

# SUN BUSINESS

Kelley Keehn

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## Teeing off at work

**Kelley gets her 'A' game on for a day at the course**

By Kelley Keehn



Golf isn't just for leisure these days. Business-minded Albertans are striking deals, solidifying relationships and enjoying the great outdoors on finely manicured fairways.

Bill Rosser, partner with McLennan Ross and chairman of the firm's corporate commercial securities practice group, anticipates spending 25% of his golf rounds talking business. He enjoys the rest of his course time with friends and business contacts, just dropping the corporate chat in with the latter.

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"The most important business I do on the golf course is bonding with clients," said Rosser. "You don't have many opportunities to spend four or more hours with clients just having fun. It's a great atmosphere for getting to know your clients better and develop a personal connection."

Not just for leisure

Rosser, a member of Edmonton's most exclusive private golf course, the Mayfair Golf and Country Club, notes that the cost "is worth ever penny," and "well worth" the current five-year wait for new members.

Graham Stringer, regional director with Oracle Corporation, feels golfing is almost a necessity in business. Stringer's company helps pay the costs of doing business on public courses, but he's also had to personally join the Mayfair. It's worth paying the difference.

Clients 'always impressed'

"Clients are always impressed by the attractiveness of the club," he said. "And they're also more likely to take you up on an invitation than perhaps a less exclusive course, where they can golf on their own without a member's invitation."

Stringer spends less than 5% of his time on the course for recreation.

Mike Englert, faculty member with the Canadian Association of Elder Planning Studies, tells his students about a financial planner that made the course his office. He profited immensely by using the course as his marketing, advertising and prospecting centre. It's not for everyone, but if your ideal client spends most of his or her summer playing golf, why would you look elsewhere?

Eric Thorsteinson, head pro at the Mayfair, says that following course etiquette not only ensures the game is simple and has a purpose, but tells a lot about you as a person.

Counting your three-putt as a two or ignoring divots when the other players are watching are cardinal sins. Many companies use the course to observe potential employees or to evaluate individuals for promotion. Clients are always observing, as well. Poor conduct on the course, whether throwing a club or using a cellphone ring, just might lose you a client or promotion.

For the novice golfer who's panicking after the invitation to the company tournament, help is near. Thorsteinson has simplified the dos and don'ts on the course with five golden rules to successful play:

Five simple rules

No. 1: Know your etiquette. Causing a shadow to fall in the line of a putt or showing up in "short" shorts can lose major points.

No. 2: Betting is totally acceptable in the game of golf, but be realistic and let your client win whenever possible. Check your ego at the tee box.

No. 3: Develop a relationship. Thorsteinson understands more than anyone the value of strengthening relationships on the course. But he warns about overt selling during a game. "If the client or your guests bring up business, talk business. If they don't, you shouldn't."

No. 4: Play quickly and without apologies. Keep in mind that your client and guests don't care how good or bad a golfer you are; they just want you to keep pace with the play and enjoy the time spent together. If you're having a bad day because you tripped over the dog last night and have a sore knee, keep it to yourself.

No. 5: Don't second-guess your guest. Have you spotted your client or boss cheating or calling a four for the hole when you know it's more like an eight? Do they kick the ball out of the rough and forget counting the three duffs on the last hole? "Relax," recommends Thorsteinson. "It's a time to have fun and build relationships, not call clients on creative scorekeeping."

Whether you're a novice, a scratch golfer or a reluctant employee invited to the company tournament, you may not be able to escape the corporate lure of the golf course this summer.

Just do all of us a favor and leave your favorite beer hat, cell phone and sales pitch at home.

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Kelley Keehn, lecturer, personal coach and author of *The Prosperity Factor*, uncovers the "inner games" people play surrounding wealth. Visit Kelley at [www.TheProsperityFactor.com](http://www.TheProsperityFactor.com) or call her at 780-732-0144.

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