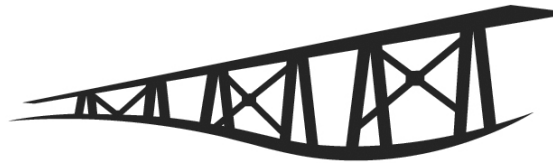


STRATEGIC PLAN
2009



THE BRIDGES
AT TILLSONBURG

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The seven key issues that surfaced from the Planning Survey are: Organizational culture, Customer Service, Condition of Golf Course, Clubhouse, Communication, Financial Resources and Marketing.

As a result of the Strategic Planning Process, THE BRIDGES AT TILLSONBURG's Goals and Objectives are:

- 1. To change the culture and image as well as the name of previous Tillsonburg Golf and Country Club.**
 - 1.1 Break down barriers.
 - 1.2 Be more welcoming.
 - 1.3 Encourage more patience.
- 2. To provide customer satisfaction that is above and beyond expectations.**
 - 2.1 Make a good first impression.
 - 2.2 Employ a friendly and knowledgeable staff.
 - 2.3 Encourage everyone to return to play.
 - 2.4 Improve specific services.
- 3. To maintain the golf course at a high but yet affordable standard.**
 - 3.1 Establish an affordable standard of excellence.
 - 3.2 'Dress-up golf course.
- 4. To improve the condition of the clubhouse (with the knowledge that it is to be replaced at a later date).**
 - 4.1 To make the Club House more comfortable and inviting.
- 5. To communicate more effectively.**
 - 5.1 Improve use of communication tools.
 - 5.2 Increase communication.
 - 5.3 Get 'feedback.
- 6. To maximize opportunity for revenue generation.**
 - 6.1 Increase utilization of existing resources.
 - 6.2 Ensure financial viability.
- 7. To increase awareness of THE BRIDGES AT TILLSONBURG.**
 - 7.1 Develop Marketing Plan.

2. PROFILE of The *BRIDGES* at *TILLSONBURG*

PAST

Representing more than eighty years of tradition, the Tillsonburg Golf & Country Club was distinguished by its beautiful setting, challenging layout and traditional clubhouse. In 1925, the nine-hole semi-private golf club designed by E. H. Houghton was established. Built on 55 acres of farmland on the south side of town on John Pound Road awaited members and guests looking for enjoyable, relaxing breaks from the days busy schedules.

Founded by a group of 9 local businessmen, shares were initially sold for one hundred dollars. The group purchased farmland from the MacDonald family, and a retired druggist named Houghton designed the original layout of holes. The farmhouse was used as the clubhouse with the catering being provided by the membership (namely

the ladies section of the club). A few years after its founding, the original clubhouse was destroyed in a fire and a portion of today's clubhouse was erected. Members participated regularly in working bees to do whatever it took to improve the facility. Everything from brush clean up, rock picking or clubhouse improvement was undertaken by the membership.

PRESENT

Over the years many changes have occurred but the philosophy of the founding members has not. It is still a place where members and guests can congregate for camaraderie, fellowship and recreation. Members are still greatly involved in all aspects of the club management and activities are still designed with member enjoyment and participation in mind.

The existing 9-hole, 2,666 yard, par 34 course, although renowned for its excellent playing conditions, mature trees and natural ravine landforms, had a limited viability. Recognizing the need to create a sustainable 18-hole golf course within the Town of Tillsonburg, the Town and the Golf Course ventured into a partnership to expand the course on the south side of John Pound Road.

FUTURE

The year 2009 will represent a year of change and transition at the Tillsonburg Golf and Country Club. This quaint 9-hole golf course will now be transformed into a picturesque, challenging 18-hole beauty that will be a pleasure for all to play.

The existing mature 9-hole layout will be converted to six holes with 12 memorable new holes constructed on approximately 110 acres of land on the opposite side of John Pound Road. The 12 new holes wind through beautiful natural areas in and throughout the Otter Creek floodplain, crossing the river in a number of locations.

These new holes also offer scenic elevation changes with stunning backdrops that are designed to be played by golfers of all calibre, but at the same time, challenging enough for those players who prefer to play the course at its longest.

The final project will not only offer a championship-quality 18 hole golf course to the community but also walking trails, extending the current trails throughout the town. The approximate 5 km trail system will provide both summer and winter recreation opportunities for residents and tourists alike and will be fully accessible to the public. It is only fitting that a golf course of this distinction, should have a change of name. From this time forward it will be known as THE BRIDGES AT TILLSONBURG. Along with the name change will come a new and more welcoming culture.

