



MEMBERSHIP

Manual



Bobby Jones[®]

L I N K S

2019 EDITION



MUCH AMBITION IS A
BAD THING TO HAVE
IN A BUNKER.”



MEMBERSHIP MANUAL

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WHY MEMBERSHIP IS SO IMPORTANT

If you are reading this, chances are you are involved in perhaps the most important things we do at our clubs: selling memberships and retaining members.

Why are these so important? **Dues, Dues, Dues.**

At a purely private club, the largest revenue item by far is member dues. They are the lifeblood of the club. Years ago, Bob Deadman started *Club Corporation*, the largest *Bobby Jones Links* type club ownership and management company in the industry. He was famous for asking the following question when he first arrived to visit one of their courses:

“How much was your dues billing last month?”

You too should know this number.

At a semi-private course, a club that has members and allows non-member play too, a member “yields” more per round than the average daily fee golf round. Apples to apples, members are more profitable for the club, so the above question is applicable to this type of club as well.

THE MATH OF MEMBERSHIP

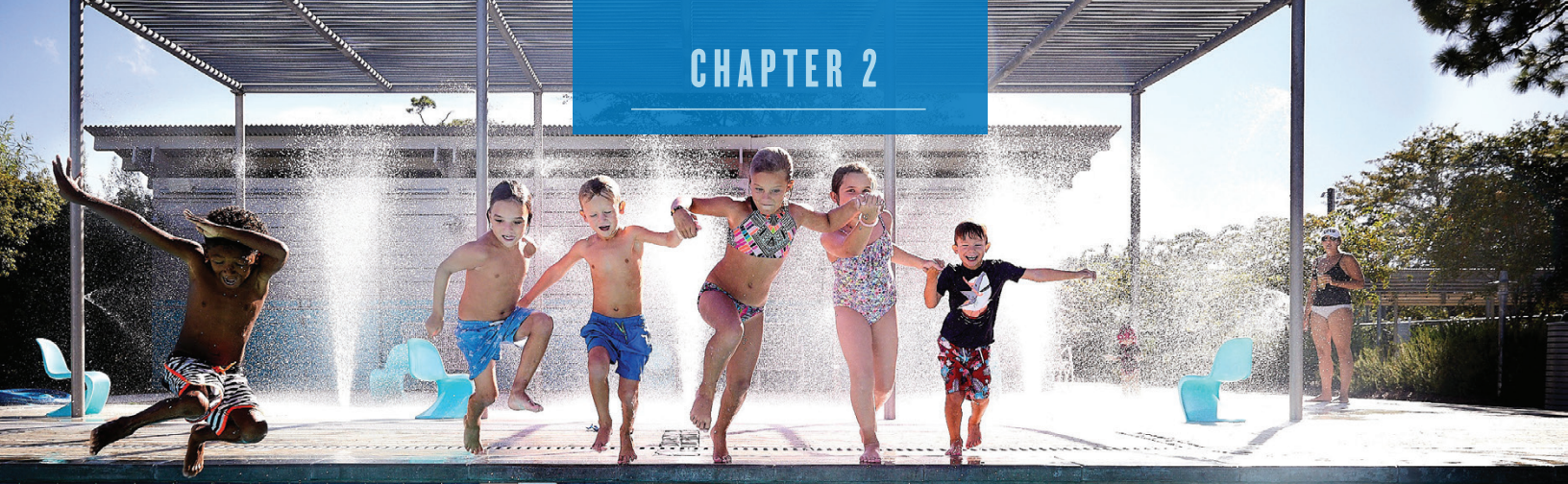
Each new member you enroll is not just adding dues revenue. They also spend money at the club: cart fees, shirts, burgers, beer, clubs, lessons, etc. This further adds to their value.

For example, if a member pays \$400 per month in dues, that member is worth more to the club than \$4,800 per year. Add the member’s club charges, or what we call “member spend,” and that \$4,800 becomes, say, \$7,931 per year.

So think of it this way using the above example: every new membership you sell is worth \$7,931 to your club. And equally important, every member you prevent from resigning and keep at your club – this is called retention – is also worth \$7,931!

Simple math can tell you what 50 incremental members to a club means to its profitability. In the above case, this is \$396,550 in new profits!

This is why what you do is so very important – and why we have prepared this manual. It’s your blueprint for sales and success.



