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Call out... THE FIRE BRIGADE!

THIS month's discussion is with Mike Braidwood who is the operations director for Braemar Golf Management, which is based in St Andrews in Scotland. The focus of the discussion is on what to do and who to call on when business is flat or your golf facility's revenues are shrinking.

To be honest my experience has been that many Club's tend to act like a proverbial rabbit in the headlights when faced with a crisis and then, when times are good, they are inclined to spend too much on what I like to call 'ego projects' and not on good 'investments', initiatives or improvements which will have revenue generating potential for the years ahead.

Sometimes it feels not as if the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing, but rather that the left hand doesn't even know that there is a right hand!

As a case in point some years ago I remember in a committee meeting having a heated internal debate around the merits of installing a new kitchen and showers in the mens' change rooms.

At the time the golf course needed an urgent irrigation solution to combat the perennially dry fairways over the closing three of four holes and the rebuilding of the 9th green, which had serious design 'flaws', both of which seriously affected the playability of the course.

Finally the greens' committee was forced to play 'politics' on the main committee and point out that the players' post game creature comforts were going to be of little consequence if there were no players because of the course conditions and that any legacy value, for the honour board bearing the outgoing Chairman's name on the wall of the new facilities, would be seriously compromised! Common sense finally won the day, and a revised plan, including more

modest but effective upgrades to the changing and catering facilities, allowed the much needed course improvements to be affected, but it was far too close for comfort. Have you had similar experiences?



Mike Braidwood:
Yes indeed John – sadly there is often a tendency for committees to group into factions, or to put their collective head in the sand and hope a problem goes away, or to plough ahead with a patently inappropriate solution. All of this can be very frustrating especially if you are a manager and trying to get some key decisions made or vital expenditure signed off.

The only real foundation for a sustained recovery has to be a well thought out, properly researched plan (and the research must be an ongoing process) which is balanced to the real needs of the Club, or facility rather than just a hodgepodge series of knee jerk, pressure related reactions.

To be proactive in this type of situation my 5 key do's would be:

- ✓ **Do take third party advice.**
A fresh pair of eyes will be good for your business. This could be a golf business consultant or a fellow club manager. If you are a manager then you may also find it easier to sell ideas to your Board / Committee if it has come from an outside 'qualified' source.

- ✓ **Do speak to the customers and members that have left.**
You should try to find out why they have left or taken their business elsewhere; it might just be something simple that you need to do to get them back.
- ✓ **Do analyse your own business data.**
If you have any that is and if you don't then you may be doomed! Properly interpreted data can be very helpful in identifying trends, costs or revenue opportunities which might not have been seen before and that could help you turn things around.
- ✓ **Do write a strategic 5 year recovery plan with the help of your Board and or committee and the staff of your management team.**
You might need this plan to speak to your bank manager who might be able to help tide your cash flows over during these challenging times.
- ✓ **Do share the business challenges with your staff.**
Take the time to review their contribution and real worth. Some might decide to walk, some might decide to up their game, some may be comfortable with a cut in hours ... you will never know until you have the discussion.

Next month we'll continue the discussion and look at Mike's 5 key 'don'ts'.

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