

INTRODUCTION

Over the past twenty years, the growth of charity golf tournaments across North America has been phenomenal. The Golf Tournament Association of America estimates that there are more than 1 million “golf outings” in the United States each year. In Canada, despite a relatively shorter golf season, most 18-hole public courses host at least 100 or more golf tournaments each year, the majority of which are charity golf tournaments that raise substantial funds for a wide variety of non-profit organizations. While these golf tournaments can offer tremendous fundraising and awareness-building opportunities for many non-profit organizations, they are also large-scale “special events” that require a great deal of staff resources, volunteer manpower and financial commitment.

The purpose of this handbook is to assist you and your colleagues in planning, executing and maintaining a very successful charity golf tournament. Having coordinated more than 400 successful golf tournaments in the past ten years, Golf Tournaments Inc. has prepared this handbook in order to assist volunteers and professional fundraising staff within nonprofit organizations who are new to the experience of organizing a charity golf tournament. This updated 2007 version of the handbook will also be beneficial to those staff members or volunteers who are already familiar with organizing their own golf event but who want to take their tournament “to the next level”.

In the following pages, this handbook will outline the specific components of tournament planning, coordination and implementation that you and your fellow volunteers and staff colleagues should consider when putting together your tournament, whether it is a first time event or whether you are looking to take your tournament from “good to great”.

See you on the first tee!

Frank MacGrath

*President & CEO
GolfTournaments Incorporated*

SECTION A

GETTING STARTED – SETTING OBJECTIVES FOR YOUR TOURNAMENT

So you want to host a charity golf tournament for your organization? Before you get buried in the minutiae of tournament details such as selecting a golf course, preparing marketing materials and securing sponsors, it is important that your organization analyze the reasons that have motivated you to hold a golf tournament. As you begin the process of planning your golf tournament, we suggest that you consider the following questions:

- What is the main objective(s) of this tournament – is it to raise funds for your organization? To build awareness of your organization? Both? Are there any other reasons?
- What is the financial goal of the tournament in terms of net profit? While this may be difficult to specify, particularly for a brand new event, it is important to carefully consider whether a charity golf tournament is the most appropriate kind of special event by which your organization will raise funds.
- What kind of tournament will best achieve these goals? We suggest you look at the traditional 18 hole, 144 golfer “shotgun start” format as well as considering other options (e.g. 9 hole mini tournament).

- How can you differentiate your event from the large number of charitable golf tournaments held each year? What specific factors (e.g. choice of golf course, price, event format, etc.) will entice golfers and sponsors to choose to support your charity tournament and to return each year?
- What resources (volunteers, staff, knowledge of golf, contacts) does your organization have available to meet these objectives?
- Certain tournaments “plateau” after a number of successful years. How can your organization keep your tournament “new and exciting” each year?

Setting out specific objectives will help all volunteers and staff involved in this tournament understand what your organization is trying to achieve and will allow you and your organization to measure the results after the tournament is completed. For existing tournaments, we recommend that the organization review its tournament objectives each year to ensure that these objectives are still current with the needs of the organization.

SECTION B

BUILDING AND MAINTAINING A GREAT ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

For new tournaments, it is strongly recommended that an “Organizing Committee” be formed to carry out the coordination and implementation of all aspects of the golf tournament. The following issues should be considered in creating this Committee:

- a) **Size** - a 4-6 person Committee is ideal, allowing for delegation of duties amongst a variety of Committee members so that no single volunteer is unduly burdened. The committee can be comprised of volunteers, staff members and/or other supporters of your organization.
- b) **Chairperson:** the Committee should appoint a chairperson to lead the meetings and chair these sessions. The Committee may also want to appoint one or more vice-chairs to assist the chair.
- c) **Staff Support:** a staff liaison or support person should be appointed to work with the committee, so that there is ongoing communication between this new group and the organization that will benefit from the tournament. If a staff member within your organization is taking the lead role in the tournament coordination, it is crucial for that person to communicate with the committee which key tasks he/she will be focusing on and which key tasks the committee members need to focus on.

d) **Role of the Committee:** the Committee should oversee all aspects of the tournament's organization, but its main efforts should focus primarily on the following areas:

- Initial course selection and tournament pricing
- tournament format and itinerary
- securing sponsors
- obtaining prizes
- recruiting golfers
- fundraising activities at the tournament (e.g. raffle/auction, day-of-event sales)
- unique ideas to enhance the tournament
- event review

To effectively manage these key areas, the committee can choose “chairs” or “leads” to be responsible for each area (e.g. Prize Chairman). The following tasks should each be delegated to one committee member:

- liaison with the golf course
- menu selection
- marketing/advertising (media announcements, website & email blasts)
- contingency planning
- day-of-event management & volunteers

It is helpful if the Committee contains at least a few members who are knowledgeable golfers who have played in other charity golf tournaments; however, it is not necessary that every Committee member be an avid or accomplished golfer.

For the more established tournament, the particular duties of the committee should be reevaluated each year to focus on the key priorities that committee is facing (e.g. drop off in sponsorship, attracting more golfers).

- d) **Meetings:** the Committee should begin meeting at least 4-6 months in advance of the tournament date and meet thereafter on a regular basis as decided by the Committee. The most effective Committees communicate between meetings to follow up on the tasks outlined at the previous meeting and to ensure that the organizational timeline is being followed.
- e) **Recruiting Your Committee:** to recruit the organizing committee look to your Board of Directors (current and former), volunteer base and friends of the organization. Ask some golfers you know to get involved, including suppliers and partners that work with your organization.

Maintaining a Strong Organizing Committee

One of the most difficult tasks any annual golf tournament faces is maintaining a strong and interested golf committee, and keeping these volunteers motivated year after year. Some suggestions to keep your key volunteers actively participating on the golf committee are:

- Tangibly thank them – a post tournament round of golf might be a great way to wrap up your event, in addition to recognizing them at the tournament;
- Ask each committee member if he/she will support the tournament again by serving on the committee and get their input as to what specific areas they would like to focus on;
- Rotate positions so the committee members take on different tasks and develop different skill sets;
- Create a succession plan – ask a retiring committee member to help find their successor.
- Cultivate a champion within the committee – ideally this is a key volunteer who helps you keep the tournament focused on getting better and better (and more profitable) each year.



Pro's Tip

- ✓ *Keep the meetings focused (use an agenda), brief (set a time limit), and fun.*
- ✓ *Appoint a committee member to summarize in a brief one-page memo following each meeting, what decisions were made and what actions were to be implemented & by whom. Then Circulate these minutes to all committee members by email.*
- ✓ *If “in person” meetings are logistically difficult, consider using conference calls.*