ABOUT MEMBERSHIPS

A BRIEF HISTORY

Historically private clubs offered just these classic membership categories with different dues in each:

- **Full Club** Use of entire club
- **Junior (Under 40)** Use of entire club
- **Senior (Over 65)** Use of entire club. Sometimes restricted to weekdays
- **Sports** Use of all club amenities except the golf course
- **Social** Dining privileges at the club
- **Non-Resident** Must live a certain distance away from the club

Some clubs further broke out the above into single and family dues for each category. Otherwise, the dues were the same no matter how many were in the family.

Way back in time, there was just one membership in a club, not matter what the age or income of the member. Long ago someone figured out that younger people would join a club if they could pay lower dues, moving to full club dues paying members when they advanced at work and in pay. Similarly, senior memberships, also with decreased dues, were designed to keep older members in the game as they graduated into fixed incomes.

However, *Bobby Jones Links*, like other progressive companies, now offers dues categories for many different age ranges. For example, dues plans might begin at 21, 30, 40, 65, 75, and 80 at some of our clubs. The ideas is to truly match a member's age and ability to pay and play with their dues.

Where once junior membership was everyone under 40, now a club's dues structure should be even more tiered to make it even more affordable for young professionals in their twenties. Seniors who play less as they age now can stay at the club they love – and where their friends are – by paying dues commensurate with their age and declining club use.

TIP: During the off-season, offer free dues for a few months until spring comes.

TIP: Use trial memberships. New member puts a minimal amount down and pays normal dues for a certain period, say 1-2 years. At the end, they walk and lose the down payment or join and it is applied to their initiation fee.



THE 3 THINGS YOU MUST KNOW

Before you begin selling memberships, there are three very important things you must know:

1. KNOW YOUR CLUB

Play the course, use the amenities, know every staff member, memorize the dues, rates, and fees, learn its history, sample the menu, etc.

Your club will also have two other very important documents that you must know: *The Club Bylaws* and the *Club Rules*. The former is the document that outlines the key club policies, membership classifications, and rules of governance. It is the legal document that protects both the member and the club. The latter is the everyday rules in regard to use of the club such as tee time policies, dress code, hours of operation, etc.

2. KNOW YOUR MEMBERS

Using information from the membership files and club records, you should know their membership class, age of the primary member, number of children, occupation, how far they live from the club, and birthdays and anniversaries. The more you know about them, the more you can sell more memberships like them, or, fill in the gaps that are under-served or undersold.

TIP: *The number one source of new members is referrals from current members. Remember this. It's big.*

3. KNOW YOUR MARKET

How many clubs in the area compete with yours? What do they charge? In what way is your club better (or not as good) as the ones selling memberships in your market area too?

You should build a spreadsheet, listing the amenities, dues, fees, number of members, location, and website address, of your competitors. By the way, generally, 90% of a club's members will come from no more than a 30 minute drive from their club. Membership is a local issue.

So, what is your club's niche? Best course? Best value? Great dining? Most exclusive? Most amenities? All or some of the above? Put in terms of marketing, what is your unique selling proposition?

TIP: *Quite often the Membership Director or General Manager of the clubs in your market will share with you their membership information if you share yours.*



GETTING STARTED

Once you know your market, your club, and your members, there are six things you must do before you can start selling memberships.

1. PREPARE A MEMBERSHIP PACKAGE

Before you begin selling, the first thing you will need is a membership information package to give to prospective members when they inquire about the club. This package, to meet *Bobby Jones Links* standards, must be very professionally written by you and then designed and produced by one of our graphic artists. Information in just a Word document is not acceptable.

The goal of printing and mailing or emailing a PDF of the club membership package is this: to provide them with a compelling story and enough information so that they call you to arrange a visit to the club (great news!) or even join the club immediately (the best news!). This is why the package must be simple, yet look terrific – the prospect will judge the quality of your club by the quality of the information you send them. Most people today prefer you to email them the package. This will save you time and money while getting the information to the prospect quicker when they are more likely to join.

TIP: Use professional photography to get images of every component of the club for your membership package and website. Most all images must have people in them – you are selling a lifestyle, not pictures of holes and dining rooms!

