**Strategic Social Media Marketing Plan**

**Swan Lake Golf Course**

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**Overview**

Examining the state of the golf industry and your company’s track record within the industry will set the stage for effective and efficient decision making. Currently, the golf industry is high in demand and on a positive growth trajectory since the all-time high seen in 2005. It is a nearly $70 billion industry and has a long history of giving back to the community. The game of golf is strong due to the mass number of passionate people that are invested in the sport. Golf is in a unique targeting position because it appeals to a wide range of ages and audiences. Your firm should realize that hard core golfers are not the only market segment that should be targeted. Youth playing the game has increased by 20% from 2.5 million in 2010 to 3 million in 2015. Swan Lake can expect significant gains by using social media marketing to observe, interact with, engage, and influence this market segment. These actions, along with your competitive costs and inviting atmosphere, will help attract and retain a surplus of consumers as valuable Swan Lake guests.

**Social Media Presence**

Started Facebook page on August 15, 2013. This is the only social media platform you are currently utilizing to share news, information, and engage with clients. Currently, posts are centered on the following types of content:

* Scores from tournaments
* Photos from events and tournaments
* A small amount of posts from course
* Closure announcements during severe weather events
* Player videos such as golf swings and a video of a small child player
* Golf industry news:
  + The latest on Tiger Woods
  + PGA News – Athletes receiving big name endorsements, and becoming advocates for their communities
  + News on Junior League – rules and regulations regarding players and the success of the program
* Golf related photos and sentiments
* Client gains and awards they received
* Local news regarding ASPU golf team

In general, comments from Facebook users include praise on staff knowledge, helpfulness, and overall have great things to say about the course. There was only one negative comment in reference to a few of the sand greens needing maintenance after a rainy day. Other than this, the comments I found showed the company in a very positive light. Overall, it appears your clients enjoy the atmosphere that your golf course provides. Competitors in the area are engaging more, and receiving positive feedback with their posts especially those regarding the local community. Swan Lake is doing this but not as often. Per Facebook, the company is listed online as replying to messages within minutes, and has a great goal of responding to negative feedback within one hour. I suggest to set a goal to respond to positive posts as well a few times during the day. Even with an overall understanding of your company’s standing among consumers, you will benefit tremendously from analyzing the metrics for individual social media platforms as a means of assessing performance and improvements. This practice also establishes benchmarks with which to measure progress in achieving your social media goals.

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**Competitive/SWOT Analysis**

* Strengths:

· Your company is on the proper social media platform.

· Based on your feedback, the staff is willing to take measures to improve social media presence.

· What is being said about your company on social media is being monitored and you are responding.

* Weaknesses:

· The small budget currently being allocated for social media efforts.

· Few personnel.

· Presence on Facebook is inconsistent and infrequent.

· The target audience needs to be narrowed.

· Weak consumer response to posts.

· Resources for building and maintaining social media presence is minimal.

· Your firm's current presence on social media is weak.

* Opportunities:

· Based on my research, Facebook will provide the greatest concentration of your defined target audience.

· My observations conclude that the target market is very involved with getting news, watching videos, and forming opinions based on reviews.

· Your company can provide users with tips to engage them and better their game. You can provide information on what is going on in the golf world.

· Your firm can use videos and clips, filmed live, to show footage of tournaments.

· Working with your competitors in a friendly-competitive manner will generate buzz and publicity for both courses.

· Team up with a/an influencer(s) in the golf community to create publicity for both the individuals(s) and the course.

· Involve customers in posts and tag them directly so that your interest in consumers is conveyed. The activity shows up to their friends that they were tagged in a post from Swan Lake, as to reach a wider audience, and customers will be more likely to share posts, increasing your share of voice.

· Other firms are attracting interaction through posts by posting pictures of events and tagging guests to engage from within the community. This is beneficial for getting the community to interact with the company.

· Market demand for golf is increasing because more juniors and young adults are getting involved.

· Suppliers such as Titleist, Ping, Callaway are on social media promoting products which offers you the chance to use syndicated content.

