

## Membership Marketing - Going Tactical Series

### Part Two: Contract Membership Sales

*By Bob Bodman*

Has your member referral program run dry? Are your members tapped out of friends to invite to membership? Is your club struggling to find qualified and interested prospective members in the community? Is it taking a long time for prospects to make a decision to join? Is your Board spending long hours trying to come up with new, creative ideas on how to attract new members to the club? Does the club have a hard time following up on prospects, responding to inquiries, creating new programs, managing multiple, strategic campaigns, or producing effective, analytical reports? Is the club staff too busy to handle the complexity of membership marketing and sales?

Specialized vendor services are an essential part of any private club's operation. In today's world of highly specialized services, private clubs have been turning to outside specialists. Clubs engage outside contractors for various specialties, not so much because they lack in house expertise, resources or energy, but rather because it simply make more sense in terms of effectiveness (quality, consistency and economics). There are employees within any club staff with ample expertise, experience, skill and desire to be able to re-roof the clubhouse, but that does not make it the most effective way to accomplish it. The same is true for many other services that are best left to specialists.

When focusing on how club's can be "tactical" and dynamic in their membership marketing and sales, the concept of third-party "Contract Membership Sales" can be very effective. More so, if the club does not already include a dedicated membership sales professional. Even if it does, however, there are many ways a contract sales group can double or triple membership results inside of the first year of involvement.

The reason is that there is a growing need for professional membership marketing and sales, primarily because this critical area is a very complex mix of fundamentals, strategies and tactics that incorporates such skills as:

- Networking (in the community)
- Programming (designing and implementing campaigns)
- Contact Management (building and maintaining a prospect database)
- Selling (application of proven sales methods)
- Advertising (designing ads, fliers, eblasts)
- Communications (member internal and market external)
- Targeting (identifying and focusing on the appropriate market segments)
- Demographics (knowing the profile of your prospective member)
- Member Relations and Referral (still the best way to grow membership)
- Membership Structuring (membership types, privileges, restrictions, pricing)
- Orientation (proper assimilation of new members into the club)
- Reporting (effective, analytical, timely)
- Analysis (analyzing trends, campaign effectiveness, projections, strategy tool)

There are numerous contract membership sales approaches. First, there are companies that hire, recruit and train Membership Directors as a service. Second, there are companies that simply structure and launch member referral programs, but have the club staff and members do the actual work internally. Third, there are contract membership sales firms who actually take over the entire membership function on behalf of the club. This type of service takes over the membership marketing, campaigning, sales and reporting functions and acts as the Membership Director or Membership Representative. If the club already has a Membership Director, then the system is structured more as a “team” with the new firm as team leader.

Contract membership sales is a unique type of service. Although a third party, the firm’s marketing and sales representative plays a variety of roles, including being a virtual member of the club’s staff. Much of the work is done off-site, including phone calls, emails, membership structuring, campaign development and launch and reporting, however, it also involves frequent visits to the club to attend meetings, make presentations, assist with tours and to meet with key membership prospects. The role of the club is to provide golf course and clubhouse tours, arrange for introductory rounds of golf, review applications, approve new members and to administrate the new memberships after they have been accepted.

*To learn more about Contract Membership Sales, as well as our strategic membership marketing methods, contact Bob Bodman, president of Club Resources (800) 267-6758 or via email: [Bob@ClubResources.com](mailto:Bob@ClubResources.com)*