

Lind Golf continues online expansion

Less than a year since its product range was launched online, Sydney based Lind Golf is looking to move to bigger premises on the back of continued exponential sales growth.

Lind, named after its founder and owner, 24-year old Brad Lindenberg, was launched in May 2007 following a year of design and development of around 20 clubs in the company's initial product range, and the company's associated website. Lindenberg himself however is no recently graduated professional. Having initially learnt the game from his father, it was his IT background and entrepreneurial initiative that led him to explore the increasing power of the Internet as an effective sales forum.

"I started selling generic putters on eBay as a bit of a hobby three years ago," Lindenberg told Golf Business News.

"We then started selling irons and drivers mainly made up of overruns from the large equipment foundries in China, but as eBay became increasingly expensive and competitive, I decided that if I wanted to create something more sustainable, I'd have to look at developing my own brand.

"We partnered with a manufacturer in China who also works for a lot of the 'middle-tier' name brands such as Wilson and Orlimar, and worked with the company's designers on our product range to ensure that they conformed to R&A standards."

"We have now experienced 10 percent compound growth month-on-month since the website launch.

"As the depth of product has grown over the last year, obviously the business volume has grown in proportion.

"We now have a database of around 2000 active customers who we send specials out to regularly, and we've found that we are now picking up a significant amount of word-of-mouth business as well."

While his brand makes comparisons in performance to many of the 'bigger name' equipment manufacturers, Lindenberg says he doesn't try to pass his product designs off directly on the back of well-known models, which is a trait commonly associated with many 'clone' equipment suppliers.

"We simply inform the customer of the choice available and let them decide for themselves in respect to the product's performance," he said.

"Our demographic are not the people that are going to buy, Taylor-Made, Nike, Ping or Callaway so I don't think we infringe overlap on the same market as these bigger brand equipment manufacturers."

While few if any studies are available on the impact that Internet-based equipment sales are having on the golf industry, Lindenberg is quick to point out that in many respects, the key to the company's ongoing success lies in the provision of superior customer service.

"This process wouldn't have been possible six or seven years ago," says Lindenberg, referring to the phenomenal growth of online-based businesses during that period.

"I think it's an education process and a trend that is likely to continue as more people accept that buying equipment online is an acceptable option.

"It's not only about educating the customer in this process, but probably more importantly giving them a good service in delivering the product accurately and on time."

Following the significant current trend



towards 'component' fitting, Lind Golf currently imports all club components from China with orders being assembled by two fulltime club fitters at the company's Sydney headquarters.

"We try to build each set of clubs on the same day that the order is placed," says Lindenberg.

"It's a pretty efficient system and ensures that we get orders processed in a timely manner which has been a real selling point to customers.

"We are finding that more and more customers are buying individual items such as wedges or putters, and them coming back to buy sets of irons or drivers after they have seen firstly how good the equipment is, and secondly the high level of customer service that they are receiving."

While web-based club fitting has historically received a cool response from club professionals, (citing the examination of actual ball flight characteristics as being an essential part of the customised fitting process), Lindenberg says that this hasn't necessarily proven an issue for the company's target demographic.

"For most of our customers our basic online fitting procedure has proven to be very adequate," he says.

"Correctly identifying correct shaft length and flex solves the majority of issues, and most customers have some knowledge of their club specifications from their current equipment anyway.

"While we are in the process of upgrading our online fitting system to include other factors such as grip size and carry distance related to a number of clubs, I agree that an online system may never be as accurate as a one-on-one fitting session with a golf pro.

"However, customers ultimately pay for that personal service in the overall purchase price of their chosen clubs."

Currently the company augments its online club fitting with demo days held on Wednesday evenings at Sydney's Moore Park, with plans underway to expand that service to Melbourne and Brisbane in the near future.

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