* Threats:

· Local competitors such as Eastland Green, The Country Club, and The River Club are all established on social media.

· The River Club is very consistent on social media in posting and interacting with the community.

· The Country Club has higher quality dining facilities and offers memberships, resulting in stronger customer loyalty among consumers.

· Additional golf courses entering the market place and establishing social media efforts.

· Consumers have voiced numerous dislikes about the course.

**Goals**

In consideration of the preceding analysis, it is apparent that Swan Lake has a significant opportunity to pursue the following goals via social media:

* Improving Brand Perception
* Generating Leads to bring in more Event Business
* Driving Word of Mouth

**Strategies**

Bearing in mind the limited human and financial resources available to manage Swan Lake’s social media marketing, I recommend the following strategies as a means of achieving the aforementioned goals:

* + Goal One: Improving Brand Perception
    - Showcasing Swan Lake’s course status as one of the best courses in the region
      * Strategy 1: Collaborate on social media with current and potential clients, building a mutually beneficial relationship to provide value to the customer which will create more positive brand perception.
      * Strategy 2: Contribute to the community that will showcase the company’s involvement with local charities and nonprofits in the community.
      * Strategy 3: Interact with clients through meaningful posts that relate to the course and showcase what the company offers to clients.
  + Goal Two: Generating Leads to bring in more Event Business
    - * Strategy 1: Come together with key figures within the community, this will help the company establish a positive feedback after these figures have hosted or attended an event.
      * Strategy 2: Along with using key figures within the community making sure to take and upload event photos for each event hosted. Individual photos, or whole albums can make use of tagging key figures in the photos, this will expand the reach of the company’s photos to also include all the friends of those people tagged. This is a great way to network the courses event capabilities.
      * Strategy 3: Engaging with clients by posting event and tournament information that encourage client interaction.
  + Goal Three: Driving Word of Mouth
    - * Strategy 1: Engaging with customers with the intent to drive positive word of mouth recommendations and posts on Facebook.
      * Strategy 2: Post creative content to maximize client engagement and interaction.
      * Strategy 3: Connect with clients on a daily basis, this will help shape positive opinions on the course.

**Target Market**

Swan Lake has a wide range of market segments, ranging from amateurs to those who simply love the game. Your responses to the questions indicate you have a general understanding of certain target markets, but I would like to categorize and describe in detail a few I find the most relevant to your strategic social media marketing plan. An untapped market segment is Business Professionals, which are consumers in the age range thirty- five to sixty years old, who are middle to upper working class and looking for a way to entertain and meet with clients in a casual, non-threatening way. College Students represents individuals aged between eighteen and twenty-five, who are currently enrolled in school, price sensitive, but enjoy the game of golf. As identified in your responses, the massive target market for Swan Lake is the Retired Community which consists of consumers sixty-five years and above, who enjoy outdoor recreational activities. These are middle to upper class people who are avid golfers or who have an interest in playing golf. Pew Research surveys have determined that Generation Y online users constitute the largest group of creators with 37% of consumers ranging between ages eighteen and twenty-nine. This means millennials using social media are the most active among users for engaging and interacting. Additional research points out that 76% of U.S. adults use Facebook daily, making this the most likely social media platform the segments will frequent.

**Platform Recommendations**

With the company’s target market defined, the social media platforms with the highest concentration of the target audience need to be identified and chosen. Social media will allow your company to interact with users in the local and golf community, strengthening the brand. Founded in 2004, Facebook has become the most popular social network, with more than 750 million users, 76% of which are daily users. Facebook is the social media site used the most, by the largest range in age groups; it is also the site most people check most often daily. According to Pew Research Center, 88% of users ages eighteen to twenty-nine are on Facebook, 79% of users are between the ages of thirty to forty-nine, 61% of users are ages fifty to sixty-four, and 36 % of users ages sixty-five and up are on Facebook. Facebook is the social media platform that will allow you to reach all of the clients within each previously mentioned target markets. Furthermore, 77% of Facebook users are college graduates, while 77% of Facebook users have some college education meaning your target market is looking for a brand they are interested in and can connect with. In addition, high income earners make reliable clients with 70% of people earning $50,000 - $74,999 annually are using Facebook and 76% of people who earn $75,000+ annually are using Facebook.

