

Much more than just a golf course means an above par corporate experience!

By Teresa Flannigan

It may be the era of instant messaging and video conferencing but business people in Scotland still love face to face contact...the chance to put a face to a name and meet directly to discuss potential business. When this is combined with golf, they can also enjoy the quality of the game itself and be out in the fresh air away from the office environment.

Recent research suggests that a more challenging golf environment is the best method for encouraging a strong performance in the boardroom afterwards. So perhaps trying a course you have not played before or choosing one of a Championship quality is the way to go to bring out the best in any corporate group.

As we continue to face challenging times in business and commerce in 2011, Hr NETWORK Magazine has endeavoured to find out if a great deal of business is still being conducted on the golf courses of Scotland with many a deal concluded with a handshake at the 19th Hole?

What do corporate golf days have to offer the business community nowadays? Corporate trade has always been highly sought after by golf clubs, but a straightening of economic times has called for added value and a focus on increased customer orientated service.

At Deer Park Golf and Country Club in Livingston, the club has worked hard to ensure that its corporate offering hits the mark with a variety of specially tailored packages on

offer - enabling a corporate group to enjoy the ideal blend of pleasure and business.

Deer Park is not just about the golf. Groups can start the day with hot bacon rolls plus tea and coffee, which if they are relative strangers, some golfers will tell you that this is the critical point where friendships and business relationships are formed for the first time with everyone feeling relaxed, enabling introductions to be far more natural.

Then it's out to the 6727 yard, par 72 golf course, designed by Peter Allis and Dave Thomas in 1978 and a stunning test of golf, for four balls or whatever combinations works best for the party.





Deer Park excels at serving great food at any time of the day, which is not always the case for other golf and leisure clubs so guests are guaranteed some delicious fare at a great value price as part of their corporate experience. A corporate day can then include a conference or meeting session in the Club's Function Suite, seating up to 200, or if a smaller party, the Monarch Restaurant can be used.

Also as an add-on, corporate guests can round off the day with either more golf or a swim in the Club's stunning deck level pool, which, with its expansive floor to ceiling windows, offers panoramic views of the golf course. There is also a sauna and spa facilities befitting any five star hotel – or even a game of ten pin bowling which has been shown to be an excellent team building game or staff incentive.

As well as attracting new corporate business, the Club already enjoys a high level of regular business with many loyal business groups returning time after time.

Deer Park's Sales and Marketing Manager Cheryl Moir explains: "Although we are a Golf Club - and offer a Championship Golf Course in which to enjoy a corporate day – we are in many ways so much more than that here



at Deer Park. The emphasis is on friendly personal service from the minute you come through the door and you can mix and match your activities to suit such as adding in some swimming or ten pin bowling after a meeting – you can easily spend the whole day here and you will be fed and watered to suit – there are no restrictive times to adhere to."

Moir believes that Deer Park's annual Deer Park Masters Tournament, which regularly sees a full 100 corporate teams taking part in a two day pro-am contest with fifty of Scotland's top club professionals, has contributed enormously to the Club excelling at corporate business.

"We are hugely proud of our achievements over the last

couple of years which even in the teeth of a recession have seen 100 teams take part in the Masters. It's a real calendar highlight for them and we see many of the same companies submitting teams time after time," she said.

"It gives us the edge when it comes to putting corporate groups at their ease – we know that the quality of the golf must be good; the food satisfying and the service unobtrusive but attentive."

Throughout the year Deer Park hosts several other pro-am Tournaments, for local Charities and business networking groups, so the Club is well used to looking after large numbers. Corporate membership is available with members also offered the chance to take part in an Annual Corporate Golf Challenge.



General Manager John Douglas, who has looked after royalty in his time having spent many years aboard the QE II: "We look after our leisure members to ensure that they are receiving value for money and good service and it's entirely the same with customers coming for corporate business. A club like this needs both sets of visitors to survive in the current economic climate and both are equally important to us. We are now a Visit Scotland 4 star venue, on a par with other visitor attractions in the West Lothian area and we are sure this will give our corporate customers added confidence."

Other new facilities recently introduced at Deer Park for both the corporate and leisure sectors include new indoor golfing facilities so that golf skills and training can be enjoyed all year round.

"It's not always possible to play outdoors in Scotland so we have introduced what we call the 4 S's – Strength, Stability, Stamina and Skill – a videoed swing lesson and fitness assessment in Deer Park's gym – which is not only enjoyable but provides you with instant feedback on how to improve your game. We are confident that this service provides a new dimension for corporate activity," said Deer Park's professional Sandy Strachan. **Hr**

For further details on tailored corporate packages at Deer Park check out the website: www.deer-park.co.uk