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## ENTERPRISE

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### Small Business Bulletins

## Women could profit from more tee time

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If more small-business women knew how much business gets transacted on the golf course, they'd take up the game in a heartbeat.

That's the thinking of several local women who are leading a charge to get more women exposed to the friendly sport -- and to the business dealings that happen while playing it. Currently, far more men than women take advantage of the game's business opportunities.

"It's not in our culture yet," explained Dee Sweeney, president of the Executive Women's Golf Association Seattle chapter ([www.ewgaseattle.org](http://www.ewgaseattle.org)), who said that many women in business "are totally unaware of how much business is done on the golf course."

While it's true that men don't exactly sign contracts on the tees or close deals on the greens, they do exchange business cards and establish tighter personal relationships there. Many men use golf outings to scout for potential business, but according to Sweeney and others, not many women do so.

But why don't they?

A lot of it has to do with confidence, Sweeney said. Women like to feel confident in their games before teeing it up with the guys, she said, and unless they've dedicated the necessary amount of practice beforehand, they won't feel assured enough to risk embarrassment.

"If a woman isn't confident in her golf game, she won't use it for marketing. It's a confidence thing," Sweeney said.

You won't get an argument from California author Suzanne Woo, who has written a book about women, golf and business called "On Course For Business: Women and Golf." Woo also operates a consulting company called BizGolf Dynamics, which helps women use golf as a business tool ([www.bizgolfdynamics.com](http://www.bizgolfdynamics.com)). She said that many business women are missing out needlessly. You don't have to be a great female golfer to get respect by male co-golfers, she insists, and more women need to realize this.

"It's a powerful way to do business," Woo said.

If women aren't comfortable with their abilities on the golf course, Woo said they need to take the time to get confident, adding that it will take a commitment to practice. That time commitment, she said, doesn't have to be burdensome.

For beginners, Woo recommends group golf lessons at the local golf course. Being surrounded by other beginners just learning the sport isn't as intimidating, she said, and it can offer opportunities to set up times to practice with other beginners.

To amass a meaningful amount of practice time, she said, golfers must incorporate the game into their lives. She offered a few tips.

- Hit a bucket of balls at the driving range on the way home.
- Find someone else just learning the game and create a golf-buddy system to learn the game together.
- Concentrate on your short game at first, and don't overemphasize driving distance. Half the game's strokes are recorded around the green. You needn't be the longest hitter off the tee to record success. (Remember: "Drive for show and putt for dough.")

Sweeney said EWGA-Seattle's primary mission to introduce more women to the game of golf, but she admits it's an uphill climb.

"We're concentrating on getting new golfers out there, but it's slow in coming," she said. The 11-year-old Seattle EWGA chapter is the nation's seventh-largest group, and Sweeney says at least half of the local group's 350 members say they want to combine golf and business. (Boston has the largest EWGA local chapter, with nearly 600 members.)

How a person plays the game can tell a lot about whether you want to do business with them off the links, Sweeney said. "Golf is a way to interview people. You learn a lot about people on a golf course, like how they take frustration," she said.

In addition to learning the physical aspects of how to hit the ball, which even Sweeney admits isn't easy ("It's the hardest sport to master," she confesses), golf also has an elaborate set of rules and etiquette standards that must be learned. Knowing when to talk (not on the green), knowing where to stand (not directly behind someone on the tee) and even knowing where to walk on the green (not in the path of someone's ball to the hole) all have to be mastered.

With all the rules, technique and etiquette to learn, is it worth it?

"If you're playing in a golf tournament with 143 other people, you have 143 business opportunities out there," Woo said.

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