the key stakeholders on how the findings of the BHC can be actioned to not only enhance the bottom line of the golf club, but increase the earning potential of the golf professional need to be had, before a realistic figure can be agreed. Everyone wants value for money don't they? – the club, the professional, the members, the guests and so on.

But how exactly do we best set about determining what 'value for money' is?

For any manager who has attended a NGB, GCMA or UKGCOA conference in recent years, you may well have heard US management guru, Gregg Paterson, define it as:

Value for money = Experience – Cost.

I like that, but what I like even more is the definition below, from the National Audit Office. It exists to provide independent opinion and evidence to assist parliament in holding the government to account, and its definition is:

'Good value for money is the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes.

"Optimal" means 'the most desirable possible, given expressed or implied restrictions or constraints'.

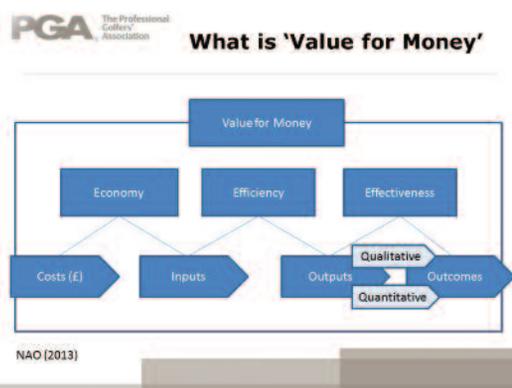
'Value for money is not about achieving the lowest initial price'.

The model it proposes suggests that 'value for money' be assessed by considering not only the economics, but the efficiency and effectiveness of any activity.

- The **economics** refers to the cost of

providing the resources to deliver the intended outcomes – the cost of staff, equipment, facilities and so on.

- The **efficiency** is measured by reviewing the outputs of what has been agreed – was the delivery of activity in keeping with what was agreed?
- The **effectiveness** is measured by assessing the outcomes (quantitative and qualitatively) against the cost of delivery – was a positive return made on the cost of delivery to the business?



In short, you will get value for money, if the agreed outcomes can deliver a greater return than the cost of delivery and especially if the feedback of the participants positively reflects on the ongoing future business of the golf club.

Conclusion

So, to summarise, the BHC is designed to create the opportunity for a constructive conversation, which leads to an agreed set of objectives which can be measured.

To deliver those objectives a realistic budget needs to be agreed which provides the level of service (or higher) that the customer might expect.

From this position, an objective appraisal of the role of the PGA professional can be made and re-alignment of future ambitions can be calculated. **GCM**

If you would like to discuss the opportunity for a PGA business relationship officer to support you and your PGA professional in working through the theories outlined above, please get in touch with the PGA – email yvonne.mcphillips@pga.org.uk or call 01675 470333 and ask to speak with Yvonne McPhillips