

GO PLAY

A COURSE PARTNER COMMUNICATION FROM GOLFNOW

FALL 2018

FEATURE

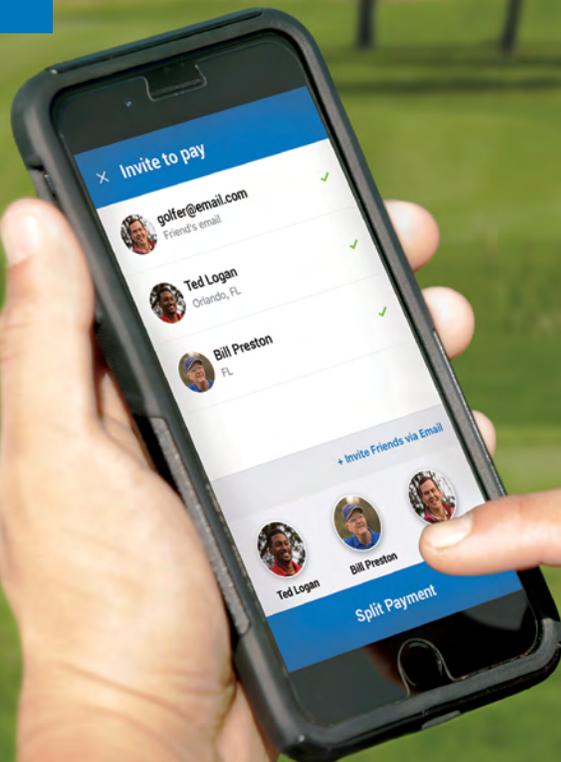
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can turbocharge the booking process

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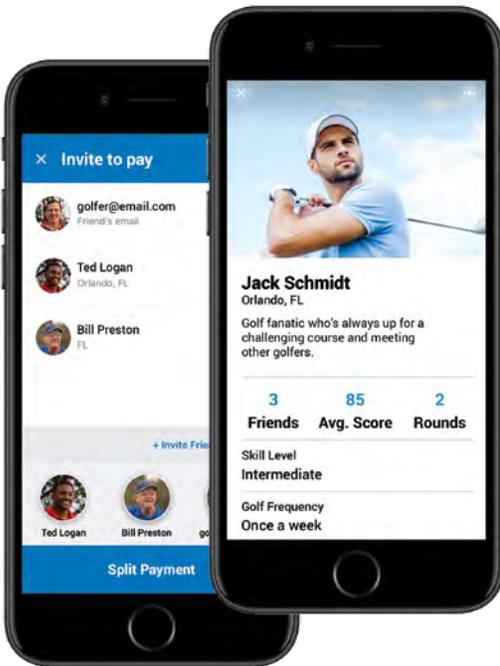
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A brand-new “split payments” feature built into the GolfNow platform stands out as a potential invitation-generating machine. It started out as a way to avoid requiring one member of a golf group to pay for all players upfront, expecting reimbursement later but knowing the risk of getting stuck with more than his/her fair share of the bill. As the product development specialists at GolfNow worked to address that issue, it became clear that their solution could significantly change the whole dynamic of tee time booking.

The new feature has rolled out nationwide and is earning high marks from users. The booking process is intuitive and easy, with the group organizer able to move through a sequence of digital steps, and also see what invitees see, as the process zips along and participants respond and engage.

Those group “captain” types have always been vitally important to the golf industry. Along with gratitude for the important function they fulfill, there’s been empathy for the pre-payment burden they’ve endured. Meanwhile, having one person in a foursome habitually handle tee-time purchases has kept that player’s friends once-removed from databases. Course operators, along with tee-time distributors, have long wished to capture contact and spending data on those golfers, as well. So a service devised to make life easier for the organizers also has made it easier for everyone to become digitally visible.

“Our work on this feature started with feedback from golfers,” explains Jonathan Oster, Manager of Platform Services at GolfNow. “We became very aware that people would get over their hesitancy about booking through our platform if they didn’t have to front the money. Meanwhile, the players who were accustomed to pre-paying their friends’ green fees were enthusiastic about avoiding that responsibility, if it were at all possible.”



Payment-splitting apps—for housemates paying bills, tour groups paying travel expenses, etc.—are filtering through the economy, and golf surely stood in need of one. The fact that the split-payments feature from GolfNow also opens up a new wave of users to start the booking process makes it an elegant solution. But it goes even a step further, increasing the number of golfers who are engaged by the game-arranging process on an everyday basis. That’s because the program allows or even encourages one person’s golf invitation to go out to more than three others, in the time it takes to enter a few email addresses (or select them from a drop-down) and click “Invite.”