Twitter is the second most used platform by individuals aged between eighteen and twenty-five. Twitter will be the platform with the greatest reach to College Students and Business Professionals. These consumers live a busy lifestyle so the act of retweeting allows you to post to generate quick buzz about brand content to accommodate their needs. On Twitter, 42% of users check their account daily and 24% of users check their account weekly. An average of 19% of high school graduates use Twitter, and 28% of users are college graduates, while 24% of users have some college education. Users on this platform are more likely to react to posts about entertainment news (28%), sports news (25%), government and political news (17%), and posts based on user opinions (39%). This data deems it worthwhile to create content that could directly and more intimately embrace each group. The intent is to fortify customer relationships, improve customer satisfaction, and hence increase customer retention.

**Implementation**

The above goals, strategies, target market, and platform recommendations have been taken into consideration in developing the following actionable social media platform-specific tactics. This section of the plan indicates how content will be generated efficiently and effectively for each social media platform. The following social media platforms and tactics were chosen as the optimal means for implementing your company’s overall strategies and reaching your social media goals.

**Facebook Rationale and Tactics**

* Avoid posting before 8 a.m. and after 8 p.m.
* Post between 1 - 3 p.m., with activity engagement highest on Thursday and Friday, peaking on Friday afternoon.
* For Brands:
  + Posting on a Friday will generate-
    - 17% of likes
    - 15% of comments
    - 15% of shares
* Sales-orientated posts along with posting too often can cause Facebook user to unlike or unfriend a business.
* 62% of U.S. adults use social media for news. This is a great way to engage with followers by posting important golf industry news, and highlights of the week.
  + 2/3 Facebook users use the site to retrieve news.
* Great platform to share short videos. The average American ages fifteen to twenty-five years old spends three hours watching videos, as opposed to seven minutes reading an article.
* Provides free insights that can be viewed by the company concerning your specific clients, using these will give you the best times to post based on those clients who liked your page.

**Twitter Rationale and Tactics**

* A form of brief communication, so it is important to have short creatively worded posts that can persuasively convey a large idea.
* Retweets allow you to post to generate quick buzz about brand content.
* 62% of U.S. adults use social media for news. This is a great way to engage with followers by posting important golf industry news, and highlights of the week.
  + 6/10 Twitter users use the site to retrieve news.
* Understanding the format used on the platform to successfully use Hashtags. Using them will boost the number of people that are seeing your content.
* Posting daily will allow clients to see and engage with posts, however, do not post more than three times a day.
* Best time for retweets is after 3 p.m. but before 8 p.m.
* The best time to post content is 5 p.m.
* The worst time to post content is after 8 p.m.
* For Business to Consumer, the best times to tweet are on weekends and on Wednesdays.
* For Business to Business, the best days to tweet are Mondays through Thursday.

**Content Development/Procurement and Management**

Facebook Content Guidelines and Recommendations

**Retired Community**:

* Socialization
* Community involvement
* Beauty of the course

Facebook Posting Gaps

* There are currently no posts showing the social aspect of your golf course and facilities.
* No post showing how you contribute to the community.
* One photo that shows the course at sunset. To truly capture the atmosphere of the course, there should be an abundance of photos of the greens.

Recommendations

* Show your regular customers interacting and having fun hanging out on the course and in the facilities.
* Host senior tournaments and post updates and pictures from the event.
* Advertise discounts if clients bring a friend.
* Organize senior activities that are not only golf related (seniors who want to play golf but also want to connect and with other seniors).
* Post pictures that showcase the beauty of the course at different times of the day throughout the year.

**College Students:**

* Affordable price to play golf
* Updates about tips and news
* Socialization
* Advertise that you are close to the Austin Peay campus
* Connection with support of their school

Facebook Posting Gaps

* No posts about prices of student discounts.
* Updates on events are infrequent.
* Not posting tips or news about the golf industry.
* Does not showcase social aspect of golf or show other college students who golf there.
* Does not show any evidence of relationship with APSU or APSU Golf team.

