



The Water Cooler

“No way!” Greg insisted. “This is the 21st century!” It was the end of the workday at their law firm. Melissa, Joanne and Greg, all young attorneys, were clearly engaged in a heated conversation by the water cooler. Melissa and Joanne had just told Greg that the male attorneys benefited from opportunities not offered to female attorneys. Greg was in denial, they said.

Just then, one of the senior partners approached the trio. “I have an extra ticket to tonight’s hockey game. I’m entertaining two new clients. Greg, would you like to join me?” Greg stood there hoping his jaw didn’t hit the floor. Amazed, he declined the offer, suggesting that Melissa might want to go.

The attorney turned to Melissa in an apologetic manner confessing that he didn’t think she would be interested in hockey. Whether or not she was interested in hockey, she was certainly interested in the new clients.

But women are not always overlooked because someone else thinks they lack interest. Let’s take a golf outing as an example. Sometimes the opportunity to play is never extended to the female attorney. And other times, she passes. She knows she’s a tremendous lawyer but feels vulnerable on the golf course. She prefers to not make a negative impression. Yet by not participating, she is missing so many chances to develop those relationships that would cause her phone to ring and the business to come across her desk.

Given that you’re game to play golf, how do you send up the smoke signal to let others know? Watch a tournament on television or, better yet, in person. Bring it up in conversation. Ask others if they play. Do they have a favorite course? Place golf related items in your office – trophies, pictures, magazines, books, golf balls, calendar, screen saver, mouse pad or even a golf club. Wear golf attire.

When I worked as a real estate lender, people who came into my office knew right away that I golfed. If my visitor were a golfer, we would form a distinctive bond. And since not many women played business golf, this gave my company and myself added recognition and a unique advantage. It made it easy to arrange golf outings. And those outings led to many successful transactions.



Yes, this is the 21st century. Businesswomen should not miss out on the deals that others are getting. They should take an interest in golf, participate, play, and make sure that everyone knows that they do. And if you have female direct reports, be supportive and encourage them to learn the game. You, too, have much to gain.

Suggestions of effective “smoke signals” for all golfers, including those who have never swung a club:

- Use a conversational icebreaker that lets others know you’re interested in golf. It’s easy to open with Tiger Woods, a current tournament, or a new course in your area.
- Volunteer to participate in an organization’s golf tournament committee.
- Place a putter in your office. You never have to use it, just make it visible.
- Subscribe to a golf related magazine at the office – and read it!
- Attend a local golf tournament and invite client or associate to join you.
- Wear golf attire or golf-related jewelry.

Debbie Waitkus, a golf consultant, speaker and trainer, is the owner and founder of Golf for Cause, LLC. She speaks to corporate groups and stages creative golf programs, especially for women, to help them leverage golf for business at any skill level. “Turn golf into gold.”[®] Debbie can be reached at dwaitkus@golfforcause.com or 602/722-3605.