The membership package should include the following information:

- A cover page with club name and club images.
- One page on the club history. The “story.” Make it compelling.
- One page on the benefits of membership including a list of the amenities at the club. However, speak to them in terms of benefits – what is in it for them – more than listing the club’s great amenities.
- Several pages listing the types of memberships available and their benefits, conditions, initiation fees, and dues. You may have one page per membership class offered, or, put several classes on one page in a more abbreviated format.
- A page(s) listing the key club fees and rates (guest fees, cart fees, range charges, etc.).
- Information on club activities and events.
- Golf, tennis, swim, fitness, junior program information.
- A membership application.

You may add to this based on your needs and your club’s nuances, but the above must be in the base package. Do not put the club’s scorecard in the package as it will be seen on the website or can be picked up when they visit.

TIP: You might include a printed version of the club’s newsletter to illustrate the most recent events and type of lifestyle the potential member will experience if they join.

2. DEVELOP A LEAD MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

You must have and use a comprehensive lead tracking system. We prefer you use Sales Force, yet any professional CRM (customer relationship management) software is acceptable.

For every lead you generate, you must keep detailed records of every contact and development with a prospective member including:

- Name(s)
- Children ages and names
- Mailing address
- Email address
- Occupation/employer
- How they heard about the club
- Primary reason for joining a club
- Type of membership they are interested in

This is a *Bobby Jones Links* requirement. It not only helps you, but also helps any staff member step in and help if you are away for on vacation.

3. DEVELOP A CLUB CALENDAR

Using your CRM software, develop a calendar for the year that shows by month a schedule of all your promotional activities, from ads, to mailings, email blasts, open houses, pay-for-click campaigns, newsletter dates, etc. This is the road map you follow to ensure everything is being done. It is you holding yourself accountable.

4. PREPARE AN ACTIVITY LOG

This an Excel file where you record the date and details every membership sale, resignation, downgrade, upgrade, and installment payment. Your log will periodically be compared to accounting's to ensure every member is being billed the correct dues. It will also be used occasionally when a member disputes a date or dues billing.

5. PREPARE A GUEST CARD

The Guest Card is a one page sheet or card that asks a prospect to provide their information. These cards are given to a prospect after a tour or first meeting and are also on display throughout the clubhouse in case you are not available and the staff asks someone to fill one out for you.

The Guest Card will ask for:

- Name(s)
- Children ages & names
- Mailing address
- Email address
- Occupation/employer

- How they heard about the club
- Primary reason for joining a club
- Type of membership in which they are interested

6. PREPARE A NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION KIT

Once a new member enrolls in the club, you must immediately provide them with a New Member Kit with the following information:

- Welcome Letter from you
- A copy of the Club Bylaws
- A copy of the Club Rules
- Staff directory with emails & phone numbers
- A list of club fees such as cart, guest, range, locker, and bag storage fees
- F&B minimum policy if the club has one
- Club billing procedures including who they contact about their bill and when statements come out
- Website login information

This kit is best presented to them in person, one member at a time, and not in a group setting. This process is known as the new member orientation.

TIP: *New members are a better source of referrals than old members. During the first 90 days they are most enthusiastic about their new club. Thus, use the new member orientation to ask the member for some referrals.*





LEAD GENERATION

Now that you know your club, its members and market, and have your sales information tools prepared, the next step is generating leads. It does not matter how well you do everything else, if you don't have lots of leads coming your way, then you won't sell memberships.

The key is filling the top your lead generation funnel with lots of prospects. It is a numbers game: the more leads that go in the top, the more sales that will come out of the bottom. The key is to have multiple lead generation programs happening at the same time.

Membership sales are year-round process. The plan should have something happening all 12 months of the year. However, load up the most for the prime time selling season.

The best source of new members are the current members of your club. And new members of your club are the best at helping you fill you lead funnel. That is why we always have a year-round member referral program (discussed below) in place.

CLASSIC LEAD GENERATION TOOLS

Bobby Jones Links' marketing team will help you develop the tools to fill up your lead funnel. It's a team effort. The best tools are:

1. A Robust Website

If your website is not dynamic, with lots of superb images, a great presentation, and some compelling content, you are going to lose a prospect before they ever reach out to you. Remember, the website is often their first impression of your club.

