

JUST ONE

name them!!

Most non-golfers believe that golfers are elitist.

Most golfers passionately deny that.

The clarity of the conflict becomes apparent when a golfer is asked: "Hey I have never played but I would love to try it, could we play sometime?"

In the history of the world there has never been a better day to play golf than today. We have incredible choices of venues, transportation, and technology in equipment, instruction and even fashion. We have built a real Big-Time Industry with a ton of bright men & woman leading the millions of dollars being spent by consumers every day. We have experts everywhere, boardrooms full of consultants meeting with other consultants, national golf industry shows that are so big that your feet and brain start to hurt weeks in advance. We are surrounded by golf industry experts talking to one another. We love to talk to one another.

Could talking to one another be the problem of golf's present and future growth?

Have you introduced anybody to golf in the last year? What's their name?

If you begin your answer with: "Well..." Then go on to tell me about how your company has donated to some important golf events. Or, if you tell me how you and your association have supported some important program, then you don't understand the question, you don't get it. Please consider that some important issues like how can we grow the game of golf may not find its answers in boardrooms, conventions and huge marketing campaigns. The answer to golf's growth may be YOU.

Global warming, drug problems, the environment, none of these real issues are going to be solved from on-high. No Drug Czar with a national program is going to save your kids from this horrible addiction. Every law enforcement officer will tell you that it can only be solved one household and with one parent at a time... That means you.

It may be the same with golf. Somehow we all forgot how each of us was introduced to the game, and it wasn't because of a PR campaign. It was our Uncle or Grandmother, maybe a friend, who took the time to share something they loved, hoping we would love it too. No golfer ever forgets who taught them the game, they recall everything about it; how old they were, where they were... But mostly we recall the encouragement and passion that our mentor had for the game. They are special memories that endure. Wouldn't you like to be part of someone's memory? A fond recollection of a gift you gave them, a gift they will cherish for a life-time?

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Five years ago, an associate mentioned that her husband would like to play golf; "He watches it all the time on TV but never tried it." We meet after work at a local driving range, shared a bucket of balls, had an ice cream cone and talked golf. The whole thing took an hour and was a lot of fun. He hit about 20 balls and then he really ripped one ... that was all it took.

My niece mentioned she would really like to try golf sometime. At noon the next week we met at my club, putted for 20 minutes had lunch, laughed and talked about family and golf.

In the last five years I introduced golf to five very different people. Today, four are weekend warriors, one joined a fancy country club and my niece has started a local league for new women golfers. I didn't share any magic message, because I don't have any. I was encouraging and I did share with them how much I love the game. The truth is still: "When the pupil is ready the teacher will appear." I just happened to appear. They all

started playing for different reasons; health, the joy of competition, to meet new friends. One newcomer later told me she started playing because she knew she was getting a divorce and wanted to meet some new friends. We all start for different reasons, but we all continue because golf finds a way to fill a place in our hearts and souls.

Share your time ... share your self ... not your money. Share your gift with someone.

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I have asked this question hundreds of times in the last few years to members of the golf industry. Most of them try to put a spin on the answer. So I follow up with: "What's their name?" This always brings some clarity to the question. Most finally say NO, and have reasons why. But when they say YES, their eyes light-up and they can't wait to tell me about it and how rewarding the experience was and what they learned from it. The most creative ideas in every industry come from beginners not experts.

Like most of society; accountants talk with accountants, golfers like to talk with golfers. We hate to be called elitist, but most of us do shy away from people who don't play when they express an interest in trying.

Are there values and lessons in golf that might make your community a better place? Have you found laughter and excitement on the course that's so rich it's hard to explain? If we all just introduced one person to golf, would we sell more golf shirts, would we build more courses, would we sell more putters? Would we feel better about ourselves?

Do we each have an obligation to encourage one? Should we each try to inspire one? Be an example and share with one.... Just One.

Bill Giering (the writer of this article) is a columnist whose work can be found in leading golf & travel magazines and newspapers world wide. He has played golf on every continent, covered all 4 majors ... and still can't putt

EAST GEELONG GOLF CLUB- would love you to introduce JUST ONE to their golf course- then be able to name them