



**GOLF
CREATIVE
CO.**

GOLF MARKETING DIFFERENTLY

2026 Golf Marketing Report



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Introduction

STATE OF THE GOLF INDUSTRY IN 2026

Golf is thriving—and evolving. Participation remains strong post-pandemic, with more women, younger players, and diverse audiences entering the game than ever. But today's golfers aren't just buying tee times... they're seeking experiences. Curated events, memorable hospitality, and frictionless digital touchpoints are shaping expectations. Courses that fail to deliver risk falling behind.

WHY MARKETING IS THE DIFFERENTIATOR

In 2026, golf facilities compete with far more than the course down the road. Destination resorts, alternative leisure activities, and premium experiences are all vying for attention. Data shows players respond to consistent, personalized engagement—powered by AI, rich content, and strategic marketing. Facilities that leverage these tools attract more players, deepen loyalty, and drive revenue year-round. Marketing is no longer seasonal—it's a strategic growth engine.

What This Report Delivers

This is a strategic playbook for golf businesses who want to stay ahead of the curve.

Inside, you'll find:

Data-Backed Market Trends

See where the golf industry is headed and what players expect.

Platform-Specific Social Strategies

Win on social media even as organic reach shifts.

AI-Driven Marketing Workflows

Automate, personalize, and scale your communications.

Advertising Benchmarks

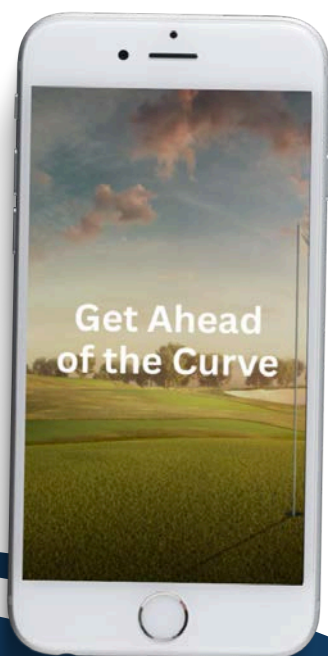
Know exactly where to invest for maximum ROI.

Website, SEO & AEO Best Practices

Make sure your business is discoverable in the right moments.

Real-World Case Studies

Learn from golf businesses already seeing results.



It's estimated only

10%

of golf businesses are implementing these strategies currently

INTRODUCTION

Social Media



Key Trends Shaping 2026

Algorithm → Community

Platforms are moving from pure reach to rewarding true interaction. Engagement, shares, and saves matter more than likes. Courses that highlight members, staff, and behind-the-scenes moments are seeing stronger loyalty and organic growth.

Short-Form Video Dominance

Reels, TikTok, and YouTube Shorts continue to outperform static posts. Golfers don't just want a pretty picture of a fairway... they want motion, story, and emotion. Expect platforms to reward consistent video storytelling.

Beyond the algorithm, here's what the data shows golfers — and your potential customers — actually want

- 66% of consumers say short-form video is most engaging.
- 81%+ average watch rate (with 59% watched for nearly the full length).
- 73% prefer short-form video for product discovery.
- 57% of Gen Z use short videos for product research.

. ([DemandSage](#), [Lifewire](#))

- Short-form videos are over twice as likely to go viral than longer videos. ([Yaguara](#), [Zelios](#))

Authenticity Wins

Overproduced ads are losing steam. Golfers respond to real people: pros giving a quick tip, superintendents sharing turf insights, members celebrating wins, or organic footage of a post-round BBQ.

Generational Split

Boomers & Gen X: Still active on Facebook, respond to event reminders, photo albums, and email-driven cross-promotion.

Millennials: Instagram is their home base. They look for aspirational visuals paired with practical offers (stay-and-play packages, lifestyle experiences).

Gen Z & Alpha: Living on TikTok and YouTube, where humor, trends, and quick-hitting golf tips dominate. They value inclusivity and brand voice more than tradition.

What's Working Now

- Drone videography showcasing course beauty with a strong hook.
- Player spotlights and “Day in the Life” stories from staff or members.
- Trend-driven content (memes, trending sounds) adapted to golf.
- Direct CTAs linking posts to booking engines or package pages.

In 2026, social media success won't come from a one-size-fits-all approach. Golf courses that lean into short-form storytelling, tailor content to each generation, and connect authenticity with clear CTAs will win both attention and bookings.



INTRODUCTION

EMAIL MARKETING

The inbox is alive and well—but the way golfers engage with email is changing. In 2026, mass “blast” emails won’t cut it. Players expect personalization, relevance, and clear value in every subject line. Courses that use data and automation to turn emails into ongoing conversations will keep their tee sheets full.