2. Direct Mail

Personalized letters and postcards to select neighborhoods and zip codes in your market area are highly effective if selected based on targeted criteria. The marketing team can help you identify mailing leads using one of the many databases available. One of *Bobby Jones Links'* most effective direct mail strategies is to hand address an envelope containing a one page, compelling letter to your list. The open rate is far greater than postcards, which average about a 1% to 2% response rate.

3. Pay-For Click Ads

These pay-for-click ads run on all major search engines and are highly effective tools to point prospects to your website. Of course, the ultimate goal is for your club to be on the first or second page of the "organic" listings, but that takes a lot of time and effort. These ads will focus on important key words such as "golf membership," "club memberships," or "golf and country club." *Bobby Jones Links'* marketing team will select these keywords for the club based on analytics from your websites traffic and will place the ads for you.

4. Business Databases

There are some great local and national business databases that can be used to generate leads. Tools such as *Business Wise* and *Sales Genie* can help you identify every business in your market area, including the name, address, and email address of the key officers of the company. We utilize their lists for email and mail campaigns.

5. Print Advertisements

While not the primary advertising tool they once were, print ads can be highly effective. The key is placing them in publications that serve your market area and the demographic of your prospects.

6. Social Media

Social media, such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, *Pinterest*, and *Yelp* are instrumental in creating awareness of your club. There is no doing this halfway: social media campaigns must be done daily and well.

7. Realtors

Real estate agents in your area, particularly the top producers, can be great sources of leads. The key here is getting to know them and making sure they know all about your club. Invite them to lunch, host a realtor play day, or allow them to done or play golf for free once in a while. Make them your zealots.

8. Club Signage and Information

Guests are at your club everyday, whether dining, playing golf, part of an outing, or attending a wedding. That is why you must have membership information available at the key points around the club. Put membership information packages and guest cards in the clubhouse lobby and pro shop. If you have a golf outing, put membership information in their carts. If you club is semi-private, you can put basic membership information in the cart message holders.

9. Hold Open Houses

Several times per year, particularly in the prime selling season, hold "open houses" at your club, inviting prospects and the community around you to visit the club and enjoy a round of golf, free lessons, a brunch, party, etc. Whatever the club can afford to give away to make for a great day to expose your club.

10. Other Tools

Every club is different. Every market is different. Thus, there may be ways to promote membership for you that is different than any other club. You might also use TV ads, a billboard, or a banner on the main road outside the club. Prepare a club photo album to show prospects and have on display in the pro shop and/or dining room.



“EACH
Club
IS DIFFERENT.
EACH MARKET
IS DIFFERENT.”

MEMBERSHIP REFERRALS & RETENTION

THIS IS THE #1 LEAD GENERATOR AT ANY CLUB

Experience has proven the best source of new members is referrals from the current members. And the best time to ask a member for a referral is within the first 90 days of them joining your club.

There are many types of members referral programs. Here are what *Bobby Jones Links* has found to be the five most effective elements of successful membership referral programs:

1. Give the New Member Something

Give the new member something when they join: credits, lessons, guest passes, etc.

2. Give the Referring Member Something Too

Make it significant. A 5% statement credit for example. If they refer two or more, give them even more credits and perks. A \$100 credit on their bill or a new driver for referring new members just does not work or move the needle.

3. Do Not Do Referral Contests

That is, for example, a grand prize for the member who refers the most new members. It is better to give everyone something than just one person a lot.

4. It Is a Year Round Program

Run the referral program January through December and not just for a specific time.

5. Involve the Staff

They should know every detail of your referral program. Make sure all the frontline staff know what memberships are offered and to send anyone inquiring about membership to you. Quite often a member will tell them, and not you, about a friend interesting in the club.

TIP: Another great source of new members is former members. At least once per year you should reach out to them and say, “We want you back!” A letter reminding them of what they are missing or of changes and improvements since they left is entirely appropriate.