The BRIDGES AT TILLSONBURG is operated by professional staff and governed by a volunteer board.

3. COMMUNITY PROFILE

"A Place to Build Your Future" captures the essence of Tillsonburg - a dynamic, prosperous and caring community of approximately 15,000 residents.

The Town of Tillsonburg is located in Southwestern Ontario, at the southern end of Oxford County, and it boasts of an excellent hospital, an up to date library, modern schools and an abundance of cultural and recreational facilities and activities.

Tillsonburg serves as a regional centre for industry and commerce and enjoys a labour and consumer population in excess of 100,000 people within a 30 minute driving distance. It is home to a variety of industries exporting products around the world, making Tillsonburg a profitable centre for business and industry.

4. PLANNING CONTEXT

4.1 PROCESS

At the beginning of October, 2008, the Board of THE BRIDGES AT TILLSONBURG, formally known as the Tillsonburg Golf and Country Club, embarked on a Strategic Planning Process. The initial time was spent collecting and compiling responses to a Planning Survey. A report on the Survey's results was circulated to members of the Club and used as the basis of the Strategic Planning Session. An article based on the responses is attached. (APPENDIX A)

The Strategic Planning process consisted of four (4) phases over the course of four (4) months:

- October – gathering and compiling data;
- November 7, 2008 – Survey results circulated to Members;
- December 13, 2008 – Board Strategic Planning Session (Appendix B & C);
- December 23, 2008 - Development of Strategic Directions including Implementation Plan; and
- January 8, 2009 - Approval of Strategic Planning document along with revised Mission, Vision and Values.

4.2 SITUATION ANALYSIS

(i) OPPORTUNITIES

For THE BRIDGES AT TILLSONBURG to:

- become one of the most picturesque golf courses in Southwestern Ontario;
- strengthen partnership with the Town in creating a 'green' environment for walking trails and golf; and
- foster greater communication with the community and maintain its support.

(ii) BARRIERS/THREATS

- getting Ministry approvals;
- increasing costs;
- financial restraints due to poor economy; and
- stiff competition from other courses.

(iii) STRENGTHS

- forward thinking with the expansion, evolving to meet the needs of the future;
- condition and quality of the golf course;
- convenient location, easy access;
- scenic beauty of the course;
- junior program and calibre and attitude of juniors;
- reasonably priced and affordable;
- fiscal responsibility; and
- variety of events for all levels of players.

(iv) CHALLENGES

- overcoming the perception of being ‘élites’ and making everyone feel welcome;
- attracting members and green fee players ;
- providing the best customer service to ensure members and green fee players want to return;
- keeping the course in excellent condition;
- a clubhouse in very poor condition; and
- keeping people informed.

5. MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

To successfully develop Mission, Vision and Values Statements, the Board responded to the important questions, “Who are we?” (Mission), “Where are we going?”(Vision) and most importantly, “What do we believe in?” (Values). The Board was aided by the Strategic Planning Committee and the Planning Survey’s answers to the question, “For what purpose does THE BRIDGES AT TILLSONBURG exist?”

The results of the survey and the subsequent discussions led to the following Mission, Vision and Values’ Statements being developed and a commitment to these statements by **everyone - Members, Staff and Board** is necessary for the continuing success of THE BRIDGES AT TILLSONBURG.

MISSION

To provide an exceptional golfing experience.

To fulfill this Mission, The BRIDGES AT TILLSONBURG relies on the following resources:

- excellent staff;
- topnotch facility;
- fees from members and green fee players;
- tournaments;
- course rentals;
- Pro Shop revenue;
- Club House day to day revenue and rentals for special events; and
- commitment from members.

The Board, with input from the Planning Survey results, has envisioned the Future; will take the steps necessary to achieve that future; and has recognized the necessity to articulate that future in a clear vision.

VISION

To be recognized as the premier golfing destination.

The Board recognizes that the Mission & Vision Statements must be congruent with the Values of The BRIDGES AT TILLSONBURG. Organizational Values become “benchmarks” for determining priorities. These Values must state the principles on which the Board and Members stand, on which they base their relationships and on which the Board bases future decisions’

VALUES

In every aspect of our experiences together, we will all:

- *be welcoming;*
- *enjoy a quality product;*
- *consistently receive excellent customer service and value for our recreational dollar; and*
- *be accountable to one another.*

Both The BRIDGES AT TILLSONBURG’s Vision and Values are intended to guide decision-making in future planning.