Recommendations

* Advertise student discounts, low prices, and weekly deals.
* Provide promotions where students can get a discount or free game if they bring a friend.
* Post pictures of college aged students enjoying the course.
* Post pictures of tournaments with updates.
* Advertise the bar and dining facilities.
* Host tournaments for college students.
* Partner with APSU to show support.
* Post pictures of the APSU Golf team practicing.
* Share posts relevant to APSU and the APSU Golf team.

**Business Professionals:**

* Connect with local business professionals
* Showcase the course as a business friendly environment

Facebook Posting Gaps

* No business-orientated posts.
* There is no indication on social media that you are one of the more upscale golf courses in the region.

Recommendations

* Post pictures of businessmen golfing and using the facilities.
* Construct tournaments primarily for teams from different businesses.
* Partner with local businesses and provide discounts for them to bring customers or potential employees for business meetings.
* Promote local business people who are already playing the course regularly.

Twitter Content Guidelines and Recommendations

**Retired Community**:

* + - Not active on Twitter

**College Students:**

* Pictures showing the beauty of the course
* Community involvement posts
* Posts including prices
* Posts about tips and news

Recommendations:

* Have a student discount on certain days.
* Include posts with humor and popular ‘memes.’
* Host student tournaments.
* Retweet APSU affiliated accounts to show interaction and support.
* Keep posts short and sweet.
* Create polls to receive user engagement.
* Use hashtags so you are easily searchable.

**Business Professionals:**

* Connect with local business professionals
* Showcase the course as a business friendly environment

Recommendations:

* Bring a client and receive a discount on golf price.
* ‘Tie-Tuesday’ campaign where you receive photos of business professionals wearing ties using a certain hashtag and the one with the best tie gets a free bucket to drive.
* Focus posts promoting memberships.
* Post pictures of business professionals enjoying golf on your course.

**Archiving Content**

Although each social media platform will feature specific types of content, all content needs to be stored in a separate and easily accessible platform, even content not currently being shared. Archiving your content will maximize the generation of original quality content that can be repurposed several times. Your company will benefit by saving time, money, and resources while creating the greatest possible impact. The risks associated with preserving your content are reduced such as accidental deleting, misplacement, and theft. I suggest that only trained personnel should have full access to the storage platform to combat reckless behaviors. Giving full access to only trained employees will ensure that social media content is properly managed and moderated to stay on topic with community conversations. However, all employees should be made aware of their opportunity to contribute unique content to the folders.

I recommend your content should be organized by the date taken and by each location on the course so that material can be reformatted, allowing it to appear in various forms on multiple platforms. Google Drive and Dropbox are two storage platforms accessible via the internet and each allow multiple users administrative access. Google Drive is an option that offers the first 15 GB of storage at no cost and up to one terabyte of storage for $9.99 a month. An account can be created by simply creating a personal Google account at [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Dropbox is another option for your firm to use because it is free for the first thirty days. In addition, the cheapest payment plan, priced at $12.50 per user per month, offers 2 TB of data storage. This platform can be accessed at [www.dropbox.com](http://www.dropbox.com) and choosing the button “Try Dropbox Business free.”

**Social Media Management**

Given human and financial resource limitations, I recommend the adoption of Hootsuite Professional, an investment of $19/month. Using one shared username and password, your small team will be able to:

* Schedule social media posts in advance for up to 10 profiles.
* Interact with users on each of your profiles.
* Monitor social media pages, including those of your competitors and firms producing syndicatable content.
* Gain access to real-time analytics concerning post performance.

To review additional plans available via Hootsuite, visit <https://hootsuite.com/plans>.

Additionally, your company may wish to consider the creation of a social media marketing internship position. In this role, a qualified student could insure the aforementioned tactics are implemented, monitored, and tuned, freeing your company’s administration to focus on more pressing matters. For more information on securing an intern, email Dr. Terry Damron at damront@apsu.edu.

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