

CASE STUDY

Hazeltine National Golf Club

StoryTeller
media + communications



MOVING BEYOND TRADITIONAL: How Hazeltine used digital marketing to rebound

Private Golf Club partners with StoryTeller to drive more memberships, weddings, and events.

www.storytellermn.com

The background of the slide is a photograph of a golf course. In the foreground, a white golf ball sits on a green tee. The grass is vibrant green and slightly out of focus. In the background, there are more green fields and a blue sky with some white clouds. A large, semi-transparent white triangle is overlaid on the right side of the image, pointing towards the top right corner.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hazeltine National Golf Club is an internationally recognized private golf club known for hosting major golf championships, including the 2002 and 2009 PGA Championships, the 1991 U.S. Open, and the 2016 Ryder Cup. Yet, despite its storied history, Hazeltine encountered the kinds of challenges presented by the 2008 economic downturn that had become common throughout the private club industry: declining membership and pressure to increase its wedding and events revenue. Hazeltine responded to the challenge by partnering with StoryTeller to implement innovative digital marketing strategies; thus becoming the first private club in the nation to apply inbound marketing strategies to drive business growth. By leveraging targeted content, marketing automation, and lead nurturing campaigns, together StoryTeller and Hazeltine engineered a dramatic turnaround that delivered impressive ongoing results.



“

Hazeltine, like other private clubs, doesn't advertise like you would a normal product or service. There are many reasons for that, one has to do with the perception of the brand.

Ed Heil, CEO/ President,
StoryTeller Media & Communications

A background image of a golfer in mid-swing on a green field under a cloudy sky. The golfer is wearing a yellow shirt and khaki pants. The image is partially obscured by a white diagonal shape that contains the text.

CHALLENGES

After hosting the 2009 PGA Championship and still feeling the dramatic impact of the 2008 “Great Recession,” Hazeltine closed for over a year to make major capital improvements: reseeding all the fairways, renovating every green on the golf course, and replacing its nearly 50-year-old clubhouse with a larger, banquet and events-friendly clubhouse facility.

Still, Hazeltine encountered significant obstacles when it re-opened in late 2010. Marketing a private club was already a daunting task in the post-Recession and post-Tiger Woods golf world, but Hazeltine needed impressive results just to replace the members lost during the renovation and fill up a clubhouse that was designed for a substantially larger banquet business.

On top of that, extreme weather conditions ruined the reopening of the newly re-grassed golf course in the spring of 2011, keeping it closed for much of the golf season.

With all of this as a backdrop, Hazeltine headed into 2012 at a crossroads. The club needed to add new golf and social members, acquire new private golf tournament clients, and significantly expand its catering business to support the new, larger clubhouse.

“

The traditional private club marketing model of limited paid advertising, direct mail, open houses, and trade shows was not yielding the necessary results. The return on investment (ROI) of the traditional marketing model was insufficient to support the business model of the new club.

Ruth Glaser, Hazeltine's Senior Director of
Sales & Marketing from September 2010–April 2018



TURNING TO INBOUND MARKETING FOR HELP




In light of these challenges, StoryTeller implemented its inbound marketing strategies to generate awareness and leads from an untapped area - the internet. With Hazeltine, StoryTeller created content like blogs and videos that aligned with prospects' interests and distributed them via social media to increase visibility. Valuable content offers were also created and hosted on landing pages to convert those new website visitors into leads.



The inbound marketing campaigns that StoryTeller helped us to implement resulted in the best years for membership that we've ever had to that point. I attribute that success to our inbound marketing campaigns.

Ruth Glaser, Hazeltine's Senior Director of Sales & Marketing from September 2010–April 2018

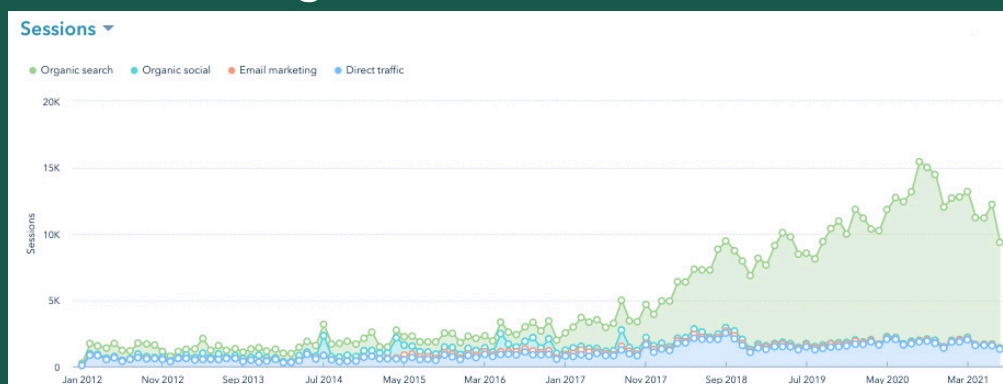


With landing pages to turn traffic into leads and automated emails to nurture them until they became sales-ready, Hazeltine now had a new inbound marketing model for both attracting highly interested visitors and converting them into customers. The Hazeltine marketing model flipped from promoting what the club had to offer to attracting people through SEO and blog content that helped address the issues their prospects were trying to solve. The content that was created didn't require website visitors to choose Hazeltine as a solution, but it established Hazeltine as a trusted resource and as a result, many chose Hazeltine for their event or membership.

