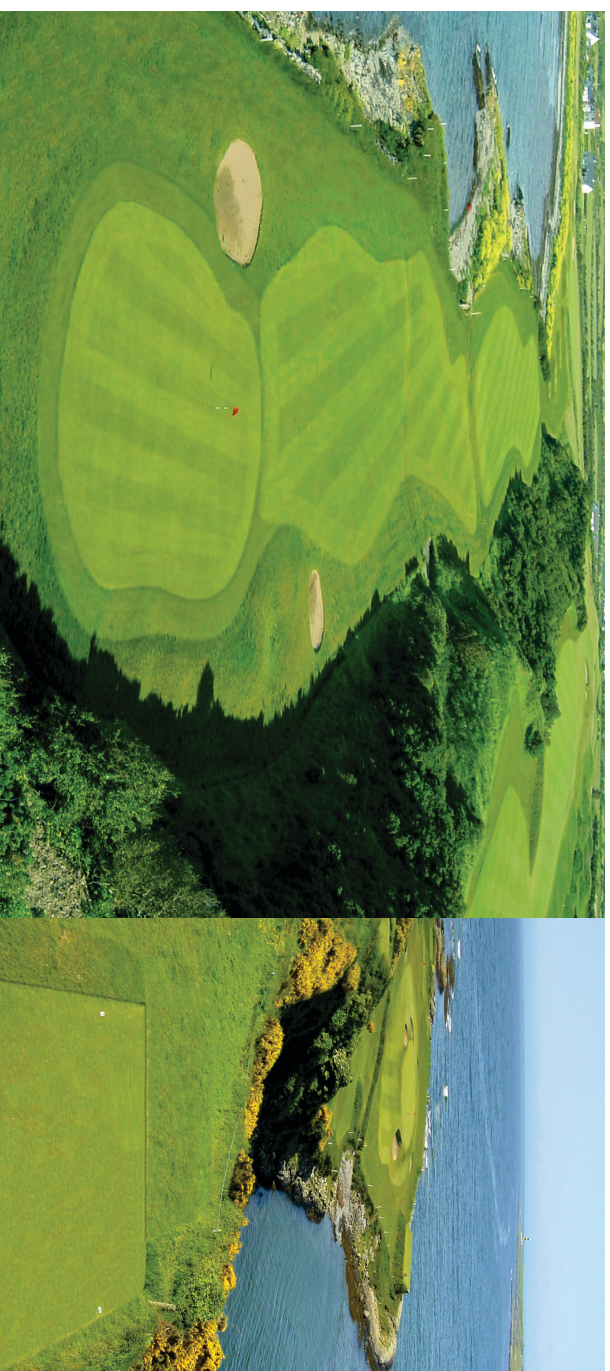


Tee Time for Two

On-line tee time booking systems are nothing new, yet a couple of brothers from Northern Ireland appear to have created a unique system which has exceeded demand, and every club's expectations. Article by Charles de Haan.



While many golf clubs in England, Scotland and Wales are still learning to exploit the potential of their offline software, many clubs in Ireland are moving towards online software as the IT environment of the future.

Given the Irish clubs pre-eminence in marketing their golf to the rest of the world, it's not too surprising that they can see the advantage that technology can bring to their marketing strategies.

The company that's currently helping over 50 Irish clubs to lead the charge to an online future is BRS Golf. Run by two brothers, Rory and Brian Smith, both of whom have blue-chip experience with major online companies such as Nortel Networks and British Telecom, BRS Golf started with a simple request: to design a better website for a local club, Ardglass in County Down.

This project extended into a further development, a tee time booking facility that could be integrated with the club's website so that members and visitors could find and use it easily, and at any time of day or night wherever in the world they were located.

And with so many American golfers coming to Ireland to explore their wealth of fabulous golf courses, a tee

time booking facility available 24/7 anywhere in the world wasn't a luxury - it was a necessity.

Ardglass
Debbie Polly is the club secretary at the scenic Ardglass Golf Club (pictured above), a regular destination in County Down for those who like great golf that's a little off the beaten track. The club used to run a very similar manual system of tee time booking for members, casual visitors and societies.

Again, all the data was loaded by BRS on to the club's new online system, and from the start it has proved genuinely easy to use for the club's manager, staff and visiting golfers.

"It's reduced significantly the 20-30 emails we used to get everyday asking if this day or that time was available, which of course we then had to respond to, check, and so on," said Polly. "Now, people just select the times we decide to make available at the green fees we set, and they pay online there and then." So no worries about no shows.

"We also enable players to book caddies via the system, and one day we may also include buggies as well. The system's very user-friendly, both for us on the administrative side, and more importantly, for the golfers, whether regulars or new visitors to Ardglass."

The BRS Tee Time Manager also takes care of Ardglass's international marketing needs; by being online via the club's website and promoted via the global search engines, the club's already seeing a steady flow of bookings from far a field.

"With the website and the online tee time booking system within it, it's certainly boosted green fees. It's an excellent system, and I'd strongly recommend it to any golf club."

A number of clubs use the system purely as a tool for the members, while retaining control via telephone and e-mails of the visitors' bookings. The internationally famous venue for the British Seniors Open Championship, Royal Portrush, is one of those clubs.

