

How to Build An Effective Online Promotion Strategy for your Golf Course

Creating an online promotion strategy for your golf course should not be a daunting task.

We will cover the basics of creating an online presence for your course. Whether it may be through social media, emails or on your website - being online can bring back a lot of revenue to your course.

Understand the strategies you are putting in place.

Today, tons of businesses are engaging with their customers online. They do so because this is where most communication happens. “70 percent of U.S. households now use the Internet when shopping locally for products and services.”

83% of Americans have a social media account, and 48% of them have interacted at least once with a company or institution online. 41% say it’s important for companies to have a social media presence. Of those with social media accounts, 28% would rather use social media to interact than to visit a physical location, and 59% agree that customer service via social media has made it easier to get questions and concerns resolved.

Here are some concrete **applications** of an online promotion strategy:



“70 percent of U.S. households now use the Internet when shopping locally for products and services.”

- ✓ Launching a monthly email newsletter for your members
- ✓ Creating a social media campaign to promote the opening of your course or a special event
- ✓ Enabling online tee-sheet booking on your website
- ✓ Sharing content about golf culture and engaging with your golfers on social networks

Having an online presence is now a **must** for any business in the golf industry. Here are some **opportunities** for any business engaging in online promotion:

- ✓ Engage with your customers outside of the golf course, for free
- ✓ Increase customer loyalty and member retention
- ✓ Stand out from the competition by increasing your brand recognition
- ✓ Increase revenues by creating timely promotions and social campaigns
- ✓ Keep your players in the loop even during the off-season
- ✓ Notify your customers of new services (golf school, restaurant, new pro shop items), weather related events, etc.
- ✓ Build trust

Look back and audit the tools you are using right now.

These tools can be:

- ✓ Social media networks
- ✓ Emails newsletters
- ✓ Website
- ✓ Online deals
- ✓ Online listings
- ✓ and more...

If you are already using one of these tools (or all of them) to promote your course, that's great!

Let's take a look at the tools we listed:

Social Media

With the rise of newer social networks such as Instagram, YouTube, Twitter and Snapchat, businesses can also engage on other platforms beyond just Facebook and Google. Here is a quick overview:

Facebook : With over 1.65 Billion mobile monthly users and close to 1B mobile daily users, it is the most used app in the world. 50M businesses use Facebook Pages and it's often considered as a **must have** for any business.

Instagram : The popular photo-sharing service, now owned by Facebook. Over 400 million monthly active users. Features a typically younger audience and the ability to target posts with hashtags. It's like twitter for pictures!

Twitter : The short-message network with 310 million active monthly users, 83% of which are active on mobile.

Snapchat : The fastest growing network in the world, with over 100 million monthly active users. Snapchat allows you to upload stories and send videos that disappear after a selected amount of time. It is the second most used social network after Facebook and is generally associated with a very young demographic.

