



# Interactive Marketing in the Digital Age

**John Aherne** from Golfgraffix explains how golf clubs can tap into the hugely popular area of social networking and online video marketing.

■ In today's uncertain climate with golf clubs all competing for fewer members in a shrinking market, standing out from the crowd and making

a lasting impact with your target audience is ever more important.

It is estimated that as many as 70 per cent of golf tourists will base their decision on where to play via the Internet, so if your club's web site does not make an immediate and lasting impact with a web visitor, then turning that initial web view into a green fee is going to be a much more difficult task.

When I decided to set up Golfgraffix last year, I wanted to ensure that the company carved out a niche for itself, and the area that excited me most of all was

social networking and how that phenomenon could be applied to marketing a golf course.

If you take just two of the big social networking mediums – *Facebook* and *You Tube*, who each attract over 100 million visitors a month to their web sites – any golf club marketing their course would be mad not to avail themselves of this type exposure.

But if you are a golf club manager or owner, what do you put on your *Facebook* page or your *You Tube* channel?

To help answer that question, it is important to understand why I started Golfgraffix, and where I believe, I can help your golf operation.

I knew we could create realistic flybys and imagery as good as, or even better than, what was already on the market but our biggest dilemma was how to make it interactive. After some interesting brain storming sessions, the idea of allowing web visitors to play the course on their computer was born.

Golfgraffix has just come to the end of its first year of trading, and can not only offer clients photorealistic flybys but in



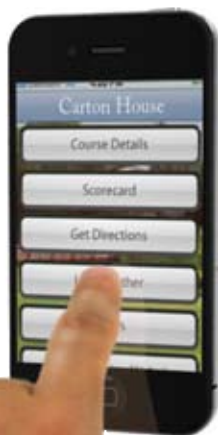
addition, any computer user can now download the clients golf course and play it as realistic computer simulation.

To give you an idea how successful this can be, our first client Roganstown Golf Club in Ireland, had over 3,000 downloads of the PC game in the first six months alone!

Golf clubs are also able to promote virtual events with monthly prizes on their social network sites, which not only helps promote your clubs brand name and image, it also helps gives your club more exposure on the Internet.

And that in turn means more visitors, as well as better listings on search engines such as Google, Bing and Yahoo.

Anyone using the Internet will at some point use a search engine to search for items online, and by utilising web links back to the club's main site, we are able to get your club listed higher in the search rankings list, resulting in higher traffic numbers and more potential to convert these to green fees.



Another huge area that golf clubs can tap into is the ever growing area of smart phone applications – or ‘apps’ – for devices such as the iPhone, Blackberry or Windows Mobile devices.

The Carton House ‘app’ that we developed in conjunction with Carton House, now has close to 1,500 users in over 15 countries – and that impressive statistic has been achieved in less than a year.

Smartphone ‘apps’ are an ideal way to market a golf course, as all the tools needed to attract a golfer can be delivered in a very easy to navigate and interactive format, which can be downloaded for free straight to anyone’s device.

And for resort courses, smartphone apps can also be used to promote hotels, gyms, wedding facilities and much, much more.

Just imagine being able to download an ‘app’ for your course, which would act as a constant marketing tool promoting your club every single day of the week.

As technology is consistently evolving, it’s vitally important to be able to showcase your best asset – your golf course – to as many prospective golfers as possible.

Like it or loath it, the digital age is here to stay, and if your club doesn’t grasp the opportunity, you can rest assured that a club in your vicinity will.

It’s time to be pro-active, as opposed to re-active in the digital age. **GME**



iPhone App

Flybys & PC Simulation

Free Yardage Book Artwork

3D Rendering - 15th Hole at Bunclody Golf & Fishing Club

**Golfgraffix**  
www.golfgraffix.com  
info@golfgraffix.com

*“The attention to detail and ability to reproduce our course exactly as it is in real life made Golfgraffix our only choice when we went in search for new flybys and course visualisation for Roganstown. Quite simply, no-one else is offering this level of detail and we see this as a valuable addition to the Roganstown website”*

**Ian McGuinness. Managing Director of Roganstown Hotel, Golf and Country Club**