A GREAT MEMBER RETENTION STRATEGY

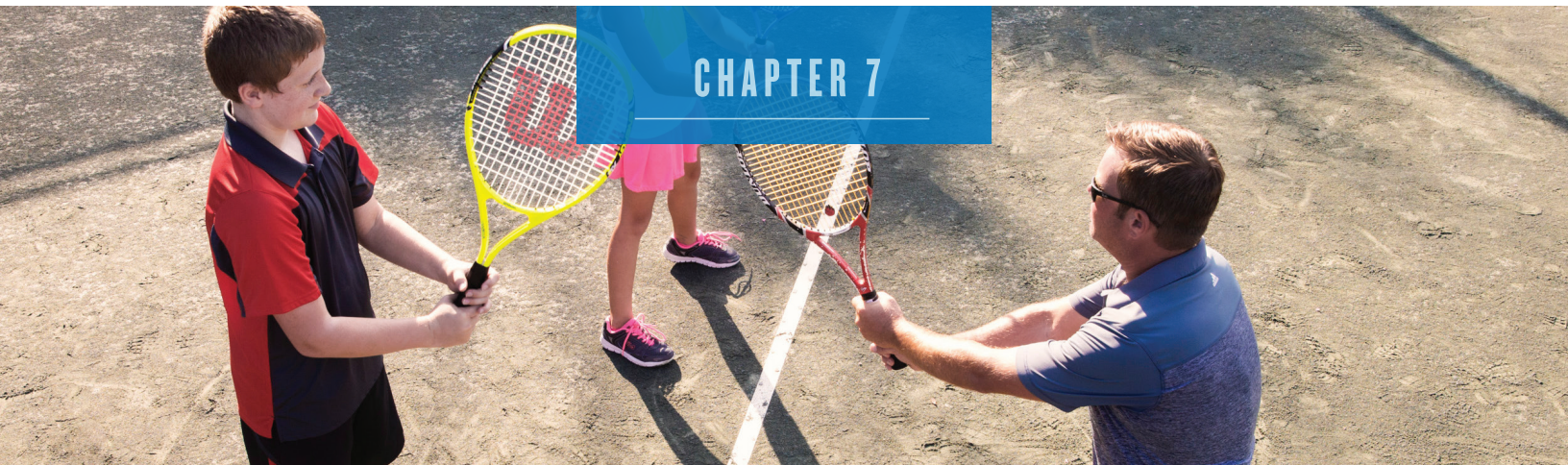
Keeping your current members is more important than selling new members. Why? They are already there and you don't have to spend any money or expend any effort to get them.

The best member retention strategy is making members happy. Or as one of our client's once called it, "Delivering happiness." That will always be number one.

However, a close second is to do this: At least twice per year analyze your membership and identify those members that spend the least at the club, say the bottom 10% to 20%. Identify these low users of the club and reach out to them. Send them a free brunch, free cart fees, etc., to show them you miss them. Call them to find out why they are not using the club.

TIP: Recognize members on their birthdays and anniversaries. Send cards, emails, or acknowledge them on website or in the club newsletter. This is member retention too.

TIP: Make it a point to periodically have lunch with your members or buy them a cup of coffee. At the least, be visible, and smile when you see a member.



SALES LEADS & SELLING

Once your advertising and marketing starts generating leads and the phone starts ringing, the key is to convert these leads into membership sales.

WORKING YOUR LEADS

It is critical that you keep track every lead you get in your lead tracking system. Organize them into hot (likely), warm (maybe), and cold (unlikely). Record on every contact with a prospective member.

Work your hot leads everyday.

Work your warm leads at least weekly.

Work your cold leads at least twice per year.

What can you be doing to work them?

- Call them.
- Email them.
- Invite them to an upcoming club event.
- Invite them to enjoy golf or lunch again.
- Send them a copy of the club newsletter.
- Send them a hand-written note.

“IN ORDER TO MAKE *sales*,
YOU MUST FIRST UNDERSTAND
THE MIND OF THE CUSTOMER.”



THE ART OF SELLING

There are millions of books, seminars, and podcasts on the art of selling. There is no one right way to sell well, but there are a myriad of truths about making sales and the elements common to all great sales people. What follows are 15 truths and tips for to make you a better sales person.

