



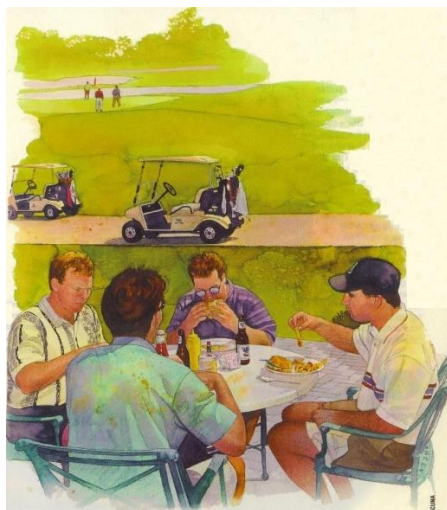
## Talking in the 19th Hole

**DRIVER.** The health, economic, and security crisis in Mexico has affected practically all sectors of the country. Golf clubs are no exception. Some clubs have cut staff, lowered salaries, lowered the quality of services, and neglected the golf course and facilities' maintenance.

Some members have decided to sell, rent, or give in usufruct their shares or membership because:

- They have other economic priorities.
- They are paying without enjoying the club for being in confinement due to the pandemic.
- The company where they work has taken away the benefit of enjoying a club.
- They have decided to emigrate to another country.

For me, a thermometer of a city or region's economy is the number of golf courses and the number of their members. If the clubs have financial problems, it means that the city's economy is having problems. Clubs have to adapt to circumstances to continue operating efficiently for the good of their members and their employees.



I was born and raised on a golf course. I know more than 70 courses and have worked in six clubs. With this experience, I am encouraged to propose some ideas that can help clubs optimize resources and overcome the current crisis, affecting their members and employees as little as possible.

- Electricity consumption. Electricity bills may decrease if members and employees are more aware of their use of electricity. It is common to find the lighting of the driving range, the tennis courts, and other club areas during the day. Or they are turned on without it being necessary. The clubs must invest in installing solar panels for the benefits they will obtain in the medium and long term.

- Private golf carts pay for the electricity they consume. In clubs that guard member carts, each cart must be paying for the energy it receives. There are clubs where some members don't pay because they are influential or because they tip the cart staff.
- The consumption of drinking water. Water wastage is common in clubs: hosing down floors, leaking toilets, leaving permanent water supply in urinals, members do not turn off the shower when bathing, using the hose stream to wash golf carts instead of a bucket or Karcher, washing members' cars with the jet of the hose, watering the gardens with the jet of the hose instead of a sprinkler system, etc. The club must campaign for the reasonable use of water. Those responsible for each area must supervise that there is no waste and work as a team with the maintenance area.
- The consumption of treated or well water on the golf course. Water waste on the golf course is common: sprinkler and pipe leaks, lake leaks, excessive water use to wash machinery and utility carts, over-watering without scheduling or supervision, etc.
- Tour and tournament expenses. The payment of registrations, uniforms, transportation, per diem for pros, etc. of children-youth, ladies and gentlemen who participate in tours and tournaments, in general, is a controversial topic. Some members believe that each member should cover their expenses and others believe that the club should support its representative team. The expenses for these concepts are high, so the current situation requires that these expenses be evaluated.
- Practice balls. The driving range is one of the most attended areas of a golf club. The members hope that the balls are in good condition, so it is necessary to invest resources in this area. Some options to save money in this line are:
  - Get sponsors for the practice balls.
  - Recover the balls from the lakes and use them in practice.
  - Get used balls from other clubs who rotate them more frequently.
  - Directly import the balls from China or India.
  - Place a deposit for members to donate the balls they no longer use.
- Weekend staff. Some clubs have good attendance from Friday to Sunday. It is convenient for them to hire staff only for the weekend. The person in charge of each area must determine its full-time staff and its weekend staff. For example, in golf, only one marshal is needed on some courses from Tuesday to Thursday, but two are needed from Friday to Sunday. Another option is for assistant pros to help with the pace of play as well.
- The pros of teaching. Some clubs have several pros that do not fulfill specific functions that add to the golf area's work. They focus on giving private classes and support in the academy, where they are also paid. Some clubs are dropping the number of pros on the payroll. Clubs are shifting from a closed scheme of only allowing their pros to teach to an open scheme to let independent pros teach private classes and at the academy. This concept allows significant savings in salaries and benefits.
- Productivity of golf course staff. I worked in a club with Rubén Robles, a superintendent trained in the United States. I was surprised that he did more with less staff. Rubén made the staff productive. Rubén managed fewer employees, but they were paid well. I have seen in the clubs that they have many staff, pay low salaries, and low productivity.

