

IS CORPORATE GOLF REALLY BACK?

It's a question that doesn't really need answering, if you ask Emajin Golf chief executive Raj Narayan.

"I don't think corporate golf was ever not a relevant tool for business," she says.

Narayan would know. Her Emajin golf networking group is a subscription-based business that comprises professionals from various industries looking to expand their network and make connections to grow their business. It's proved invaluable to small to mid-sized companies that are able to avail themselves of corporate networking without a big price tag.

"We have been in many conversations with business leaders, around the power of golf for real world corporate networking, to grow and strengthen business relationships," Narayan adds. "It's becoming clear that golf as a business activity is most effective when people meet to network with some consistency. That's how long-term, strong relationships are built."

Narayan says the demand for corporate golf is shifting from large, single-company, one-off corporate days to regular networking events with businesspeople from all different industries coming together to connect and build solid working relationships.

"But more recently, we believe the demand for golf both as a corporate networking tool and a staff engagement tool has grown even further," she adds.

"With more remote working in a post-pandemic world, staff and client physical connectivity has reduced, creating a need for people to network and connect at specialised events. People are more health and wellness conscious as well in today's world, and the demand for large corporate dinners and black-tie events is declining, with more demand for activities that are engaging, physical and outdoors."

This has led to golf-based networking being very much in demand in the current corporate landscape, allowing companies like Emajin to thrive. One of the fundamental tenets the company focuses on is inclusivity, ensuring it has multiple options for play on networking golf days.



"For example, we have the 18-hole shotgun start, but we usually offer a nine-hole opportunity for those who may not be as proficient at golf," Narayan says. "And at every one of our events, we always offer a 'try golf' clinic. This ensures that non-golfers or new golfers are not excluded from the day. Having a more inclusive structure to the golf part of the day and having everyone meet to talk about their business beforehand and come in at the same time for lunch and networking works exceptionally well."

So popular is Emajin's offerings, it has introduced a national online competition so its members can play anywhere, at any time, and all their scores go into a national leaderboard. It's a competition that lends itself to connecting people across the country, according to Narayan.

"It's perfect for networking and bringing together teams of remote workers and referral partners," she says. "Who is leading the comp this week?" is a great discussion point at coffee time or online social channels.

So, what does the ideal corporate membership provide? With corporate events seemingly moving away from a single golf day held by a company once a year, Narayan says it's important to distinguish the difference between 'entertainment' and 'networking'.

"The real benefit is when you have a corporate group that you network with and connect with regularly," Narayan says. "This is how relationships can be strengthened, and business connections maintained over time. We run several major networking events every year and regularly organise small, intimate events; it's the perfect opportunity to build a referral network while playing at Australia's finest courses like Kingston Heath and Concord Golf Club."

Narayan says the many examples of businesses now working together after introductions on the course via Emajin is reassurance that corporate golf is absolutely back, and it's here for the long haul.

"One of our networking group members invited three visitors to one of our events recently. One was a HR director of a large organisation. He connected with three networking group members, and they have all gone on to do business with each other," Narayan says. "A sales coach also connected with the HR director and has since met to discuss business opportunities. At the same event, an IT guy met with an entrepreneur in the hospitality space who needed IT services. On any given day, you don't know who will be at our networking events and the opportunities that will arise."

Check out emajin.golf for more information. 