Royal Portrush
Wilma Erskine, club secretary at Royal Portrush, is particularly pleased with the BRS Tee Time Manager. The club still handles calls and emails for tee bookings, with the online booking system as a management tool.

"We used to have a purely manual system comprising a tee time sheet for every day, for both courses," said Erskine. "While it worked well, it was inevitably very labour intensive, and very challenging for generating revenue reports."

"All that information was loaded on to the new online system. It's speeded things up significantly for the office and the golfers, and people can now book caddies and meals as well, which is a great advantage." In other words, much less paperwork but lots more revenue.

"The great thing about the new BRS system is the reports I can get from it," added Erskine.

"I can check the revenues for the month ahead, and the deposits we've taken, and as we build up the usage and the records, we will start to compare year-on-year, and month-on-month. As the system captures the visitors' email addresses, we're also building a valuable database for future marketing."

"We resisted computerised tee time booking for a long time, but BRS has done a great job, tailoring their system to give us all the things we want."

Greystone's

Any club secretary who has to run an Open Week will know the drain on operational resources, as well as their time. That's exactly what faced Jim Melody of the Greystone's Golf Club when he considered the annual Open Week, running from July 3-10, 2005.

But this year, the whole thing has been a pleasure, with a little help from the boys at BRS Golf. The tee times for the Open Week were posted on to a special page on the club's website, and the page went live on June 20 at 9am.

A total of 440 tee times were made available, of which 335 were booked out in the first day. The members got first choice while visitors could book from June 27 onwards.

Overall, 174 tee times (52 per cent) were booked by members online from their homes or offices. Interestingly, of the 50 members who booked online, 37 were men and 13 were ladies.

The rest went to the club and with a modicum of supervision from the staff, booked themselves in, which all helped to smooth the flow of the booking and administrative operation.

Pre-Pay

Although for their first year of the online booking facility for their Open Week, members were not required to pre-pay online, visitors were, which meant that even if there were any no-shows, the club reassuringly still got its money.

But best of all, there were no complaints at all about using the new online booking system. Since we all know how quickly some members will let their club know about things that may be a little less than perfect, this was a massive achievement.

The final word should come from Rory and Brian Smith, the two online experts behind the BRS Tee Time Manager system. "We both play off 12 handicap, and have been playing golf for years," said Rory.

"But we've now been able to put something back into the game we love, by helping any golf club with internet access to make life easier for its administrative and managerial staff, and by encouraging clubs and golfers to exploit their online potential.

"The thing we're particularly pleased with is the ease with which anyone can use the Tee Time Manager. Club secretaries are finding it easy to learn and operate, and quite a few don't even need the training we provide.

"And of course, it was always going to be essential that anyone using the Tee Time Manager to book themselves a tee time should find it very simple to do so. We put a huge amount of time, thinking and effort to create a system that was essentially easy and simple.

"And as anyone knows, keeping something simple is often very hard work - but it always pays dividends at the end of the day. That's probably why more than 50 clubs have installed our system, and why we're fairly inundated with clubs wanting it to be installed."

Due to fulfilling current demand from the Irish clubs, the BRS Tee Time Manager will be not available to clubs throughout England, Scotland and Wales from September 2005.

In the meantime, any club who wants to know more about the BRS Tee Time Manager can contact BRS Golf on the details below. ☎

Maximise your course revenues the EASY way!

The **BRS Tee Time Manager** is an online tee time booking system that's been installed at over **50 golf clubs** in Ireland. According to them it's:

- 1 easy** for a club's administrators and staff to learn and operate
- 2 easy** to control the available tee times, and to set the green fee rates
- 3 easy** to see when your course is busy or slack, and to adjust tee time rates accordingly
- 4 easy** for members and visitors to use because of its step-by-step procedure
- 5 easy** to set up for competition tee times and pre-payment via its secure online payment system
- 6 easy** to run 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, so bookings can be made when you're closed
- 7 and even easier** to get reports about revenues, bookings and course usage

"The system's very user-friendly, both for us on the administrative side, and more importantly, for the golfers, whether regulars or new visitors to Ardglass. It's an excellent system, and I'd strongly recommend it to any golf club."

- Debbie Polly, Club Secretary, Ardglass Golf Club

www.ardglassgolfclub.com

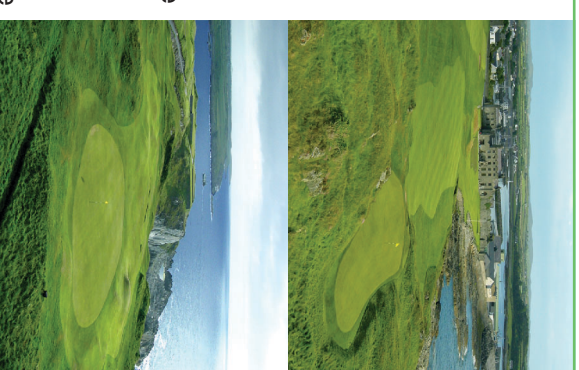
Contact BRS Golf and ask for one of their brochures...

Telephone: **028 90 580 363**

Email: info@brsgolf.com

Website: www.brsgolf.com

Post: BRS Golf, 31 Burnside Park, Belfast, BT8 6HU



BRS GOLF