4.5 BILLION email users worldwide
by 2026 (*Statista*)

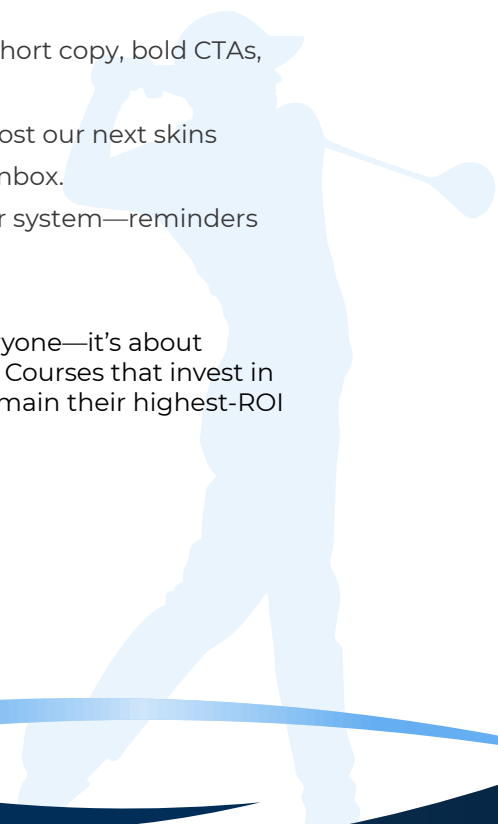
Email generates an average ROI of **\$36** for every **\$1** spent
(*Litmus, 2025*)

Personalized subject lines increase open rates by **26%** (*Hubspot*)

What’s Working in 2026

- **Hyper-Personalization:** Dynamic content tailored to player behavior (e.g., past tee time bookings, favorite packages, dining habits).
- **Automated Journeys:** New member onboarding sequences, abandoned booking follow-ups, and loyalty reward reminders—all triggered automatically.
- **AI-Enhanced Writing:** Smart tools create subject lines, segment lists, and even A/B test content in real time.
- **Mobile-First Design:** 80%+ of golf emails are opened on phones—short copy, bold CTAs, and tappable layouts are non-negotiable.
- **Interactive Emails:** Booking buttons, polls (“What day should we host our next skins game?”), and video embeds drive engagement directly inside the inbox.
- **Cross-Channel Integration:** Email now plays best as part of a wider system—reminders in inbox + follow-ups via SMS or push notifications.

In 2026, email is no longer about shouting the same message to everyone—it’s about delivering the right message to the right golfer at the right moment. Courses that invest in automation, segmentation, and conversational tone will see email remain their highest-ROI channel.



ADVERTISING

KNOW EXACTLY WHERE TO INVEST FOR MAXIMUM ROI

Golf courses can no longer afford to spray ad dollars across every channel and hope something sticks. In 2026, the winners are tracking, testing, and tying every campaign directly to bookings. Paid media isn't about reach—it's about revenue attribution.

Why It Matters

- Digital ad spend worldwide will surpass \$1 trillion by 2026 (Statista).
- Golfers are highly targeted: more than 75% research a course online before booking, and paid placements influence both awareness and conversion.
- With costs rising, knowing your benchmarks ensures you're not overspending for impressions that don't convert.

1 FACEBOOK/INSTAGRAM ADS

- Avg. CPC: \$0.90–\$1.10
- Avg. CTR: 0.9%–1.5%
- Best for: local event promotion, member campaigns, stay-and-play offers

2 GOOGLE SEARCH ADS

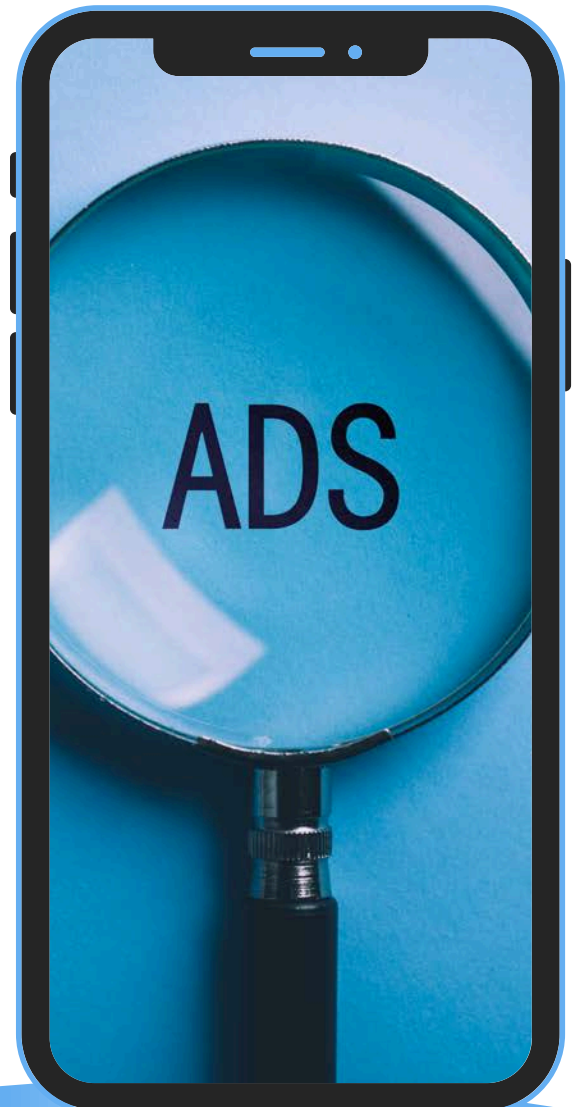
- Avg. CPC: \$2.50–\$4.00 (higher in competitive golf travel markets)
- Conversion Rate: 4–6%
- Best for: tee times and golf vacation packages

