



## Networking is Par for the Course, Regardless of Gender

By Dianna Stampfler

**I dare say the art of networking was mastered, if not invented, on the golf course.** When the creators of Mackinac Island's Wawashkamo, one of the first courses to open in Michigan, completed the task in 1898 they no doubt hosted an outing and talked trading and lumbering over a quick round, followed by cigars and brandy at the clubhouse.

Not much has changed over the years. Michigan is still building new golf courses. In fact, we lead the nation in the number of new course openings and in the total number of courses, with more than 800. And, men still make big business deals on the links, where the stuffiness of the boardroom is forgotten and egos are on the line.

According to a report posted at StrategicGolf.com, a recent survey of 401 CEO's of top-level companies found that 93% said "that playing golf with a business associate is a good way to establish a closer relationship;" 80% agree that "playing golf is a good way to make new business contacts;" over 1/3 said, "some of my biggest business deals were made on the golf course."

What has changed when it comes to the golf industry is that women are becoming a driving force behind not only networking, but in orchestrating business deals (signed, sealed and delivered) on the course. They've even been known to partake in Scotch and stogies afterward. Step aside gentlemen, today's female executive golfer means business.

StrategicGolf.com reports that "of the 60 percent of women who play golf with business clients, more than a third say that playing golf results in additional business for them." It's this fact that reinforces the efforts of the Executive Women's Golf Association (EWGA). Founded in 1991, EWGA provides opportunities for women to learn, play and enjoy the game of golf for business and for life.

"Interaction during a round of golf plays an important role in forming relationships," the EWGA website touts. "You can gain a new perspective of your associates and clients, see how they react in a tense situation and, at the same time, learn in a setting that encourages relaxed conversation. The

course is also a good place for career minded women to evaluate self-performance under pressure."

I learned about this distinguished group — where else — but on the golf course. During a media event at the newly opened Angel's Crossing in Vicksburg, I had the fortunate opportunity to meet Janina Jacobs. A "Jill-of-all-trades," Janina is a multi-medi golf specialist and golf broadcaster on CBS in Detroit. She's a musician and a restaurateur, among other things. She also has a 2 handicap on the course and is widely known in golf circles as a force to be reckoned with. Janina's "the woman" in Michigan's \$1.7+ billion golf industry.



As a former marketing director for a regional tourist association, I had learned over the years that some of my best contacts were — are — made on the golf course. Even though my golf game leaves a lot of room for improvement (I received the prize for the most putts that day at Angel's Crossing with 49), my goal when learning the sport was to have an "in" in the business world. To know the difference between a driver and an iron, a birdie and a bogie and to once in a while make par on a hole. My biggest goal was — is — to not whiff the ball (which I still do on occasion). I've





come a long way, baby...but, as with anything, there's always room for improvement.

Golfing not only shows my support for past, present and future golf course members, but it allows me a chance to meet new media contacts, ultimately opening up the door to future opportunities. My boss was allowed to golf on company time, without question. I'll never know if it was "employer/employee" or "male/female" in reasoning. Disgusted by what she heard, Janina began to share with me details about EWGA and how the organization was changing stereotypes and ideologies about ladies on the lynx. I was all ears.

Inspired by what I had learned from Janina, and ever in favor of female-friendly opportunities, I began researching EWGA. While there are more than 17,000 members in 100 chapters throughout the U.S. and Canada, Michigan has only one chapter, located in Detroit. Formed in the 1990s the Detroit chapter has more than 200 members from throughout the state. The numbers are encouraging. According to Debbie Waitkus, founder and CEO of Golf for Cause, "statistically, women are the largest new group coming into the game of golf today."

Encouraged by the opportunity for growth in West Michigan, I contacted EWGA organizers to find out how to organize informational meetings throughout the state, to increase awareness for the association, to form new regional chapters and ultimately increase the number of women who value golf as a catalyst in the business world.

Again, quoting from the EWGA website, "thanks to opportunities offered by the EWGA, women are making their influence felt in golf. The association is an open avenue for women to use golf as a tool for both personal growth and corporate advancement."

If you are interested in helping organize a EWGA chapter in the Battle Creek/Kalamazoo area, contact me at [Dianna@PromoteMichigan.com](mailto:Dianna@PromoteMichigan.com). It takes the initiative and dedication of nearly 20 women to pull it all together, but the effort is well worth it.

*Photos Courtesy of Executive Women's Golf Association*

Dianna Stampfler is a freelance writer and seasoned marketer in the travel and tourism industry in Michigan. Her newly formed marketing consulting company, Promote Michigan can be found online at [www.PromoteMichigan.com](http://www.PromoteMichigan.com).

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