THE FRUITS OF A DECADE-LONG PARTNERSHIP

Over time, as the needs of Hazeltine shifted and focused on more mature marketing tactics, StoryTeller navigated the best use of the club's financial resources to deliver high-impact results. The inbound marketing approach that had been the cornerstone of the early success was integrated across all areas of Hazeltine's business. Over the last ten years, StoryTeller and Hazeltine have continued to strengthen and grow their inbound marketing strategy; thus, leading the industry as pioneers in how to best apply digital marketing practices to offer an exceptional private club experience for their members and customers.

Growth In Organic Search Traffic Since 2012





A New Website

In 2016, Hazeltine partnered with StoryTeller to move their front-facing, searchable website from their previous Northstar platform onto a website hosted through HubSpot. The new website allowed Hazeltine to utilize the power of content marketing and search engine optimization to drive potential members to their website while still integrating into their back-end Northstar platform to support their existing club members and maintain the functionality that they needed to run the club.

This has allowed Hazeltine to seamlessly integrate social media, content marketing, and paid ad strategies, such as Google Adwords and Facebook ads, with a CRM and an enabled sales process. The team mapped comprehensive “buyer journeys” for new member and event prospects that today feed each of the club’s revenue streams through high-quality leads.

After launching the new website in early 2017, Hazeltine experienced increased website traffic and blog views. Nearly 1000 contacts were added to the database in 2017 alone due to an increase in the number of people who clicked on calls-to-action (CTA). The end result led to substantial growth in qualified leads and ultimately closing more business.

A couple in wedding attire walking away on a path in a park with autumn foliage. The bride is wearing a white dress and veil, and the groom is in a suit. They are walking on a path covered with fallen leaves. The background shows trees with yellow and orange leaves under a cloudy sky.

Targeted Audience Segments

As the club's marketing strategy has evolved, StoryTeller and Hazeltine have developed content that targets two distinct audiences:

- **Prospective members**—Speaking to the next generation of club members who are digitally savvy, expecting answers to their questions to be discoverable online. Hazeltine uses blog and video content to communicate the tenets of what it means to be a Hazeltine member and the values the institution and its members embody.
- **Event hosts and planners** (Weddings, Celebrations of Life, Corporate Outings, etc.)—Provides blog and video content as well as downloadable guides to individuals and non-members determining whether Hazeltine is the right place to host their special event.

The resulting website has leveraged new and existing assets in each of those segments, which provides the user with opportunities to watch videos, read relevant blog content, see inspiring photos and menus, and opt-in to see more in-depth content and updates, or be contacted by a member of the sales team.



Maintaining Cohesion Through Team Transitions

Across the industry, many clubs struggle when departments rely on spreadsheets to manage leads rather than using a fully integrated CRM technology like HubSpot. When transitions occur and team members leave, clubs often run the risk of losing important sales and institutional knowledge. Most recently, the HubSpot CRM and the ongoing partnership with StoryTeller granted Hazeltine greater cohesiveness and continuity when past team members left and Hazeltine needed to bring new team members up to speed.

Since 2012, Hazeltine has partnered with StoryTeller where they have helped us with our inbound marketing, website, tracking, and customer nurturing. We see ourselves as a leader in the golf industry and StoryTeller has helped our digital presence reflect that. They have taken the time to learn the ins and outs of Hazeltine to ensure their work is not only effective but also very personal to create the best possible experience for both our members and customers.

Lukas Dreger, Hazeltine's Director of Member Engagement,
July 2018 - present



LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

More than ever, private clubs today know that their digital footprint and online presence is a driving force for achieving excellence in day-to-day operations and meeting revenue targets. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, Hazeltine's website and inbound marketing strategies will continue to play an ever-important role in growing its event business, increasing prominence around golf tournaments, securing new social memberships, and in uniting golf members to gather to play the game they love. StoryTeller is excited to be a partner, guiding and collaborating throughout the journey.

ABOUT US



Content has the power to build relationships, trust, and revenue. At StoryTeller, we partner with organizations to create strategic campaigns that drive measurable results through dynamic content like blogging, websites, and video.

Our expertise comes from career journalists and our award-winning video production team made up of news veterans who understand what it takes to create a powerful story.

Finally, as a HubSpot Platinum Partner agency, we leverage your knowledge and expertise along with content marketing best practices to draw new leads and prospects to your website. Our experienced inbound marketers will develop a strategy to deliver highly-targeted, strategic content. By understanding the goals and challenges of your prospective customers, we can help you connect with them in a meaningful way.

CONTACT US

StoryTeller Media + Communications
www.storytellermn.com
952-829-9091

StoryTeller
media + communications