



Get into the Swing of Things

By Debbie Waitkus, Golf for Cause®

I would not hazard a guess as to how many times I have backed the *Expedition* out of the driveway without a second thought. Thousands, I'm sure. It is as if I am on Auto Pilot. I start the engine, buckle my seat belt, check the mirrors, crane to look out the back window over my right shoulder, *go*. The other morning, though, as I was backing out to take Ben to school, my golf bag, lying as always in the back compartment, caught my eye. Specifically it was my Driver that I noticed. And, in one of those rare moments when things connect oddly, it occurred to me that there were *two* drivers in the car. The thought stayed with me the rest of the day.



You don't really have to put a lot of thought into driving a car. Yes, you must be alert and aware of your surroundings, but you don't have to remind yourself to press on the brake or step on the accelerator. You just do it. Swinging a golf club should be the same way. Doing it correctly and consistently should be second nature.

Your golf swing, like activities you undertake in the business world and in your personal life, has three connected parts. *Backswing* (Preparation). *Contact* (Impact). *Follow through* (Results). A poor backswing equates to poor preparation for, say, a business meeting. Poor preparation leads to poor

impact, which leads to poor results. When you attend a meeting for which you or others have not prepared, it is likely a waste of time. And what's your follow through, the results, the next step? Most likely the ever-dreaded additional meeting.

When you putt the ball without taking the time to read the line, you increase your chances of sending the ball a bit off the mark, yielding less than optimal results. So what's your follow through? What did you learn? You're likely to improve your chances of holing the putt by crouching behind the ball and reading the line of the putt in advance of hitting it.

The key to getting a good result, then, is good preparation, including incorporating your lessons learned. The more you put into preparation the more favorable the result. Also, because you carry your golf swing around with you wherever you go, you can always be working on your swing preparation and visualizing your follow through, your desired outcome. You don't really need a club in your hands to practice your form, the positioning of your feet, your takeaway and your follow through. Practice makes perfect, they say, but there is a caveat. Preparation can become a trap. I offer myself as Exhibit A.

When the idea for *Golf for Cause* came to me, I envisioned the perfect golf workshop — an experiential program that would include class time, instruction and on-course play. I gave thought to the reasons women choose to not play golf, some of which are cost, time

commitment, what to wear, who to play with, where to go, justifying being out of the office, lack of equipment and not wanting to be embarrassed. These all were issues I addressed in the design of the curriculum in order to bring down the walls of resistance.

For months I worked on my concept, content and pricing, all the while defining and refining what *Golf for Cause* was going to be. One hurdle was the golf courses themselves. I could not get a single golf course to play ball with me. It was pre-September 11th and the pricing was prohibitive. The course managers were not seeing my vision and my idea just wasn't connecting with them. So I kept perfecting. I was determined to have the first *Golf for Cause* program perfected before I took it out in public.

What I did not realize was that I had become a victim of analysis paralysis. Then, one day, a colleague said, "So, Debbie, when is your first *Golf for Cause* outing?" challenging me to put a stake in the ground and just start — get to impact and see what happens. My perception of perfection had been keeping me from opening the door. Unless I moved from the backswing to impact, I'd never have any feedback to incorporate into my preparation for the next program. I needed to step up to the tee and take a swing.

So I took a chance. I risked failing. But here's the key: I expected to succeed because I had prepared to succeed. And you know what *Nike* says. "Just do it."

Driving a car, starting a business, hitting a golf ball — they all require preparation,

involve contact and lead to results. You can significantly improve your chance of success by preparing for a good result. Do anything enough times and pretty soon you can do it without much thought.

Yes, you may fall short at first. You may even miss the mark numerous times. But each time you don't achieve an optimum result, you can learn something and filter it back through, starting from the beginning. So be positive. If you are thinking about failing, you aren't thinking about succeeding. Keep in mind that you get what you focus on.

As Tom Robbins writes in his novel *Still Life With Woodpecker*, "Everything is part of it." Everything is connected. The end is tied to the beginning. If you don't like the result you're getting, if you want it to be different, change the start.

So let's drive it home. Prepare to hit, hit it, and follow through. That's how you make good things happen. Have fun and *Turn Golf Into Gold*.[®]

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