

**ADDISON CRAIG**

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Why Play Golf? – Marketing to the Next Gen

Golf is a great teacher.

Especially for juniors, learning to play golf has advantages that aren't limited to the sport. It teaches patience, discipline, respect, and persistence, and helps develop leadership qualities, and more.

My parents always encouraged me to participate in sports. My middle school promoted sports and offered a wide variety of programs, and being taller and bigger than many of the other students, I leaned towards football and was encouraged by the coach to join the team.

However, my grandfather bought me a new set of golf clubs and encouraged me to play golf more since it was a lifetime sport and it would be useful in business when I became an adult.

The sports schedule offered golf and football at the same time so I had to choose which sport to pursue. At the time, there was no one at school encouraging me to play golf and only a handful of students were thinking about even playing the game.

With lots of encouragement from my family and golf friends, I decided to play the game I've learned to love - golf. I decided to play golf over football. It wasn't easy at first, but I know this was one of the best decisions in my entire life.



Golf is one of the greatest teachers of life skills. It teaches you discipline, the importance of setting goals and developing plans to reach those goals. Golf also teaches you about important leadership qualities – honesty and emotional intelligence.

As a PGA Golf Professional and a U.S. Kids Certified Coach, I'm able to connect with many families and pass on

lessons I've learned, to a new generation of players and their families. This experience also has given me a good view of the problem clubs have attracting young players.

I'm a Millennial and I find that many of my peers and younger people don't always think about the impact that golf has on their lives and what it could do for them and their families. Clubs need to recognize that my age group and the one following mine – Generation Z those born in 1995 and later – are worth paying attention to.

Generation Z is 26 percent of the U.S. population and already contributes \$44 billion to the economy. Yet, the number of younger people playing golf is dropping. If you want to attract this population, you must pay attention to them and be deliberate about promoting the many benefits of the game.

Not only is golf a great way to create lasting memories with family members, here are four life skills that clubs should market:

1. Golf teaches healthy habits and includes spending time outdoors walking nearly five miles on a typical course. Unlike some sports, it is a lifetime sport and is less prone to injury than other sports.
2. Golf builds your ability to get along with people from all walks of life, ages, backgrounds and abilities. You meet the best people while playing golf and I have personally built long-term friendships because of the game.
3. Golf is a very respectable sport. When I think about the times I've played or watched golf, I do believe that the game shows us the importance of sportsmanship.
4. Golf teaches you how to focus and strengthens your mental game. As a Millennial, I've grown up with technology and lots of distractions. Golf requires you to be focused so that you can block out noise and any distractions that would impact your game. Like life in general, there are lots of distractions, however, the people who succeed stay focused on their goals and don't let distractions sideline them.

I think the late Arnold Palmer said it best: "Success in golf depends less on strength of body than upon strength of mind and character."

For clubs seeking to grow and prosper, the bottom line is this: When kids have fun playing at an early age, they're more likely to play for a lifetime. **BR**