6. STRATEGIC ISSUES IDENTIFIED

6.1 ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The culture of an organization is defined by its values and plays a strong role in the success or failure of an organization. Members of an organization soon come to sense the particular culture of an organization because it is the same as getting a feeling about someone's personality. Values and Beliefs describe the standards and ideals that an organization holds in high regard. They provide a framework for implementing strategic initiatives which is one of the reasons that many strategic planners now place as much emphasis on identifying strategic values as they do mission and vision. Values must be clearly defined, consistently communicated, never compromised and periodically reviewed to maintain relevance.

Survey participants got right to the point and advised that the Club must get rid of

- ✓ “the stigma of a ‘private course’ image within the community”.
- ✓ “Over the past, it seemed difficult to take part or join in with the existing members.” ;
- ✓ “The aura is still snobbish but has improved over recent years”; and even more plainly stated, there is clearly an
- ✓ “inability of the club (members) to dispel the town’s conception that the club is a collection of snobs.”

The Board understands the difficulty of changing the culture of an organization or at least the community’s perception of that culture but is determined to make that change. The new Mission, Vision and Values that the Board has approved for all to ‘own’, reflect that determination.

The Shareholders, themselves, have certain rights, but more importantly, they have a stake in and a responsibility to improve the culture by ‘living’ the Values.

In order to ensure the success of the expansion of the course to an eighteen-hole course, the Board has also identified a Goals and an Action Plan to assist in improving the community's perception of THE BRIDGES AT TILLSONBURG.

6.2 CUSTOMER SERVICE

Customer service has been defined as "a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction – that is, the feeling that a product or service has met the customer expectation." (Turban et al. 2002)

Good customer service is all about bringing customers back. And about sending them away happy – happy enough to pass positive feedback about THE BRIDGES AT TILLSONBURG along to others, who may visit the course and see for themselves and in then in turn become repeat players.

In the Strategic Planning Survey, members identified customer service as key to the continuing success of THE BRIDGES AT TILLSONBURG:

- ✓ "People don't return to courses were they leave feeling unwelcome and unappreciated no matter how grand the course.";
- ✓ Green fee players "should be greeted & talked to before & after their round. They must feel welcome.";
- ✓ "We have only one chance to make a first impression and it better be a good one."; and
- ✓ "Front line staff must go out of our way to engage conversation with green fee players... ask how they enjoyed themselves... let them know anything they may need to know before starting. Make them feel really welcome with a professional flair. In general, be courteous."

In other words take that extra step, whatever that extra step may be, if you want to provide good customer service and it will be noticed and passed on to others. Dealing with complaints and asking for feedback also make it far more likely that person(s) will return.

The Board recognizes the importance of good customer service and has identified it as one of its Goals and will do everything in its power to encourage staff and members to always be helpful and courteous to others and in so doing further the Mission and Vision .

6.3 CONDITION OF GOLF COURSE

Every golf course has its own unique design – differing tees, fairway and greens with varying degrees of rough, water hazards and sand traps, enhanced by selected landscaping details. No matter the combination of the above, every player expects an exceptional golfing experience and blames or credits the condition of the course on whether or not he/she enjoys the experience.

- ✓ "The first impression for new players playing the new course will have major impact on whether they come back or perhaps even join the club. I think play should not be permitted on the new course until the condition (of the course) is the one thing they share with others."

The Board is determined to keep the course at the highest standard that resources would allow.

6.4 CLUBHOUSE

The clubhouse is old and not in good shape.

- ✓ "The clubhouse is not very presentable to bringing guests for dinner."
- ✓ "Club house needs to be spruced up even if it's going to be replaced in the future repair and make the deck larger." and
- ✓ "Clubhouse facilities are less than adequate - a new building is required sooner rather than later to attract new members and social activities.'

There-in lies the Board's quandary – How much to spend on an old building while planning for its replacement? The Board decided that some upgrades definitely had to be made while at the same time 'stepping up' its feasibility study on building a new clubhouse.

6.5 COMMUNICATION

Effective communication is the cornerstone to the long-term success of any organization. Often misunderstandings and discontent are the results of poor communications. In the Planning Survey, it was revealed that several of the identified shortcomings were the result of a lack of awareness - the information had not been provided or had not been communicated in a meaningful way.

