

New research study unveiled at 63rd PGA Merchandise Show explores corporate golf access for men and women

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PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. (Feb. 2, 2016) -- New cutting-edge research entitled "Business Golf: The Gender Puzzle," conducted by Sports and Leisure Research Group (SLRG) for the PGA of America unveils new insight into the evolving realities of today's corporate environment. Some of the specific workplace examples identified in the study, as well as how men and women executives each perceive the opportunities and barriers of business golf, were highlighted during a lively panel discussion at the 63rd PGA Merchandise Show.

On the panel were: PGA Secretary Suzy Whaley, Troon Golf Chairman and CEO Dana Garmany, Whirlpool Corp. Director for Corporate Reputation and Community Relations Deb O'Connor, and ESPN Senior Vice President of espnW and Women's Initiatives Laura Gentile. They presented ideas on gaining an understanding of the magnitude of the corporate opportunity; building the right environment to facilitate the optimal business golf experience for both men and women; and learning how to get in the door at corporations, and speak their language.

Actionable strategies for PGA Professionals and facility operators seeking to grow revenues by better engaging with the corporate community were shared.

"Women have the money to spend at your facility," said Whaley. "They're making over half-million dollar deals. Creating that opportunity for them is what they really value. Golf just needs to think about how we can fit in their world and not vice versa."

Below are some of the key findings from the study. For additional information click [here](#).

- Both men and women golfers rank golf as the most effective of all networking activities with peers, clients/prospects and suppliers/vendors. Even non-golfing executives rank golf as the No. 1 most effective way to build business relationships.
- 78 percent of women believe playing golf in a business environment is a great networking tool. Both men and women executives rank golf as the most effective of all networking activities with peers, clients and suppliers.
- Nearly 60 percent of business golfers have closed a deal on the golf course or at the golf club. Women are just as likely as men to have done so. Both genders say that there is significant volume and value of deals closed at golf facilities.
- More than a quarter of the women who closed a deal through golf did so with deals valued at more than \$500,000. Both men and women golfers report closing an average of five deals through golf.
- The strongest agreement among golfing men and women is that golf is quality time that helps businessmen and businesswomen de-stress from their jobs, and helps them get to know their peers and colleagues better.
- Nearly 60 percent of women executive golfers agree that playing the game has made them feel more included, while 58 percent of women golfers felt that playing golf has contributed to their professional success. In addition, 75 percent of golfing women executives expressed strong interest in after-work corporate golf activities.
- Women are significantly more likely than men golfing executives to agree that business golf builds confidence and is an important part of the culture in their organization.
- More than half of businesswomen golfers strongly agree that golf has helped make them more assertive (51 percent); more disciplined (56 percent); and more risk-taking (52 percent).

"In companies today, employee engagement is a focus, and just getting together and creating relationships within the company is important," said O'Connor, whose company will host the 77th Senior PGA Championship presented by KitchenAid in May. "It's really important to where you're going to find your next job...It's really important for women to get to know executives on a level playing field, and golf can really help."

"We're progressively trying to get to the tip of the spear, trying to say we have people who want to play golf and want to participate," said Garmany. "So, let's do everything we can to find a way to get them involved."

There are still barriers to entry. For example, businesswomen golfers say they are significantly more likely than men to feel that the game is not as accessible to women than men within their own companies. Only 30 percent of male golfing executives' business rounds are played with mixed gender groups, yet 79 percent of women prefer to do so. Golfing businesswomen are also 25 percent more likely than men to feel that business golf is more stressful than social golf. Meanwhile, nearly half feel that men on the golf course are often trying to teach them what to do.

"It's about making golf hospitable...It's about the culture of the game and everyone feeling equal," said Gentile. "Golf has certainly helped me as an executive, make relationships, foster deals and build a good reputation."

"Golf and business have always had an intrinsic connection," said Moderator and SLRG Founder and President Jon Last. "Yet, the magnitude of this relationship has only been sporadically studied. It has been approximately a decade since the market was analyzed. We found that companies are looking for bridges to create cultures of inclusion and positive intra-firm and client relationships. Golf is highly valued in this regard."