

MELBOURNE IT HELPS GOLF LINK PARTNERS FOCUS ON THE GAME



Customer: GOLF *Link* Partners

Key Facts:

- 1,500 clubs and 400,000 golfers
- Customer base includes 95% of Australian golf clubs
- Primary service is to maintain the handicap system

Challenge:

- Too much time was spent managing infrastructure needs
- Required greater capacity
- Faultless system changeover to a new calculation method

Solution:

- Out source to Melbourne IT
- Flexible and tailored infrastructure solution

Results:

- An impeccable system changeover
- Well-managed infrastructure which is customised to ensure optimum performance

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Judy Pridmore , CEO. GOLF *Link* Partners

‘What’s your handicap?’

It’s quite possibly the most common question asked by golfers when discussing the game with a fellow player, and for most golfers a low handicap is a source of real pride.

The responsibility of managing the system that calculates and maintains the handicap data for more than 400,000 club golfers in Australia falls to **GOLF *Link* Partners**, who is the exclusive service provider to golf’s governing body, Golf Australia. **GOLF *Link* Partners** is acutely aware of the importance of the information to its enthusiastic customer base and reliability is paramount, so it entrusts its data hosting to Melbourne IT Enterprise Services.

Turning a vision into reality

Today, **GOLF *Link* Partners** supplies a range of online services to more than 1,500 clubs and 400,000 golfers. But turning this vision into reality has taken time.

The idea for an online service for golfers to access and update their handicap from any club in Australia was initially created in the late ‘90s. The first iteration of the system won the 1999 National Sports Award ahead of strong competition from the AFL website and the Australian Yachting Federation membership scheme. Since then, the customer base of clubs has grown from less than 50 to 1,500 today, which is around 95% of Australian golf clubs.

The primary service is maintaining the handicap system. After a round of golf, players take their scorecard into their clubhouse and it is scanned or entered into the club’s system which interfaces with the **GOLF *Link*** system to automatically update their handicap. This handicap is internationally recognised and required for entry into competition golf.

In addition to handicap services, **GOLF *Link* Partners** provides a booking service for clubs so golfers can go online to check availability of tee times and book a round. There are also a range of lifestyle services offered on the site including travel booking, a wine club, and golfing gift vouchers.

“Our objective is to meet the needs of golfers in Australia by providing a full service for their game of golf and their golfing lifestyle,” **GOLF *Link* Partners** CEO, Judy Pridmore, says.

Delivering reliable service

With such a range of services to deliver, Pridmore says it was vital for **GOLF *Link* Partners** to choose the right partner to manage its online infrastructure.

“Prior to 2007 we had our data with a co-located service and there were some performance issues which highlighted to us that the infrastructure was not as robust as it could have been,” she says.

“We needed to focus on our core business rather than continue to be distracted by the infrastructure issues. We also needed greater capacity because our club base was growing rapidly and to meet that growth we needed to scale up.”

GOLF Link Partners selected Melbourne IT Enterprise Services following a competitive tender process to host all its online infrastructure and databases.

“We really felt that Melbourne IT had understood the business best and developed a solution that demonstrated that understanding of our needs. And while we had no concerns they could meet the RFP criteria on the technology front, the real reason we chose them was the quality of Melbourne IT’s people,” Pridmore says.

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The Big Switch: April 2010’s Handicap System Change

GOLF Link Partners put the relationship to the test in April 2010 when the Australian golfing handicap system changed to a new method of calculation. The new system meant an update to the calculation algorithms but also meant that more than 400,000 golfers’ handicaps would change as a result.

“Any slip-up would have affected every single club golfer so we couldn’t afford any mistakes in the changeover. This was a big deal for us and required careful planning,” Pridmore says.

“We worked very closely with the Melbourne IT team to map out the transition to the new system. This included a lot of capacity planning to minimise any downtime when we went live at 9am on April 9th, as we knew we would have 400,000 keen golfers logging in at exactly the same time wanting to see how their handicap had changed,” she says.

“We were really impressed at the professionalism and problem solving ability of the Melbourne IT team. The change went off without any major hitches and the way it was managed was copybook.

“It was critical to **GOLF Link** Partners that we could make that transition with a minimum of fuss and it was fantastic that we could totally trust Melbourne IT as our partners.

“The Melbourne IT team is solution-based. Rather than trying to sell us equipment and services we don’t need, they really understand our business needs and objectives – meaning we get a flexible and tailored offer to suit our requirements,” Pridmore says.

“The follow up and support is first class, which resonates with me because personal service is something I really value. People who know me know that I don’t hand out this kind of praise lightly but our team at Melbourne IT has really earned it.”

Innovating and Future Growth

GOLF Link Partners has also launched an iPhone application which connects to the **GOLF Link** system to provide handicap information to golfers on their iPhones, building on the company’s existing SMS alert system which texts golfers their updated handicap directly to their mobiles. Within only a few months the application had already attracted 3,000 users.

“We’re always looking to innovate and update the range of services we provide to see what else we can offer to meet the needs of our members,” Pridmore says.

“Our focus is on delivering the best service we can to our customer base. While technology will always be at the heart of our company, Melbourne IT allows us to focus on first class service delivery and growing our business – and not worry about the back-end infrastructure.”