

## An Exploration of the Preferred Golf Management Competencies

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As one of the most popular leisure sports, people of all ages and abilities play and enjoy golf for a variety reasons. According to some researchers (Beggs, 2002; Cohn, 1991; Petrick, Backman, & Bixler, 1999; Petrick, Backman, Bixler, & Norman, 2001), golf is a satisfying activity. When an activity is satisfying, individuals continue to engage in the activity (Beard & Ragheb, 1980). The game of golf has been booming for the last 40 years (Kelly, 1987). According to Kelly and Freysinger (2000), golf participation increased 75 percent since 1994. The National Golf Foundation (NGF) reported that in 2004, 30.3 million Americans ages five and above either played a round of golf or visited one of the United States' golf facilities. Additionally, golfers spent \$24.3 billion in 2002 on equipment and fees. Further, in addition to 16,057 existing golf facilities, a total of 220 new golf courses opened their doors across the U. S. in 2004 (NGF, 2005).

The rapid growth of the golf industry has created a strong demand for skilled golf course management. Since golf course operation is complex and has many different aspects, the golf profession requires expertise in a variety of areas such as turf grass management, retail operations and merchandising, food and beverage management, personnel management, accounting, risk management, marketing, golf teaching skills, and customer services (PGA, 2005). Further, this surge of golf as a leisure activity has led to a tremendous opportunity to explore the managerial and financial needs of this industry. Golf and leisure service managers/directors must be aware of the potential for financial loss and learn to effectively manage the immense risk that exists in their professions. Thus, identifying competencies in golf management for private, semi-private, and public golf courses will provide a needed foundation for management research and help modify current education in the PGA and the effective training of future golf directors.

The purpose of this study was to discover the importance of needed competencies identified in the PGA professionals' analysis for golf course directors in private, semi-private, and public golf courses in the United States. The entire research process aimed to construct a competency model for PGA golf professionals using the Competencies of Golf Course Directors (CGCD) instrument and test this model in the study.

From scientific management by Taylor to contemporary management, the most common concern is effectiveness and efficiency of job-related performance to generate profit for organization. Management concepts have transformed from functional specialization to broad management skills with specialization (Von der Embse, Delozier, & Castellano, 1973). Management competencies help managers to meet organizational goals and changes, as well as to improve organizational effectiveness. These are related to skills, knowledge, ability, tasks, processes, expectations, and core content regarding one's job (Boyatzis, 1982). Management competencies investigated by management theorists as well as sport management scholars were classified into six categories including technical, human relations, conceptual, negotiation, political, and intuitive skills. To be considered a qualified golf professional, it is important to possess those competencies in golf and business-related areas.

This study was designed to explore golf management competencies at PGA recognized golf facilities in the United States. Due to the nationwide scope of the study, the research design chosen for this study was a self-administered electronic mail-survey questionnaire. With regard to the selection of the instrument through reviewing literature in management competencies of recreational sport managers, Toh's (1997) Competencies of Sport Managers (COSM) instrument was chosen with modification. Hereafter, the instrument is identified as the Competencies of Golf Course Directors (CGCD). The CGCD instrument consisted of two sections: (1) Competencies and (2) Demographic Information. A total of 91 competency statements were maintained through the content validation process by expert jurors.

The subjects selected for this study were PGA certified directors/head professionals who were in a golf operation position in PGA recognized facilities. The sampling method used was judgment sampling to measure different golf environments including year-round and seasonal golf facilities, different populations served, familiarity, and/or willingness to provide directories for the sample Districts. Among the Association's 14 Districts, four Districts (District 2, 11, 12, and 13) were chosen from the 2005 PGA Membership and Golf Directory, PGA members' name, email address, facility name, and telephone contact number were listed alphabetically. When choosing the population, all members holding Class A-1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 13, 14, 19, or Life membership in each of the selected Districts were chosen. The sample of Districts included a total of 3,793 subjects (748 golf professionals in District 2; 968 golf professionals in District 11; 655 golf professionals in District 12; and 1,422 golf professionals in District 13). This sampling design utilized four Districts to represent the PGA. Within the Districts and respective sections, a census of

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members permitted contact with all listed members. From that census, respondents voluntarily self-selected by responding to the electronic survey. Through measuring the selected golf environments using judgment sampling, the chosen sample appears to be representative of the entire population. When administering the instrument, Dillman's (1978) Total Design Method for survey was followed for purposes of data collection. The Total Design Method includes four mailings in eight weeks. Data collection concluded during October 2005.

Demographic information revealed similarities and differences between directors/head professionals at disparate types of golf courses in different regions. In terms of yearly rounds of golf within Districts, there were few differences reported. Thus, all-year round golf courses and seasonal golf courses seem to share more similarities than differences. It was assumed that all-year round golf has much competition depending on its locations and population, while seasonal golf remains consistent with rounds of golf per year. A principal component analysis with a direct Oblimin rotation scheme was performed to discover the pattern of the factor structure in the relationships among competency variables. Competency factors identified in the golf course directors' analysis indicated the presence of a 2-factor competency model made up of 76 observed competencies including (1) Golf Operation and (2) Client Care Development. It is deemed that golf course directors regarded each separate management competency category as a whole golf operation.

Overall response rates for this study were low (10.3 percent) compared to other online surveys. To increase the response rate for future studies, the use of a pre-screening method would be helpful for contributing to respondents' trust as well as building expectation and reducing the possibility that a potential respondent might disregard the survey when it arrives. Inclusion of this step may eliminate potential non-respondents as well as administrative errors (e.g., bad email addresses, system errors, etc.) via electronic mailing.