

THE EUROPEAN GOLF BUSINESS CONFERENCE



THE NEXT STEP

FROM CHANGE TO OPPORTUNITY

AMSTERDAM
2-4
DECEMBER 2009

Defining the Next Step

Last year's European Golf Business Conference was entitled 'The Big Change'. This year, it's up to delegates to define 'The Next Step'. **Tibbe Bakker** describes what the fourth European Golf Business Conference, taking place in Amsterdam, has to offer.

■ Big changes, economic downturn, increasing demand for sustainability; they could be seen as only negative trends. But golf course owners have to realise that change means opportunity.

What can operators do to make sure they take the next step from these changes and seize opportunities that lie ahead in the future? The European Golf Business Conference will offer ideas and solutions for operations, marketing, hospitality and yield management.

Once the golf industry realises change is occurring, there is a need to define and collate the opportunities evolving from the changes around us. In short, we have to define the next step to be taken.

Around 250 delegates gathered last year in the Hilton Hotel in Berlin to discuss and define the changes that are taking place in the European golf market.

Research by the EGCOA showed that old models do not fit anymore and the time is right for golf courses to start acting upon the wishes of the so called 'new golfers'.

The 'commercial push to growth period' (see *GME* March edition) forces course owners and operators to think of new ways to attract customers and replace out-dated members. The

intensive growth of golf courses in the late

1990s and 2000 changed the supply- and-demand equation and

the industry has been attempting to figure out how to deal with it ever since.

The impact of the economic downturn might have resulted in a decline of the growth rate, but the question remains, are too many courses chasing too few golfers?

And, on the growing supply side, what is happening with regards to the demand of people looking to play golf?

It was not long after the Berlin conference that the credit crunch started to demand even more creativity from golf course operators. How could people afford to play golf if more and more started losing their jobs?

Another major force that will impact on the golf business is 'green awareness'.

Water management is higher on the agenda than ever and most communities no longer accept green, flourishing golf courses that do not respect environmental sustainability.

Besides this change in demography and demand for sustainable development, the program of the fourth European Golf Business Conference will touch on various other subjects:

How can staff at your golf club adapt better policies that will increase member retention? What can we learn from other businesses when it comes to yield management? And do you think your e-marketing is almost perfect?

Speakers at this year's conference will also present ways to better use valuable sources like websites, e-newsletters and member databases. If you have questions, comments or suggestions for speakers and topics, let us know what they are and we will make sure they are included in the program. **GME**