- 1) Most salespeople spend too much time selling the product and forget that selling is 80% people and 20% product. People buy for other reasons than just product benefits.
- 2) Show more interest in the buyer and his concerns than you do in selling your product. It is about them, not you.
- 3) Always, always agree with the customer! Agree with their objection, and then find a solution. “I agree that is a lot of money. However, everyone who uses our club finds...”
- 4) In order to make sales, you must first understand the mind of the customer.
- 5) The true essence of selling is not just getting the sale, but the sincere desire to help. Selling is the act of giving, not getting: serving, not selling.
- 6) Persist. People will not buy without you asking them to and people will never say yes to someone who quits asking.
- 7) Take massive action. If you want one thing, take massive action equal to at least 10 times what you think it will take to ensure that you attain that one thing.
- 8) Create a sense urgency and a fear of loss in you club membership campaigns. “If you join by May 31st, you will receive a special package worth \$1,000,” for example.
- 9) The sales process is finding out the following about the buyer: Who are you? What do you want? Why do you want it? What do I have that fulfills your wants and needs?
- 10) Your great attitude is the only know cure for continuous rejection.
- 11) You have to believe in your ability to differentiate from your competition in a way that the customer perceives as both different and valuable.
- 12) Start with humor. Whatever you say after you say something funny will be heard and remembered ten times more than when you drone on expect others to hear it. If you can make the laugh, you can make them buy.
- 13) The more you put value in terms of how they win, how they profit, and how they produce, the more it will be perceived as true value, or real value.
- 14) Most sale presentations and information are about us. “We do this, we do that, we are great, and we are the best.” This is “we-we.” Meanwhile, the customers, the ones with the money, are looking for a message about how they produce, how they win, and how they profit.
- 15) If you don’t ask amazingly emotionally engaging questions, you will lose to a competitor who does. Ask about their life. Selling is listening, learning, and discovering the customer’s motives to buy.

THE PROFESSIONAL CLUB TOUR

A new prospect will want to tour the club and it is your job to do it. Here is how to host a professional tour, one that will help you make the sale:

BEFORE THE TOUR

- Every morning when you arrive at work, walk through the entire club, picking up any trash and making sure the club is “show ready.” Let the staff know when you will be hosting prospects and touring the club.
- Turn on all the lights and televisions in every room of the club, even if the club is quiet that day. Make the club look lived in and vibrant. It’s not compelling when they peer into a dark, empty, quiet dining room or grill. Turn on the music too.
- Make sure the club looks great.
- Dress professionally.
- Use their name often

DURING THE TOUR

- Smile, smile, smile.
- Make them laugh.
- As you tell show them the club’s amenities, always be speaking to them about how they will benefit if they join the club. Once you know their interests, you can say things such as, “Our junior program is one of the best in town so your children can learn the game and have fun too.” Or, “The new wellness items on our menu will really help you stay fit.”
- Ask them lots of questions to get to know them better and make them feel comfortable.
- Visit all areas of the club, but focus on those that they seemed interested in the most.
- Introduce them to the department heads and key staff as you go.

AT THE END OF THE TOUR

- Give them the Membership Information Package at the end of the tour.
- Ask them before they leave if they’d like a Membership Application.
- Ask them before they leave if you can arrange a free round, lesson, or lunch as the club’s guest sometime soon.
- Have them fill in the Guest Card so that you can put this information in your lead tracking system (CRM).

MOST IMPORTANTLY

Before they leave, know what the next step is with your prospect. Don’t leave it open-ended.

TIP: When you sit down and speak with them and tell them more about the club and the memberships available, don’t do it in your office. Instead, sit out on the back deck, in the dining room, or any other active place of the club with a great view and atmosphere.



PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

So now you know a lot about selling memberships at a *Bobby Jones Links* club. There is a lot to learn – much more than we can put in one manual – but this should get you started. However, to summarize what you now know and must do.

LET'S PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

Membership dues are the lifeblood of a private club. You must know your club, your members, and your market backwards and forwards. There are six things you must have in place before you start selling memberships are listed below. You must use them all and keep your information and these records up to date at all times.

- 1) Membership Package
- 2) Lead Management System
- 3) Master Lead & Sales Calendar
- 4) Club Activity Log
- 5) Guest Card
- 6) New Members Orientation Kit

There are many tools for lead generation, but the most important are:

- The Club Website
- Member Referrals
- Direct Mail
- Print Ads
- Social Media
- Club Signage
- Realtors
- Business Databases

The #1 source of leads are the current members, usually just after they have joined. The best way to capitalize on this is a year-round member referral program.

In order to make sales, you must first understand the mind of the customer.

It is easier to keep a customer than find a new one.

And finally, the number one rule: You must work your leads daily.



PUTT OR DETAIL IS TOO
SMALL TO BE DESPISED."



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