

A Swingin' Coffee Break

Resorts remake golf instruction into 30-minute programs

When it comes to holding meetings at resorts, the pacing of the program is essential to keeping attendees engaged and effective in business sessions. Especially given the fact that tempting leisure pursuits are just beyond the meeting room walls, planners must make a concerted effort to incorporate enough

time in the agenda for rejuvenating endeavors.

Interestingly, some resorts have picked up this mantle as well, making the mixing of business and leisure an easier task for planners. One way they are doing this: bringing golf into the middle of the business agenda.

Whereas a round of golf, or even a golf-themed reception and teambuilding exercise, had in the past been scheduled to take place only after a meeting concludes for the day, there are now programs that bring golf instruction and contests into 30- to 60-minute refreshment breaks in the midst of a meeting.

For instance, at the Doral Tesoro Hotel & Golf Club in Fort Worth, TX, a new complimentary program called All About Golf brings the resort's golf instructors right into the meeting room, with clubs and equipment in tow. They offer both novices and experienced players the opportunity to have their swings critiqued and improved, to learn how to putt more accurately, and to learn basic golf rules and etiquette. Food and beverage choices can be themed to the task as well.



Putting tournaments are perfect for meeting breaks or receptions

STEPPING OUTSIDE

Other resorts are blessed with having golf practice areas within short walking distance from the meeting space, allowing for outdoor, active refreshment breaks that reinvigorate attendees who've become a bit sluggish from the day's proceedings.

At Tucson's Hilton El Conquistador

Resort and the two Pointe Hilton Resorts in Phoenix, the golf shop staff often conducts the Hilton Golf Break during a meeting's intermission. It includes instruction in chipping, sand shots, and putting, and can also include a quick five-hole putting contest on the practice green, complete with prizes. Refreshment tables are placed on the perimeter of the area; attendees can opt

to simply listen and learn, or to partake in some practice swings.

Another teambuilding event that the Hiltons can incorporate into the business agenda is a putter-building contest. In this exercise, teams of attendees are given 20 household items that must be fashioned into a working (and somewhat visually attractive) putter. After an hour, teams must show the judges their creations, and demonstrate that the devices can indeed putt a golf ball passably.

And at the Rosen Shingle Creek Resort in Orlando, Brad Brewer, who runs the golf instruction academy at the resort, has fashioned a "scoring zone" practice facility just steps behind the large meeting and exhibition wing so that groups of up to 100 can absorb the sunshine and get in a bit of exercise between sessions.

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The "scoring zone" incorporates instruction and contests for shots of less than 50 yards (including putting), so that both novice and veteran golfers can partake under the watchful eye of Brewer and his instructors.

"We have been told that once attendees go back into the meeting, the

energy level is much higher than before," Brewer said. "Getting attendees to do a little physical activity makes a lot of difference in their ability to stay mentally alert."

Other resorts known for having golf practice areas within walking distance of their meeting space include Marriott

Seaview Resort in Galloway, NJ; Sea Pines Resort in Hilton Head, SC; La Costa Resort & Spa in Carlsbad, CA; Barton Creek Resort in Austin, TX; PGA National Resort in Palm Beach Gardens, FL; Pine Needles Lodge & Golf Club in Southern Pines, NC; and Doral Resort & Spa in Miami. ■