- ✓ "Hearing the Bad news on the Street is NOT what is good for the Club."
- ✓ "We have only one chance to make a first impression and it better be a good one." and
- ✓ "Membership needs to be kept abreast of the FINANCIAL STATUS of the expansion project on a more frequent basis."

A good communication plan allows good news to be shared, plans and activities to be announced and difficult decisions to be explained and in so doing, leads to stronger relationships among Board, Members and the community.

The Board recognizes that these relationships must be built on mutual respect, trust and open communication. To that end, the Board is taking steps to improve its communication with the Members and the community. As well, this Strategic Planning process has identified many innovative strategies and the Board needs to communicate the 'good news' to all concerned

6.6 FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Financial Resources refers to the availability of money in the form of cash, securities, potential for revenue generation and loan facilities etc. possessed by an organization. In determining whether an action is readily achievable, the Board must consider the nature and cost of the action, the financial resources available and the overall effects on expenses and resources. The success of THE BRIDGES AT TILLSONBURG depends primarily on being able to generate the funds necessary for required actions to be taken. The Annual Budget is based on 'assumptions' and those assumptions must be realized for the future viability of the Club. Members had many ideas about managing the financial resources:

- ✓ " Keep golf affordable for people. I know that the economics of doing business may influence the cost of membership and green fees, but the board may have to be extremely cautious on how they price our product. Overpricing may drive people away, and under pricing may put us in a deficit.";
- ✓ "Get more members involved in the club. Volunteers can be a great asset to accomplishing goals and it also builds pride within your membership. People will feel like they are more a part of the club.";
- ✓ "Staying competitively priced to attract and maintain memberships.";
- ✓ "Fiscal responsibility in order to sustain viability" and
- ✓ "Attract tournaments."

The Board has taken all of these suggestions seriously and has devised a plan to generate revenue.

6.7 MARKETING The following are some definitions of marketing:

"satisfying needs and wants through an exchange process";

"an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders."

"the management process which identifies, anticipates and supplies customer requirements efficiently and profitably"; and

"the process of organizing and directing all the company activities which relate to determining the market demand and converting the customers".

Whatever definition you choose, marketing requires co-ordination, planning and implementation.

Survey participants strongly urged the Board to develop a Marketing Plan:

- ✓ "traditional ideas of marketing have to be abandoned in lieu of the fresh/novel marketing approach encouraged new members to join";
- ✓ "there needs to be continued communication with the golf community about the events and changes with the course to entice people to try the course. Once they were able to play; they would be hooked." ; and
- ✓ "we need to have a marketing plan that is going to target and attract new members."

The Board accepted the advice and are taking the necessary steps to market THE BRIDGES AT TILLSONBURG.

7. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

As a result of the Strategic Planning Process, THE BRIDGES AT TILLSONBURG's Goals for 2009 - 2010 are:

1. To change the culture and image as well as the name of previous Tillsonburg Golf and Country Club.
2. To provide customer satisfaction that is above and beyond expectations.
3. To maintain the golf course at a high but yet affordable standard.
4. To improve the condition of the clubhouse (with the knowledge that it is to be replaced at a later date).
5. To communicate more effectively.
6. To maximize opportunity for revenue generation.
7. To increase awareness of THE BRIDGES AT TILLSONBURG.

8. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

GOAL 1. To change the culture and image as well as the name of previous Tillsonburg Golf and Country Club.

Objective (i) Break down barriers.

Action

- Change course designation to 'Semi-public' from 'Semi-private';

- Promote openness and transparency;
- Change Dress Code Policy to better reflect today's average golfer; and
- Circulate announcements of events/occurrences/proposed changes, e.g. new Dress Code, etc.

Objective (ii) Be more welcoming.

Action

- Hold special event to celebrate new Mission, Vision and Values;
- Develop Member Orientation to educate new and existing Members on the revised Protocols;
- Invite non-members to play; and
- Encourage foursomes instead of twosomes.

Objective (iii) Encourage more patience.

Action

- Create signage to educate green fee players on protocols and pace of play;
- Have map of course available for newcomers; and
- Look at feasibility of having volunteers to act as Starters, Marshalls and people who will greet players at the end of play to hear their comments and concerns.

GOAL 2. To provide customer satisfaction that is above and beyond expectations.

Objective (i) Make a good first impression.

Action

- Improve signage (map);
- Establish a staff training program to enable all staff to become Directors of First Impression to welcome/inform/direct/etc
- Encourage every member to carry out same duties;
- Have a Starter to facilitate starts and encourage pairings that have not been previously arranged; and
- Encourage consistency through staff uniform.