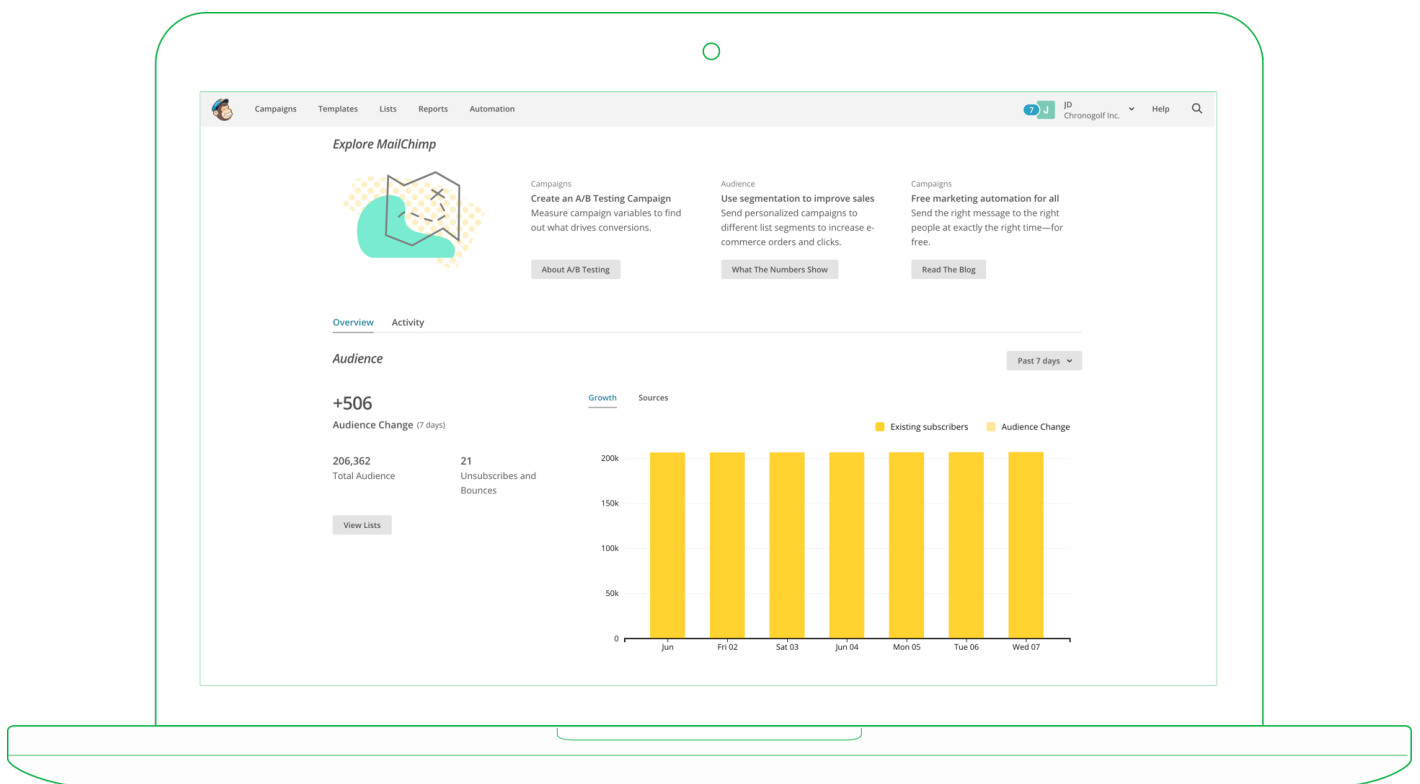
YouTube : The world's leading platform for social video sharing, with over 1B users. A third of the people on the internet have a YouTube account.

Email

Email marketing has become one of the most important forms of online promotion. Golf facilities use emails to keep their customers up-to-date, send payment receipts, booking confirmation, promotions, and more.

For every \$1 you spend on [email marketing](#), you can expect [an average return](#) of \$38.

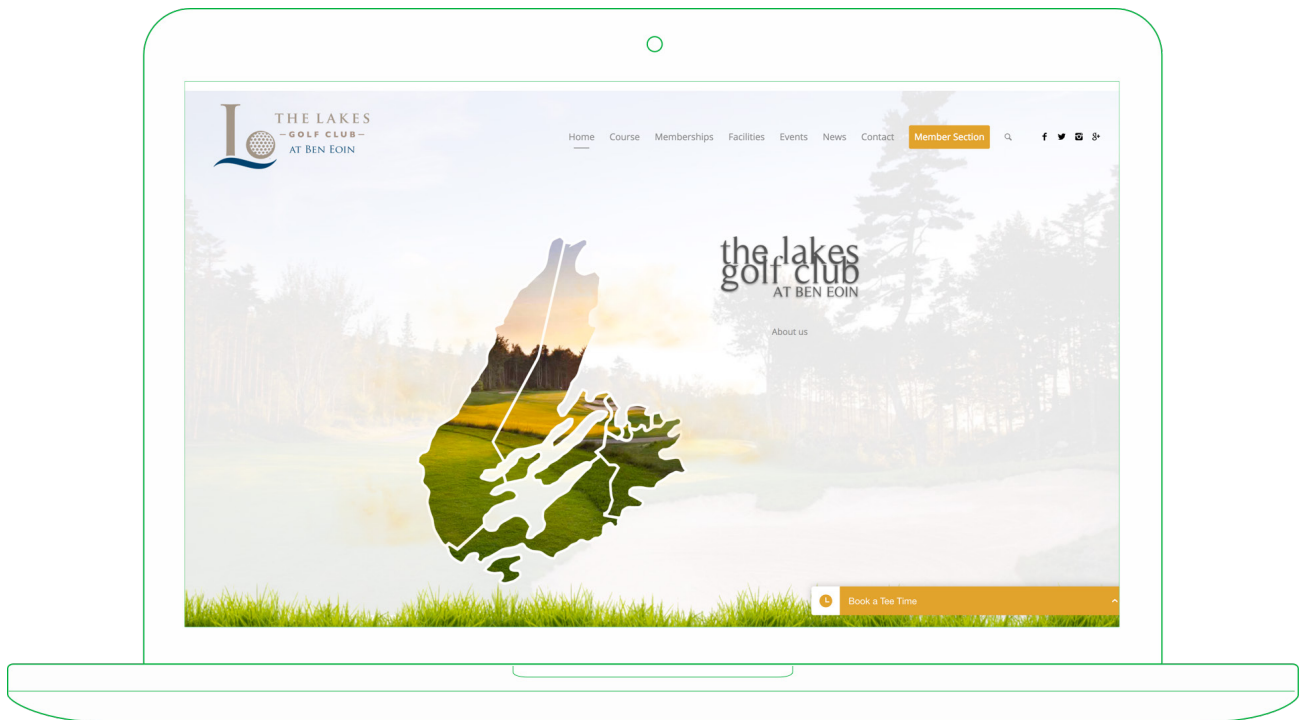
61 percent of consumers enjoy receiving promotional emails weekly. 38% would like emails to come even more frequently.