- Productivity of maintenance personnel. In the clubs, the maintenance staff works similar to the Federal Electricity Commission staff, who will give a repair or maintenance service; that is, several employees go, but it seems that they take turns working. It is urgent to increase the productivity of the maintenance area. Keeping track of maintenance orders can help.
- Buy from the best suppliers. In many clubs, materials, equipment, and services are purchased from executives, former executives, friends, etc. but not necessarily in the club's best conditions. It is necessary to review the suppliers and stay with those who offer the best conditions.
- Security personnel. When I lived as a child in the Culiacán Country Club, there were only three security people: Don Manuel and Juan Rodríguez, they were the morning and evening doormen, and Samuel was the watchman. Times have changed, and today, due to society's insecurity and dishonesty, clubs require more security personnel. But, the security staff can be less if you invest in technology.
- Fuel consumption. In fuel for machinery, utility carts, automobiles for personal use or transportation, and gasoline vouchers, personnel usually have thefts. It is necessary to have adequate controls to avoid leaks in this area.
- Not necessary jobs. In the clubs, there are jobs created for family members or recommended by executives, positions to fulfill managerial whims, temporary assignments that have become permanent, etc. It is a priority to review the organization chart and define which jobs can be dispensed without affecting the operation.
- Reduce counseling services. In most clubs, advisory services are hired for accounting, tax, legal, marketing, golf course, golf area, construction, etc. The reduction may consist of stopping contracting these services. The Club can also reduce the budget it designates for this concept. For example, hiring a national advisor instead of a foreign advisor, or a local advisor instead of the national one, or ask an employee or club member for advice instead of the local advisor.
- Avoid building and buying fancy. Some executives promote the construction of works, the purchase of works of art, the purchase of fashionable equipment, the installation of systems, etc.; they are merely personal, family, or group whims. The oven is not for buns, so the clubs should avoid the expenses made to please the executives' whims and tastes on duty. There are so many stories to illustrate this point.
- Scorecards and pencils. Some clubs have a good practice of having sponsors provide the scorecards and pencils used by golfers. It is essential to update the content of the scorecard so that it has the current information.
- Executives do not abuse the budget. There are executives who, abusing their authority, have trips, meals, and even drunkenness at the expense of the club's budget. I agree that the club covers certain expenses, but the executives should not abuse them.

- Executives do not have privileges. Some executives give themselves benefits for their service in the club; for example, the club staff does maintenance work in their house: painting, plumbing, carpentry, etc. Another example is that executives no longer pay maintenance fees after their administration because the council established that.
- Staff training. I favor staff training, but I can't entirely agree that administrative personnel go to the Golf Industry Show or PGA Merchandise Show in the United States. In essence, it is to finance a vacation for them. The training is now virtual, which reduces the expenses in that concept. I suggest that the club employees themselves train the staff. For example, a systems person can train golf staff who do not know how to use Office. The most prepared golf pro can train golf staff and caddies.
- Maintain an inventory of assets. Club assets are valuable, but some clubs don't know what they have because they don't have an inventory of equipment, machinery, tools, furniture, etc. There are several benefits of inventory control, including less theft, more efficient purchasing, and better asset valuation.
- Payment of ordinary and extraordinary fees to the Mexican Golf Federation. Many clubs are not affiliated with the FMG for different reasons. Affiliated clubs must pay dues to the FMG. Some clubs absorb the payment of fees, and others collect it from their players. I consider that the player interested in having a handicap in the FMG should pay the fee.
- Sponsors per hole. At the Culiacán Country Club, they held a golf tournament to benefit the DIF. It is curious that in Sinaloa, there are 18 municipalities, so the organizers assigned one hole per municipality. Also, they set a sponsoring private company to each hole. Clubs may have private companies sponsor the maintenance of a hole. The clubs can combine this idea by putting a name to each hole, as other clubs have done. Thus, the club would put on the tee sign of each hole: the hole's information, the sponsoring company, and the hole's name.
- Avoid the liquidations of employees due to decisions of executives. Some executives take differences with employees personally, to the extent that they fire them to fulfill their whim. Liquidations are very expensive, so clubs should avoid them, especially if they are due to the executive's tantrum.
- Overtime pay. There are clubs where overtime, double, triple, and even quadruple hours are paid, in many cases without being necessary and benefiting the area chiefs' friends. Decreasing or eliminating overtime pay will provide significant savings.
- Carry out audits and inventories. Clubs must carry out audits and inventories in all their areas, especially those that handle more budget. Golf course maintenance, clubhouse maintenance, and food and beverage are areas with a pretty budget and are where there are more incidences of theft by bosses and employees.
- Reduce theft. Dishonest behavior on the part of employees, and sometimes members, causes considerable loss to clubs. Among the most common behaviors are: stealing stationery, soaps, gifts from sponsors, toilet paper, antibacterial gel, bottles of wine, objects forgotten by members, golf clubs, golf balls driving range, pro shop merchandise, golf course scrap accessories, cart batteries,

building supplies, tools, general merchandise, etc. Also, revenue from practice balls, green fees, passes, etc., are not reported.

These are some actions that clubs can take to be profitable and continue to operate. Some employees and executives will be affected by these actions, but they are necessary actions. Employees and members must understand that there are situations that do not last forever, and they should be grateful for the time they benefited from them. **FORE.**

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