




Putt Yourself Out There! Golf As an Upper Hand in the Business World

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Putt Yourself Out There!

*Golf as an upper hand in the
business world.*

By Allysha Mae Mateo

Parents often sign their children up for a variety of sports hoping to see their child take a particular interest in one and excel in their chosen sport. Kids typically take an interest in high energy and highly competitive sports like basketball, football, and soccer. But golf— you know, the game where you hit a little white ball, hop in the cart, hit it again, and repeat for hours on end— is often overlooked. Perhaps this is because young people may perceive golf as an “old man’s sport.”

Golf is often categorized as a game for older Caucasian men, or a game for only the wealthy because they have the resources and time to play. Some may view golf as an excuse for self-serving business executives to get out of the office. However, those who think this seem to either forget, or are simply unaware, that golf provides an individual the upper hand in the business world.

Golf is a unique sport in the sense that it doesn’t have a shelf life and does not require a specific body type or innate athleticism. Golf is a sport that virtually anyone can pick up and learn if given the opportunity. It also provides vital skills that are transferable to the business world and offers future opportunities for those that play. Thus, golf is a business tool that provides an advantage to everyone in the workplace.



Why Golf?

Golf is a sport that provides a unique method for people to build relationships outside the office. Mark Goldfarb, a businessman on the board of trustees at Charles Schwab, attributes much of his success to relationships forged on the golf course. Goldfarb's co-partner, Bob Littman, explains that when building relationships, "you build trust, clients get comfortable with you, they invest in [your] business, they feel comfortable with the other things [you] have to offer, [and] they refer [you] to their friends."¹

Relationships are essential to the success of every business and are regarded as "[organizational] resources crucial for competitive advantage and success" by management and marketing studies.²

Being on the golf course allows clients and executives to see a different side of one another outside of the workplace and develop crucial relationships for their businesses. The serene environment provides a more relaxed and personal encounter with potential clients and vendors.

"Symposium on Golf, Business, and Relationships" expounds upon this idea of creating relationships on the golf course by presenting fundamental human values that a golfer and leader should exhibit on the golf course and within their organization. In explaining the importance of security as a value, Simon Lim Qing Wei describes how the environment of the golf course enables "the fostering of deep relationships among golfers, creating a sense of belonging and stability of bond." High-quality relationships in an organization return favorable financial outcomes and improve business performance.³ The time spent on the golf course provides a meeting of at least four hours of valuable face time where critical attributes such as competitiveness, humility, thoughtfulness, and the full scope of personality are displayed, allowing people to see how the other may act within their business. The sport itself is popular among business professionals, allowing people to develop relationships in their specific networks and providing opportunities to advance one's career and grow the company.⁴

Golf is also a learning tool that teaches leadership and life skills that are essential in a business. In golf and business, things may not go as planned, leaving people in tough situations. Golf teaches an individual how to manage those unforeseen events through problem-solving and strategizing, which are essential skills in business. Golfers learn how to deal with the success, failure, and

adversity that they encounter both on the golf course and in the workplace. In golf, one can learn patience, goal setting, listening skills, and teaching skills. They gain the ability to manage expectations because not everything in golf is under their control. Instead, golfers learn to understand what is within their power and focus on what is in the present. Golf teaches people to focus on the process and not the result, be more realistic about goals, become more disciplined, take more risks, and be assertive. The sport also teaches principles of integrity, trust, and respect, all of which are essential in business.⁵ All of these skills learned in golf are relevant in the workplace.

Golf and Gender

It should be noted that golf is not a business tool exclusive to men; it is a great networking tool that is accessible to everyone. An article by Matt Kammeyer in The Enterprise explains this idea that business golf is not just for men. In 2016, a comprehensive study by the Sports and Leisure Research Group found that women

golfers report closing deals on the golf course at nearly the same rate as their male counterparts (58% compared to 60%). The study also found that 60% of female golfers felt that playing golf has contributed to their professional success and makes them feel even more included in the workplace, which is sometimes difficult in a male-oriented environment.⁶

Adrienne Wax, co-author of *Even Par: How Golf Helps Women Gain the Upper Hand In Business*, argues that playing golf as a businesswoman provides an even more significant advantage: being able to talk about golf in the office allows for bonding with higher-level colleagues. A businesswoman golfer can communicate and get to know others in a way that the office can't provide.⁷

Golf will aid both men and women in building relationships, simultaneously advancing the golfer's career and helping to grow the company.



Golf may be an intimidating sport at first, but learning the game and being able to participate will provide both men and women the upper hand in business. Approximately 90% of Fortune 500 CEOs play golf, and executives who play golf earn 17% more than those who don't.⁸ Playing golf will aid people in building relationships with clients, customers, vendors, and colleagues, simultaneously advancing the golfer's career and helping to grow the company.

Golf is also a useful learning tool for people of all ages that provides crucial skills and principles that apply to business. Hopefully, after reading this, people realize that golf is accessible to whoever wants to learn, and all people should take the opportunity to do so. Free clinics, group lessons, and private lessons are available at most golf courses or driving ranges. Children and adults alike should take any opportunity they have to learn golf and gain the upper hand in the business world. 🏌️

Notes

1 Adam Burroughs, "Driving Success," *Smart Business Cleveland* 29, no. 12 (2018): 32-36.

2 Aldona Glinska-Newes, Iwona Escher, Pawel Brzustewicz, Dawid Szostek, and Joanna Petrykowska. "Relationship-Focused Or Deal-Focused? Building Interpersonal Bonds within B2B Relationships," *Baltic Journal of Management* 13 no.4 (2018): 508-527.

3 JMM Staff, "Symposium on Golf, Business, and Leadership," *Journal of Markets and Morality* 21, no. 2 (2018).

4 Ashim Neupane, "Networking on the Fairway," *New Business Age*, (Nov 30, 2018).

5 Andrea Doyle, "Golf Schools Are Great Places to Teach Leadership and Life Skills," *Successful Meetings* 67 no.1 (2018): 18-21.

6 Matt Kammeyer, "Business Golf: It's Not Just Men on the Course," *The Enterprise* 48 no. 29 (Feb 11, 2019): 17.

7 Andrew Wood, "10 Reasons Golf Will always be the Ultimate Business Tool," *The Enterprise* 48 no. 29 (Feb 11, 2019): 21.

8 "Learning Golf can be Good for Your Career," *University Wire*, (Sep 11, 2018).