Create efficient newsletter using MailChimp

Website

An effective website is the cornerstone of your business. Your website should house all important information about your course and how to contact you. A website is also the perfect place to host a blog. Additionally, your website should allow your members and public players to book online¹.



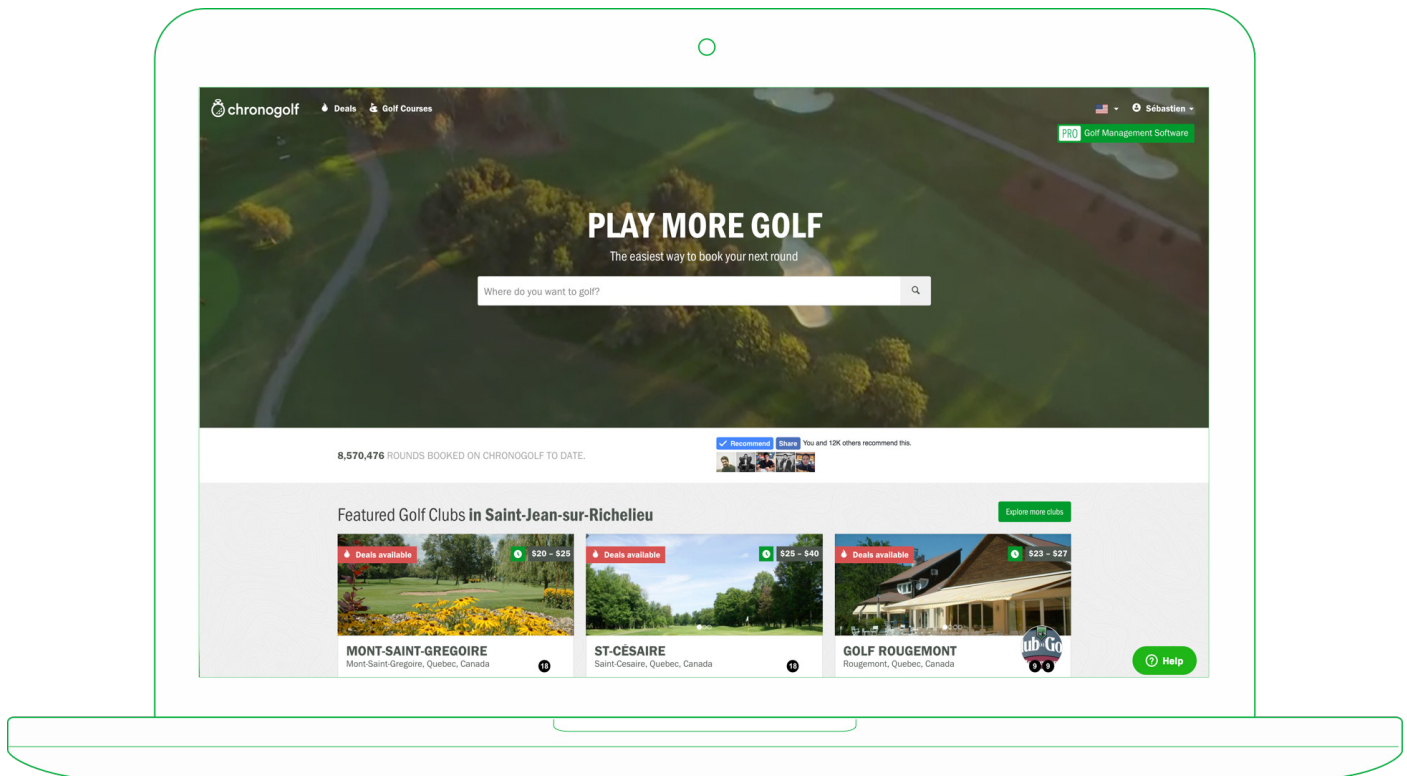
Create a beautiful and responsive website.

