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## TPC launches an all-encompassing embedded reservations system for golf, tennis, lessons, dining, and experiences a dramatic increase in web traffic and a quantifiable impact on the club's bottom line.

### Background:

The Tournament Players Club Network, having over 30 years of experience in the private club industry, is home to a complex network of private, destination and resort clubs around the country. In an industry where the personal touch, excellent service, and superb accommodations are key to enriching member experiences, TPC's properties are extending the same focus and standards to their online presence.

One recent TPC initiative resulted in a seven-fold increase in the value delivered to one of their most complex clubs by its website. TPC management wanted to test whether installing a fully integrated suite of reservations systems for their members would increase the member capture rates. They also wanted to test whether having a common user experience across all types of reservations would increase member adoption and participation levels.



## SUGARLOAF

TPC Sugarloaf, led by General Manager Vic Aliprando and located just north of downtown Atlanta, was chosen to be the pilot club for implementing the new systems which included online tee times, golf lessons, tennis court, tennis lessons, a la carte dining and private event reservations. Jackie Corsey, National Director of Sales and Marketing for TPC, discussed the reasoning for choosing TPC Sugarloaf among the other network clubs: "TPC Sugarloaf is one of the most complex clubs in the TPC network with a 27-hole golf course and a sports complex. They also have a very active membership that would represent a majority of situations and issues that might surface waiting for us to experiment with."

## **The Goals:**

The change was prompted by the need for TPC to accomplish three goals with TPC Sugarloaf's website:

- 1) Improve the overall member experience and convenience through adoption of a suite of five integrated reservation systems
- 2) Improve efficiency and productivity, allowing staff to provide better face-to-face service to members and their guests instead of managing telephone traffic
- 3) Improve the branding of the club, the look and feel of the website, the website's relevance to members, and e-commerce opportunities

## **The Results:**

While TPC Sugarloaf was already taking reservations online for tee times, the previous system lacked many of the cross-marketing capabilities that an embedded reservations suite could offer. TPC Sugarloaf offered five embedded reservations systems with uniform user interfaces to ease member adoption and put a strong focus on increasing membership awareness of upcoming events through the use of event banners and customized confirmation emails.

Within three months following the implementation of the new reservations suite, the hard work paid off in several ways.

When comparing member page hits during only the peak summer seasons of 2009 and 2010, TPC Sugarloaf's total private website traffic increased a staggering 724% from 24,452 to 176,914 hits. To put this in the proper context, a typical private club that undertakes a serious effort to increase web traffic through traditional means, but does not include online reservations or other interactive applications, would not expect to see an increase greater than 10 – 15%.

More important than web traffic, however, on-site club traffic also increased at the club. As a direct result of utilizing the embedded online reservations suite and focusing heavily on new cross-marketing capabilities now available, the club saw a dramatic increase in attendance at club events. After going live with the new systems, online registration for events at the club soared to 1,765 attendees from 212 in only six months. This increase resulted in a real financial impact at the club. By comparison, the other TPC network properties averaged 407 online event reservations since TPC Sugarloaf went live.

While the surge in member participation tells a powerful story, the new reservations suite also directly improved club operations. Tyler Graham, Assistant Golf Professional, noticed that "more people are using the new online system than the previous system." He continued, "On Tuesday mornings, we used to have two phones up to each ear taking phone calls for weekend tee times and now we have more time to spend directly assisting members and guests visiting the club. We have a *lot* fewer phone calls than we had before." Referring to the new dining reservations system, Assistant

Food & Beverage Director Jacob Staffin, added that the club's "ability to confirm member reservations without an additional phone call was definitely more efficient and cost-effective."

As the club's Food and Beverage Administrative Assistant, Alma Hernandez, has first-hand experience with taking member reservations over the phone. She said, "I have definitely noticed a decrease in calls for reservations. I have gotten a few e-mails from members asking me how to make reservations online and they are very pleased with it. I really think the members like this better because it's easier, faster and convenient for them. I think it is great, I love it and I'm sure members love it too."

It must be noted though, that this tremendous time savings for club staff does not at all imply a decrease in quality of customer service. Quite the contrary, the staff now have more time to work with those members who want or need extra attention. At the same time, this provides an additional level of service and convenience for busy members by allowing them to efficiently make reservations online from home or work at any time of day or night.

**Conclusion:**

It is important to note that an increase in website traffic leads to an increase in the number of impressions a club can make on its membership about upcoming events, but ONLY if members stay on the club's website, and ONLY if the club staff places current announcements in the high traffic areas. Converting these page hits to member awareness has been the key to TPC Sugarloaf's success. All too often, as was the case with TPC Sugarloaf prior to their new reservations suite, clubs use third-party reservations systems that direct traffic away from their website, losing the opportunity to engage members in other activities and events at the club.

Online reservation applications drive more traffic to the website than any other web application. *Embedded* reservations applications keep this traffic on the club website and multiply the member awareness impact with integrated confirmation emails. Cross-marketing tools let club staff place messages to members right on those high-traffic pages and again in the confirmation emails members look for in their inboxes, meeting members where their attention is already focused.

TPC Sugarloaf showcases the reward of increased member engagement and efficiencies that overwhelmingly justify the cost of switching to the new embedded reservations systems. In addition, as member engagement increases, membership retention and recruitment efforts are more successful, contributing to the long-term health and enrichment of the club.

Changing member routines can often be a daunting task and appear risky at first, particularly when it comes to their use of club facilities and booking online reservations. However, as marketing to the membership becomes more important, and the value of reservations communications as a marketing channel becomes more apparent, the potential financial impact is too great to ignore.