Objective (ii) Employ a friendly and knowledgeable staff.

Action

- 'In house' training on providing superior customer service (positive, caring, accommodating attitude, professionalism, etc.);
- Develop position descriptions;
- Foster accountability through performance appraisals; and
- Monitor Guest Relations and Customer Service Investigation

Objective (iii) Encourage everyone to return to play.

Action

- Establish a staff training program to enable all staff to become Director of Last Impression) to inquire, "How did you enjoy the course?" Where you well served?"
- Establish a volunteer position (Director of Last Impression) to inquire, "How did you enjoy the course?" Where you well served?";
- Encourage every member to carry out same duties and invite them to return.

Objective (iv) Improve specific services.

Action

- Improve 'Bag Drop' and assistance from car to first tee (clubs, batteries, etc.);
- Determine most appropriate area for club cleaning and improve club cleaning service;
- Ensure clubs are on First Tee when player is ready to tee off;
- Ensure consistent hours of service in Club House;
- Ensure a consistent quality in menu and food; and
- Improve table service in Club House (e.g. `chits presented at table, etc.).

GOAL 3 To maintain the golf course at a high but yet affordable standard.

Objective (i) Establish an affordable standard of excellence.

Action

- Determine a standard to allow a good pace of play;
- Develop a Five Year Equipment Capital Budget;
- Develop a maintenance plan and schedule to maintain course at expected level (e.g. cutting of greens, fairways and rough, watering, aerating of greens, etc.);
- Communicate this maintenance plan and course conditions daily; and
- Ensure consistency of sand, greens and tee boxes.

Objective (ii) 'Dress-up' golf course.

Action

- Improve landscaping with flowers, etc.;
- Arrange annual volunteer clean up; and
- New signage.

GOAL 4 To improve the condition of the clubhouse (with the knowledge that it is to be replaced at a later date).

Objective (i) To make the Club House more comfortable and inviting.

Action

- Put a new roof on back room;
- Look at feasibility of expanding deck or creating a patio;
- Enlist a volunteer team to paint the dining area, bar and Pro Shop;
- Improve main entrance;
- Improve walkways;

- Ensure overall cleanliness of Club House; and
- Remove pictures of Past Presidents and replace with plaques.

GOAL 5. To communicate more effectively.

Objective (i) Improve use of communication tools.

Action

- Improve the large calendar containing all activities going on at the course and Make it accessible to all;
- Improve use of posters and bulletin boards;
- Increase use of e-mail;
- Use 'Loyalty Card' to obtain e-mail addresses of new players;
- Update information on website and stress its importance; and
- Reach younger players through 'chat rooms' and Facebook.

Objective (ii) Increase communication.

Action

- Support authors of 'Bunker to Bunker' and encourage members to submit information;
- Communicate condition of greens and maintenance events on a daily basis;
- Communicate achievements of Members;
- Give regular updates on Outcomes from the Strategic Plan;
- Communicate to members, the responsibility of each Board Member and encourage contact; and
- Inform new players of course features, e.g. First Hole, registration, washrooms, etc.

Objective (iii) Get 'feedback.

Action

- Re-establish 'suggestion box' and respond; and
- Develop 'Comment Cards' and Encourage immediate feedback at end of play.

GOAL 6. To maximize opportunity for revenue generation.

Objective (i) Increase utilization of existing resources.

Action

- Encourage increased rentals of Club House;
- Attract new people to the Club House dining room;
- Increase the number of corporate tournaments;
- Attract increased number of members by offering different 'packages';
- Establish a 'coupon' program to increase number of first-time players; and
- Attract more green fee players by offering a superior product and excellent customer service.

Objective (ii) Ensure financial viability.

Action

- Utilize the Board's Long Range Planning Committee;
- Develop a Business Plan;
- Continue to monitor monthly Financial reports for variances to budget;
- Develop a budget for the implementation of the Master Plan; and
- Develop a Five (5) Year Capital Budget.

GOAL 7. To increase awareness of THE BRIDGES AT TILLSONBURG.**Objective (i) Develop Marketing Plan.****Action**

- Establish a Marketing Committee;
- Identify target audience;
- Seek a partnership with the Town of Tillsonburg;
- Tie in with promotion of Trail System; and
- Use all communication tools mentioned above as well as Trades Shows, golf magazines, Recreation Show, radio.