Deals

Roughly 4 in 10 American adults use online coupons² like those offered by Groupon. Deals can be a great way to promote your course during shoulder seasons.

Online Listings

Get listed! Your business can be part of different online listings such as Google Business Listings, YellowPages, SuperPages, YELP, Golfink, Tee-Off.com, Golf-courses.net, etc.



Use an online marketplace to promote your golf course!

Understand who your key customers are.

Identifying the types of customers who are loyal to your facility and who bring in more business is key to succeed in online promotions. Online promotion can be directed to all of your customers, but sometimes it is best to have targeted groups of golfers in mind.

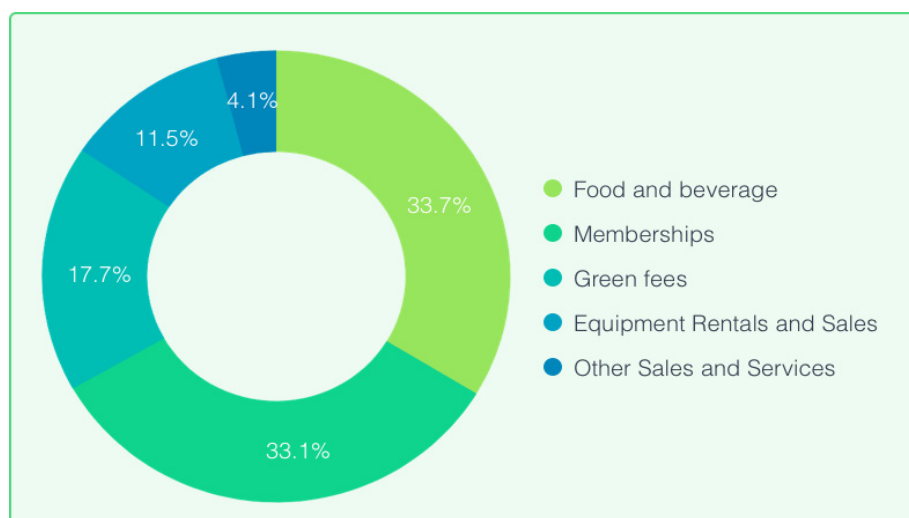
A good example is the 80/20 rule. 80% of your customers bring in 20% of your revenue, while 20% of your customers bring in 80% of your revenue.

A quick look back at your yearly sales can help you identify the most important segments of your course's revenue.

The most important revenue segments for golf courses are

- ✓ Food and beverage
- ✓ Memberships
- ✓ Green fees.
- ✓ Equipment Rentals and Sales
- ✓ Other Sales and Services

The key is to identify who are the 20% of customers generating 80% of your revenue, and then to nurture your relationship with them. In other words, you want to retain these customers and ensure their satisfaction.



An IBIS World, report on the golf industry shows that :



“With increased competition among participants for fewer avid or regular golfers, establishments have invested more resources into retaining existing members and attracting new ones. Operators have discounted memberships, provided reciprocal membership rights to other clubs and improved golf course and country club facilities. Country clubs have increased the number of rounds played, particularly during off-peak seasons, by lowering green fees or increasing services. Operators have also emphasized greater retail sales of golf equipment, promotion of lessons and golfing clinics and better practice facilities to shore up extra revenue. Moving forward, industry operators may increase outreach programs in an attempt to attract new golfers and members.”

Set your goals and action items for the coming weeks and months.

While it may seem like a lot to do, launching an online promotion strategy is manageable if you focus on the actionable items you need to complete in order to achieve your goals.

Common golf course goals:

- ✓ Increase tee-time sales during weekdays and off-season sales for public players
- ✓ Increase sales at the pro shop
- ✓ Increase sales at the restaurant
- ✓ Increase tournament sales for the upcoming season
- ✓ Increase membership sales

Now that you have selected a few goals, put in place some actions to create a strong promotional campaign.

Here's an action item list:

Choose a campaign you would like to focus on.

- ✓ Create a monthly newsletter
- ✓ Launch a social media page
- ✓ Advertise on social media
- ✓ Promote an upcoming event (can be done using social networks, websites and/or emails)
- ✓ Improve online experience of current customers and members with a user friendly website and online booking

Choose which social networks you want to use to engage with your audience, depending on what type of campaigns you would like to start.

There's nothing wrong in creating new social media accounts on different platforms - although you need to remember these key points:

- ✓ Keep your goals in mind
- ✓ Don't dilute your message over too many networks
- ✓ Some social networks have their own "specialty". Choose the networks that works with your course the best. We strongly suggest using a Facebook Page, and perhaps an Instagram account as well.
 - > Instagram is for pictures
 - > Snapchat for short videos
 - > YouTube for longer videos

Start with what makes sense.