3 YOUTUBE & SHORTS ADS

- Avg. CPV: \$0.05–\$0.15
- Completion Rate: 35–45%
- Best for: showcasing drone footage, storytelling, and destination marketing

4 TIKTOK ADS

- Avg. CPC: \$1.00–\$1.50
- Engagement Rates: 3–5% (well above other platforms)
- Best for: Gen Z & Millennial golfers, trend-driven campaigns



What's Working in 2026

- Retargeting: Following up on website visitors or abandoned bookings remains one of the highest-ROI strategies.
- Lookalike Audiences: AI-driven audience expansion finds “future golfers” who behave like your best members.
- Booking-Linked CTAs: Ads that click directly to a tee sheet or package page see 2–3x higher conversion than generic landing pages.
- Dynamic Creative: AI testing multiple variations of ad creative in real time ensures spend is always optimized.



Key Takeaway

The courses seeing the highest ROI aren't just running ads... they're tracking the right benchmarks, cutting waste, and tying every dollar back to tee sheets and bookings.

INTRODUCTION

AI AUTOMATION

Players expect seamless, personalized experiences... yesterday's manual processes won't cut it. Automation frees your team, fills more bookings, and keeps players coming back. Ignore it, and you'll lose rounds, revenue, and relevance.

ON AVERAGE

25%

average increase
in revenue

40%

reduction in
administrative time

60%

decrease in no-shows

90%

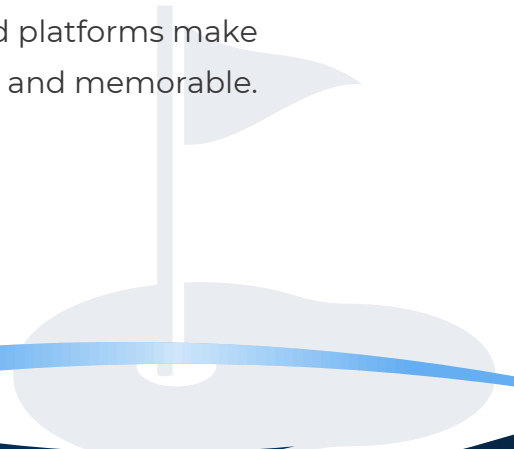
customer satisfaction

7 HOURS

saved per week

HOW CAN YOU ACHIEVE THIS?

- Automate the Player Journey – AI-driven bookings, reminders, and check-ins create seamless experiences.
- AI Customer Assistants – Bots answer questions, handle reservations, and deliver 24/7 support.
- Personalize Every Touchpoint – Tailored emails, texts, and notifications increase engagement and loyalty.
- Smart Marketing Automation – Use AI to create content, run campaigns, and optimize promotions consistently.
- Data-Driven Decisions – Centralize analytics to track behavior, campaigns, and operations for smarter growth.
- Frictionless Digital Experiences – Apps, loyalty programs, and integrated platforms make every interaction smooth and memorable.



INTRODUCTION

SEO/AEO



The way golfers search for tee times, packages, and course info is changing fast. Traditional SEO (ranking on Google) is still critical, but AEO (Answer Engine Optimization) is emerging as search behavior shifts toward voice assistants, AI chatbots, and zero-click answers. Courses that optimize for both will win the visibility game in 2026.

Why It Matters

- 75% of golfers research a course online before visiting.
- Google is no longer the only “search engine”—players ask Siri, Alexa, ChatGPT-style tools, and booking aggregators.
- If your course doesn’t show up in these results, someone else’s will.

What Moves the Needle in 2026?

