



## PGA of America

### Professional growth in a multigenerational workforce

#### The challenge of expectations

The Professional Golfers' Association of America (PGA) is the world's largest working sports organization, leading a \$65 billion-a-year industry that serves 1.5 million jobs. Its membership, standing at 27,000 strong, makes its mission to promote the game of golf at every level to every audience, serving as instructors, course facility operators, pro shop managers and various other capacities that serve the game, its players and fans.

The PGA's goals are to elevate the profession's standards and satisfy the economic well-being of its entrepreneurs. Building an agile workforce that adapts quickly to changes in market, economic and demographic variables while letting go of its past success was a tall order. What worked for members in the past wasn't going to work in the future.

#### Change in a tradition-driven culture

As an organization founded in 1916, its members had traditional practices that were imposing on their ability to develop contemporary business acumen. The PGA needed to find a way to deliver training to its members that would build their business capabilities and help them develop the critical thinking skills needed to operate in today's environment.

In 2011 the PGA commissioned the Boston Consulting Group to conduct a research study that identified the golf industry facing a "reset" in supply and demand as evidenced by a real decline in golf participation both in the number of golfers and number of rounds played. The PGA of America was looking to understand what can best drive future growth in the golf industry. Deep understanding of consumer behavior, attitudes and triggers, coupled with an assessment of their capabilities, led to a learning and development blueprint that laid out an action plan for growth titled Golf 2.0.

The glaring challenge standing in the way of delivering a training initiative that could support growth was a very real generational gap. New members are roughly 30 years old when they join, with an average member age of 45 years. This means there is about a 50/50 split in membership, with half being more "tradition" oriented and the other half being more digitally-focused.

PGA members consist of a multi-generational workforce where some members embrace technology and others don't. The PGA needed to facilitate the development of expertise among veteran members and get them to share their institutional knowledge and experience with younger members without fear of losing their jobs to them.



#### Challenge

- Heighten business development expertise of PGA members
- Help members remain relevant with their clientele
- Develop a multigenerational audience consistently

#### Solution

- Highly effective custom course curriculum
- Resources aligned to support certification and career objectives
- User-friendly experience that fosters continuous development

#### Results

- An industry-wide initiative called, Get Golf Ready, yields \$58 of benefit to the golf course for every \$1 invested by the consumer
- Overall golf income increased \$1,069 per participant

## Building the program

The PGA's original forays into learning and development were becoming obsolete. Learning options were not well integrated with business objectives and very little incentive was provided to participate in the development program. Value simply wasn't communicated.

To begin building its development program anew, the PGA created new content that would engage and resonate with members. With Skillsoft's support, the PGA offered 17 new custom courses for apprentice training and 26 for member training. Course content was presented in an interactive, golf-oriented context. Additionally, there was a major emphasis placed on an intuitive, clean user experience.

Courses were tied to four different certification paths, giving members a "next step" to strive for within their profession, and flowing into the next phase of their development which includes collaboration and mentoring.

## Marketing development

The PGA had two primary challenges when it came to engaging members, especially veteran members, to participate in the program: they had to market it in a non-threatening manner (from a jobs perspective) and they couldn't insult experienced members' intelligence.

The program's success was found in the following factors:

- Identifying the right champions for development. Assembling a "who's who" of the industry to validate the content and vouch for its relevance and importance.
- Positioning the program as a "just-in-time, just-for-me" solution that saved learners time and money.

"With a great partnership and a careful blend of relevant content, technology, and clever program designs, you stand a better chance of engaging your labor force and improving their performance."

*Dawes Marlatt,  
Senior Director of Education &  
Employment, PGA America*

- Knowing their user and the barriers in front of them. By providing certification levels that followed a personalized, elective approach, they were able to sell an aging membership on a digital learning platform.

## The end result

The rollout of this strategy, including a newly designed content plan, research and assessment tools, and digital infrastructure, showcased an innovative model providing full integration of advanced competencies critical to improve job performance. The digital infrastructure provides a suite of customized assets that includes a learning management system, elearning courses, research analytics, social learning through PGA Connect, PGA

Wiki, and computer-based testing. The PGA of America has developed a certification (Player Development) and effective business tools (Get Golf Ready) that have increased member engagement by motivating 42% of the participants to play golf for the first time.

Because of its desire to pinpoint the impact, the PGA astutely leveraged KnowledgeAdvisors to track learning analytics. KnowledgeAdvisors findings revealed improvements in job impact, business results and ROI from 2012 to 2013. In terms of ROI, the Knowledge Advisors Metrics that Matter® software evaluated that the PGA's investment in training and development showed for every \$1 invested there was a \$5.14 return.

In partnering with Skillsoft, the PGA was able to build an innovative and scalable development program to support the growth of its membership, positioning the PGA well for the future and contributing to a storied American institution as it nears its Centennial in 2016.



For more information or to learn more,  
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