One step at a time. If you think an email newsletter would be great - start with that. If you think you should start with creating social media accounts because you don't have any - you should most likely start with this too.

Create a website that provides value to your customers and that answers a problem.

Don't just create "a website" - Make sure your website has a great design, all the necessary pricing and contact information, that it's mobile compatible and - if you want to go one step further - add an online booking tool to your website. You would be surprised how online booking tools can help reduce phone calls and increase green fees sales. More and more, golfers book their tee-times online like they do for hotels and plane reservations. There's no reason to lag behind.



Create a beautiful and responsive website.

Develop your own content and share content from others.

When engaging with your customers online, you'll want to have great content to share. This can be pictures of your course and clubhouse, golf news articles, interesting videos, and so on. This content can be created in-house but can also be shared from other sources.

While this type of content may be good for small interactions, you might want to invest more time and efforts in producing high-quality content for your “top 20%” customers. For example, you could start a short video series on how to play your golf course; covering 1 hole at a time, explaining how you should approach it and so on. This type of content can be content shared in a member’s newsletter, on your website and more - over and over. This type of high-quality content brings a lot of value to your customers and will solidify your online presence. Start creating today!

Get listed.

Plenty of websites list businesses according to their offerings. For example ; Google Business Listings, YellowPages, SuperPages, Golfink, Teeoff.com, Chronogolf Marketplace, Golfcourses.net etc. Additionally, you can create and curate your reviews on YELP and TripAdvisor for maximum visibility.

Be proactive.

Developing a promotional strategy isn't rocket science. If you accomplish one task related to your goals every day - you will start seeing results in a matter of weeks!

Tip: create a schedule of tasks related to your promotional strategy.

For example:

Today - create your new social media account.

Tomorrow - work on what type of content you would like to share.

The day after - etc.

Monitor the results!

As you start creating campaigns, existing and potential customers will start engaging with your golf course brand. You can use the various reporting tools offered on all the social platforms to understand the impact of your actions. Facebook's "Insights" is particularly efficient.

Common challenges and how to overcome them.

"Setting up an online promotional strategy takes too much time that it's not worth it for our facility"

Promoting your facility online can be time-consuming at first, but the return on investment can also be huge. Start one step at a time, and you'll quickly see results in your golf community. You can ask your staff to contribute to your online communications as well.

"Learning all these new tools is complicated and we don't have the competencies"

It's okay to be unfamiliar with the tools at first - but don't be overwhelmed! Tons of free online resources exist to assist you in setting up your promotional campaigns and creating a community surrounding your course. The most important skill is probably a skill you and your staff already have; to be social!

"We don't want to discount our prices because members will complain"

Discounting green fee prices doesn't mean your members are getting the shorter end of the stick. It means your course is trying to increase its popularity, revenue and eventually, improve the quality of the offerings. If you think your members are feeling left-out, why not create specific promotions for them as well?

"Our players are not on social media"

Facebook has close to 2B users, and there's 6 new profiles created every second. Trust us, there's a lot of potential customers on social networks.

Here are a few examples of common golf course issues that can be fixed using online promotion:

Lack of newcomers: Create a social media advertising campaign and promote golf lessons for beginners.

Fewer rounds played: Create packages for your players and promote them on social media.

Merchandise sales in decline: Promote your pro shop offerings through an email newsletter and social media.

Memberships sales in decline: Create new membership types and advertise them on your website, social media or via email.

Failing to attract a younger demographic: Millennials love social media. If your course isn't attracting new young golfers, this is absolutely the place to start.

Conclusion

Engaging in online promotion is now a “must” for all golf facilities. Whether you have started to promote your course online, or not, there is still tons of marketing initiatives that can be done with social media, email marketing and a website. That said, remember to focus on the channels that are relevant to your facility. Some of your best customers communicate, engage and shop online - you need to be there as well! Don't miss out on this golden opportunity to create awareness around your facility at such a low cost and start promoting your course online today. Some facilities don't realize that by proactively engaging in online promotion they can radically improve their revenues - don't be that facility.

About Chronogolf

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Chronogolf provides innovative cloud based software and marketing solutions to golf courses ranging from online booking, electronic tee-sheet, members management, tournaments management, customer loyalty and point of sale solutions for pro shops, snack bars and restaurants. Find out more at: pro.chronogolf.com.

Hundreds of golf courses trust Chronogolf as their software provider across the world. Chronogolf is headquartered in Montreal, with offices in Vancouver, Toronto and Paris. More than 400 golf courses have used Chronogolf tools to sell over 8,500,000 tee times to date.

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