As more golfers take the initiative to set up a round, and larger numbers of other golfers are being contacted by that organizer through a quick and easy online process, that can’t be anything but good for the game and the industry. ■



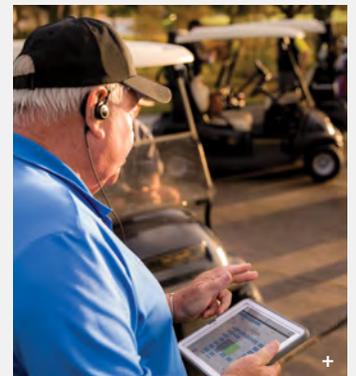
* Golf des Yvelines is just 35 miles west of Paris in the heart of the Île-de-France region.

GolfNow expands in Europe

Coinciding with the excitement surrounding the Ryder Cup, GolfNow recently announced its expansion into France via agreements with two of the country’s leading multi-course management companies. The arrangement provides golfers residing throughout GolfNow’s footprint – including the U.S., U.K., Ireland and Australia – with the ability to book tee times on GolfNow at more than 50 golf courses throughout France. ■

GolfNow’s G1 technology honored

As its rapid adoption by golf courses across North America continues, GolfNow’s G1 technology is getting noticed. In Central Florida, the Orlando Business Journal’s Innovations in Technology Awards recently recognized G1 as a trailblazer, and one that has taken high-tech steps to enhance its company’s business capabilities and help bolster the economy. ■



*A starter with a G1 tablet becomes a more-informed and in-control champion for a golf course operation.

Money-saving agro purchases start with Ride

Every course must bear annual costs for seed, sand, chemicals and other supplies that keep fairways smooth and greens rolling true. But can you ensure that the shed is stocked without breaking the maintenance budget?

Through GolfNow's Ride program, group buying power has truly come to the course-maintenance facet of the golf industry. An initial wave of more than 1,000 Ride participants has experienced this dollar-stretching new advantage—from 6 to 35 percent in annual savings as the norm—and, with the seasonal stock-up period happening now for superintendents in the northern regions, many more are considering joining in.

Ride's ability to help courses lower their overhead comes courtesy of the immense purchasing power of Comcast, parent company of Xfinity, Universal Studios, and the NBC networks, including Golf Channel, which owns and manages GolfNow. "Ride on the agro side—the program also covers food-service and office-supplies purchasing—fills in a lot of categories where price tends to be the only distinct factor in the decision to purchase," says Dan Bury, Senior Area Sales Manager serving the Midwest and its adjacent Canadian provinces.

Another popular feature of the program is the no-minimum spend level. "If a partner course decides they want to save with Ride in only one limited product area, they are offered that kind of ordering flexibility," Bury notes.

An industry-leading distributor, SynaTek, does all fulfillment on agronomy orders via Ride. With a catalog of more than 500 products and a longstanding reputation for service, SynaTek is able to deliver nationwide without missing a beat. Ride users have benefited from the company's early order price book, which sets down firm prices on all products and lets the customer see just what they'll be paying as they plan their orders and shipment schedules. "That factor has brought a lot of peace of mind to the agronomy ordering process, according to what our Ride participants are telling us," says Bury.

Among suppliers of agro products to golf courses, no company has pushed harder in technology and innovation than SynaTek. Through a dedicated technology unit, SynaTek serves its customers with analytics, controls and a full range of hardware and software solutions that help courses optimize maintenance operations.

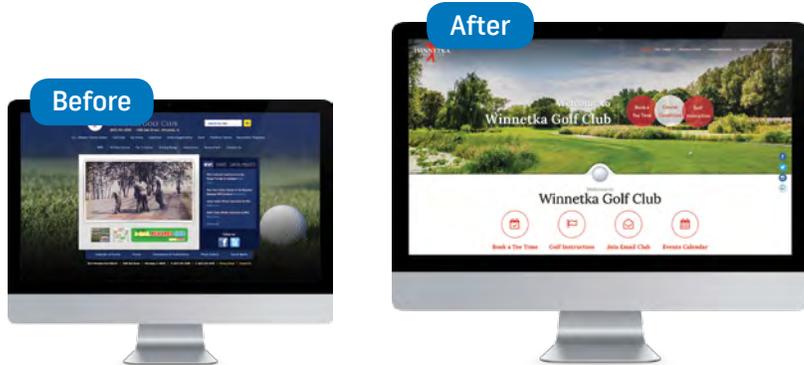


Within the Ride program, courses have also earned Partnership Points via the dollar totals of their purchases, then applied those points toward acquisition of technology that was not previously in their arsenals—and which delivered additional savings of money and time.

