

The retail reign of Haggin Oaks

The Haggin Oaks Golf Super Shop has been the model for retail success for the past three decades, and it has no plans to stop

BY LAIRA MARTIN

The Haggin Oaks Golf Super Shop does not take its name lightly. The 15,000-square-foot shop in Sacramento, Calif., is packed with every club, ball, shirt and hat imaginable. There is a putting green right there in the store. And if that is not enough, customers can test any club sold in the store, not against a net, but on a full driving range — which, by the way, is open 24 hours a day, May through September. Super, indeed.

At 9,000 square feet in 2006, the Haggin Oaks Golf Super Shop already impressed many. But it upped the “super” factor when it added 6,000 square feet in 2007. The public course’s on-site Super Shop has long been admired as one of the best

examples of successful golf retailing, and it has the accolades to back it up.

It is a lifetime winner of the Top 100 Golf Shops — an award that has taken many forms in the past 30 years under Golf Digest, Golf Shop Operations and Golf World. Most recently the Association of Golf Merchandisers has taken over the award, combining it with its former Front Nine Awards, to create the Platinum Awards.

This year, the Association of Golf Merchandisers honored the Super Shop as one of the “Best of the Best” at the PGA Merchandise Show in Orlando, Fla. Whatever names the award has had or will have in years to come, be assured, Haggin

Oaks is on the list.

“Haggin Oaks is a prime example of speaking to the non-golfer as well as bringing in a lot of core golf products,” said Amy McClean-Ragsdale, owner of AMR Retail Consulting. “A golf shop needs to reflect current trends, and some are slow to jump on them. Haggin Oaks has been really good about that, and keeping up with the industry outside of the shop.”

The Super Shop is very much brand focused. It has Nike and Adidas concept stores in addition to a separate shoe store that has anywhere from 1,200 to 2,000 pairs of shoes throughout the year. In May, it added a 300-square-foot PUMA/Cobra Concept Shop.

But why stop there? In July, Director of Retail and Marketing Ken Morton Jr. decided to divert a third of the annual marketing budget to start a customer relationship management department. He brought in three full-time staffers to launch 15 to 20 initiatives per month.

“They do nothing but provide our sales staff and golf pros marketing expertise to do targeted and individualized marketing campaigns,” Morton said. “What we are doing with one-on-one targeted marketing is pretty unique in the industry, not outside of golf, but I haven’t seen another course doing what we’re doing.”

Morton is right. The Super Shop’s promotions are unique. That is, unless your local golf course has sent you a skeleton key. How about a fishing lure?





The Haggin Oaks Super Shop, America's most-awarded golf shop, has the largest on-course Nike clothing concept shop in the world.



Unlikely. These are some of the targeted initiatives that most impressed the Association of Golf Merchandisers.

"Our soft goods sales team mailed 100 skeleton keys to our best Jamie Sadock customers, and one opened a treasure chest at the front of the golf shop with a \$100 gift card," Morton said. "We had 44 ladies with skeleton keys come in, and they ended up spending almost \$9,000 on Sadock products."

The customer relationship management team also worked with golf pros to identify 10 students who had taken golf lessons in the past but had not returned in the last year.

"We had some fishing lures made up with a our logo etched on and sent them off to 10 clients with a note saying, 'We have not seen you in a while. What would it take to lure you in?'" Morton said. "We got responses from all 10 customers. Ten mailers doesn't seem like a lot, but 100 percent engagement is much different than the average email blast."

The award-winning promotions were creative, inexpensive and, most importantly, easy to measure.

The marketing team has also made a push for more social media, engaging more than 6,500 users on three platforms: Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. They

post photos to promote new clothing lines at the Super Shop or tweet updates on Power Tee installations at the driving range.

"I think a lot of properties spend their marketing dollars through traditional means with newspaper or magazine ads in arenas where it is difficult to measure returns," Morton said. "We found that with social media and targeted initiatives, it is really easy to gauge return, because you're getting instant metrics."

America's most awarded public golf shop is perhaps best known for hosting the largest golf demo day in the country. What started as a two-vendor affair 40 years ago has expanded to a three-day extravaganza.

The Haggin Oaks Golf Expo draws nearly 200 vendors, 40 exhibiting golf courses and upward of 22,000 attendees. On top of that, attendees get in for free and can meet golf celebrities, which in the past have included Callaway Golf Chief Designer Roger Cleveland. Haggin Oaks' 40th expo day takes place April 24 - 26.

"That generates somewhere in the neighborhood of \$700,000 in retail revenue over three busy days," Morton said. "The size of our promotions is definitely a differentiator from the other courses we manage, that are much more

typical in scope. We have a new wrinkle each year so it has a tendency to grow larger."

From 2006 to 2011, Haggin Oaks dedicated a space during the expo called Golf Course Alley, where dozens of other golf courses could promote their courses for free. All they had to do was make a small donation to the local chapter of First Tee, a junior golfing program.

"While it might seem strange that we had competitors at our show, we recognize more rounds is good for everyone, and thus, we wanted as many courses represented at our course as possible," Morton said.

So many courses were interested in the opportunity to promote themselves on a competitor's turf that they opted for purchasing regular booths in more prime locations, putting an end to Golf Course Alley.

Another one of those wrinkles Morton mentioned is the addition of the nine-hole MacKenzie Putting Course last year. The facility's Alister MacKenzie-designed 18-hole golf course, one of two championship courses on site, already attracted design buffs.

The new putting course has expanded Haggin Oaks' reach to families and junior golfers.