Structured Data (Schema Markup):

Adding schema to your tee times, packages, and events makes them discoverable by AI and voice assistants.

Conversational Content: Build FAQs and blog posts that answer natural-language questions (“What’s the best public golf course near Hilton Head?”).

Google Business Profile Optimization:

Photos, reviews, updated hours, and booking links boost local visibility and voice search results.

Zero-Click Readiness: Create content that delivers direct answers—AI and search snippets pull from clear, concise responses.

Integration with Aggregators: Tee times linked through platforms like GolfNow, Supreme Golf, or TeeOff increase the chance you’re surfaced when golfers search “book tee time near me.”

AI-Friendly Content: Ensure your site loads fast, is mobile-first, and provides scannable, high-quality answers AI tools prefer to pull from.

Tot Hill Farm

Tot Hill Farm Golf Club, in Asheboro, NC, is a unique Mike Strantz design. The course opened in 2000, and Strantz was simultaneously named the #1 Architect in the World. While the golf course enjoyed success in its first couple of years, the struggles only grew over the next 20 years. Its remote location, lack of marketing effort, and catering to \$40 rounds of golf nearly sent the course into closing. A new owner breathed new life into the property in 2023 with a vision to return the course to what Strantz designed it to be — a place so unique people from all over the world would want to play it.

A New Focus & A New Marketing Approach

For the course to achieve the results its new owner envisioned after an extensive restoration of the course, the customer base had to be changed entirely. Rates were no longer going to be sub-\$50. \$150 per round was the new target.

Engaging Content Needed for Instagram to Attract the \$175 Player

The course set its sights squarely on the power of Instagram and the significant golfer population that follows and engages with unique golf experiences. The course is highly photogenic, so they brought in a variety of drone operators to shoot a tremendous amount of photo and video content. This content was spun up to create eye-popping posts, stories, and reels. These quickly caught the attention of a long list of significant golf influencers who visited to shoot content for their followers to enjoy and host substantial events for their followers at the course.

The result has been explosive growth for the course (doubling up projections), 21,000 followers on Instagram, and 10 Instagram golf groups that brought significant events to the course. The course's staff will tell you that 1 out of every two golfers who walk through the doors say they saw the course on Instagram and had to come to play.

Lake Marion

Lake Marion Golf Course is an 18-hole daily fee course in Santee, SC (population 1,187). The course is a part of Santee Cooper Resort, which has an additional 18-hole private course open to golf package play. Over the last 25 years, Lake Marion has had to adapt significantly to remain relevant and grow. The course is less than 200 yards off the always busy I-95, which makes it convenient for travelers. The course opened a golf travel company catering to the many golf travelers heading south to capitalize on its convenient location. The results have been staggering and have led to the building of 36 golf villas and townhouses on-site, a 35,000 square-foot natural grass putting course, weekly BBQ cookouts for guests, and a golf shop that sells more than 4,000 pairs of golf shoes annually.

Increase Play from Local/Regional Golfers

In such a small town with the closest major population center an hour away in Charleston, SC, a program was designed to capture golfers within an hour away and provide a Golf Advantage Card that guaranteed discounted dates year-round, tournaments, and discounts in the golf shop. To date, more than 2,000 golfers are registered in the program. They are targeted with email campaigns and social media to encourage them.

Supplement Play with Golf Vacationers

A targeted marketing effort was launched in the early years that initially included the direct mailing of a golf vacation planner. Over time, it has evolved into a consistent email marketing program using highly segmented customer groups such as social media advertising and Google search marketing, geo-targeting golfers in more than 15 states. 20+ years of golf traveler data captured from guests show us when guests start trip planning, when they like to visit, and what they want from their trip. This provides many personalization opportunities to deliver precisely what they are looking for when they are looking for it. The results speak for themselves today with a solid mix of local/regional and seasonal golf vacationers that continues to grow.

The Leader In Golf Marketing

About Golf Creative Co.

Golf Creative Co. (formerly Impact Golf Marketing) began in 1995 when the majority of golf courses didn't think they needed marketing. Fast forward 30 years later, and GCC continues to provide best-in-class marketing solutions that drive client success through inspiring creativity, innovation, and service. Golf Creative Co. is a one-stop shop for all things golf marketing, including planning, budgeting, marketing management and execution, social media, website design, search marketing, digital advertising, creative services, email marketing, AI solutions, and more. Our client base primarily comprises public/semi-private golf courses, resorts, management companies, golf destinations, and destination marketing organizations.

Think of Golf Creative Co. as your Chief Marketing Officer, filling your marketing gaps. With our custom approach to marketing, we can provide as little or as much service as you need. Cookie-cutter marketing is not offered here. We will build a custom marketing stack around your needs, goals, and budget.

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