"A superintendent who's been setting up daily tasks and equipment assignments on a white board season after season will find out he can use Ride points to upgrade to an electronic assignment board, which can be programmed from a smartphone and displayed on a monitor in the central workspace," says Bury, who adds GolfNow products, like electronic tee sheets, can be provided complimentary to courses that hit a certain spend level on Ride.

For such a multi-faceted program, Ride can get a course going on agronomy-product discounts simply and quickly through a standard letter of participation and an accompanying credit letter. From there it's a matter of studying the order book and recognizing price advantages in whatever it is you use to grow and maintain first-class turf.

With the peak of the buying season underway for a large percentage of courses, there's no time like the present to think about buying smarter and getting more bang for your buck. ■



Time to optimize your website

After upgrading its website for power and speed, Winnetka Golf Club's golfers are having an easier time finding what they want.

Like keeping overgrowth from clogging up your course, pruning your course's website can keep you focused on what the golfer really needs and wants. These days, you can tap into new tech advantages – all the visitor-pleasing features and functionality recently developed – to optimize your website.

Justin Bolton of GolfNow Business sees “tons of energy and innovation” in this corner of the industry. He would hold up the new site design and template menu offered by Plus, a GolfNow service platform that offers expert marketing consultation and proprietary technology, against anything out there.

“What we've got now is a brand-new program we started from scratch,” says Bolton, who is the GolfNow Plus Lead Specialist overseeing all branding and marketing-related activities for the group. “We went for a 360-degree solution. Not just what the golfer sees and how he navigates, but what's on the back end to make things fast and easy for the course operator—including options for all kinds of customization, plus an analytics package that constantly reports on what works, what to keep, what to change.”

There was a “set and forget” quality to website setup in the earlier days, but that mentality nowadays is bad for business. Conversion rate is a fixation for Bolton and his colleagues, whether that be an email capture, a birthday-club sign-up, joining the text club or booking a tee time.

With the new upgraded website program, different visitors can be shown varying opportunities based on their IP address, a true leap forward for a digital marketing tool that's been around for some time. That being the case, GolfNow Business specialists will build in a pop-up that calls the visitor to a certain action, then sets a length of time for how long it will stay that way, given the conversion rate it produces. “The timeframe could be 30, 60, 90 days or perhaps more,” says Bolton, “but no gadget or technique stays up indefinitely without proving its effectiveness.” Very often the strategy is an A-B test of two different methods for achieving a certain conversion standard, with the stronger idea prevailing.

Maintaining and improving your golf course creates a physical product that puts you well in the running for golfer interest and a share of their green-fee budget. Optimizing your website produces a digital destination where the power of technology begins a positive user experience and ends up delivering them to your first tee. ■

Conversational commerce

There seems to be consensus that the golf industry today is leaner and more open to changes in technology and emerging trends. Consumers have multiple ways of communicating and, lately, the phone, email and even smartphone apps have yielded some ground to the popularity of instant messaging. That's clear from recent news that GolfNow's popular Answers service has been upgraded to include “conversational commerce” support—complete with two-way texting, Facebook Messenger and website chat.

“The world is moving toward chat and messaging because it doesn't feel like an interruption,” says Mike Hendrix, Vice President of GolfNow Business Services. “It allows the flow of whatever's happening to continue.”

Texting has the back-and-forth of a phone conversation without the need for both people to be free at the same time. Nor will a text conversation veer off into digressions the way phone calls can. Email shares some characteristics of texting, but emails can pile up and responding to them can consume time in a way that doesn't happen with texting. The next time you're



multi-tasking, Hendrix suggests, ask yourself what type of communication would best fit that situation.

Hendrix has in the past seen traditionalism out-duel the acceptance of tech among golf courses, but he feels that even partial acceptance of “conversational commerce” will have a big impact. “Courses should see this as just another option,” he advises. “If you've got 5,000 people in your database, maybe only 1,000 will want to do business with you this way. Well, let's serve those customers—and make the work flow more efficient for your staff in the process. We want to help as many operators as possible reduce their friction in communicating.” ■