

**BRAID CLASSIC**

Assorted views of the James Braid designed course set on 240 acres of historic chalk downland



It's simply material for Marc Dryden at Hockley

When Marc Dryden took over the reins at Hockley Golf Club, he turned to Material Matters for guidance and support. Article by Scott MacCallum.

It's a fact of life that if you set out to buy a widget, you will be hard pressed to get the sales assistant to break away from his text messaging to acknowledge your existence. But if you are buying 1,000 widgets the manager will suddenly appear, dust will be swept off the best chair in his office and percolated coffee and jammy dodgers will be brought to you on a silver tray.

With buying power comes influence and that, in effect, is the business model of Material Matters, which over the last four-and-a-half years, has built a customer base of golf clubs large enough to create buying power which guarantees excellent prices over a range of golf clubhouse and course related areas.

"Our minimum starting point is a saving of ten per cent to the golf club on what they had been paying, so for example if we are looking at a golf club spend of £150,000 we would be looking at a saving of at least £15,000 to the golf

club on that," explained director, Paul Mould, who has worked in golf for almost all of his career, including six years in golf course construction and creating, developing and selling EASE, the specialist golf tournament accommodation service. He also worked in corporate finance in London for four years before getting back into golf

The company began with a stable of ten golf clubs which has grown quickly to over 400 with whom they work with varying degrees of involvement.

One golf club which has benefited hugely from the help and support offered by Material Matters is Hockley Golf Club, in Winchester, where general manager, Marc Dryden, has found that the buying power, and ability to source solutions and problem solve has made his own introduction into the golf industry as smooth as possible.

"I joined Hockley two-and-a-half years ago having worked in the City as a corpo-

rate financier so, while I had a strong business background, I had no golf experience whatsoever.

"When Material Matters got in touch with me, I saw it as a great opportunity for them to handle many of the time consuming day-to-day purchasing issues, while I was able to concentrate on some of the bigger projects which the club had brought me in to manage," explained Dryden.

"For example, on utility bills, with the best will in the world, I'm not even on top of my own domestic bills, and can't get my head around the pricing structures, but Material Matters looked into it and advised us on what we should be doing with our gas and electricity.

"With the experience and buying power that Material Matters has I don't have to worry that we are on the best possible rates."

The same goes for many other aspects of a busy golf club with everything from

“Material Matters helped considerably to make me look good. I’m not ashamed of that”



WINCHESTER FORGE

The course overlooks the city of Winchester



A WELL TRODDEN PATH

A footpath winds its way to yet another picturesque hole at Hockley

photocopiers, coffee machines, stationary in the office, ingredients for the kitchen and consumables for the golf course all coming under the scrutiny of Material Matters, should a golf club wish to explore those areas.

“It is not all down to cost. Material Matters suggested that we move from the traditional food suppliers to a bespoke supplier in Somerset, who is now providing us with home grown vegetables, and salads as well as unusual cheeses so we have been able to provide menus which are a little bit different to what we used to offer,” said Dryden.

Dryden now sits down with a representative of Material Matters every six-to-eight weeks and goes through every invoice the clubs has accumulated in the intervening period. Once these have been reviewed, options and alternatives are considered, or more advantageous terms are negotiated with existing suppliers.

Material Matters work closely with departmental heads including the course manager, the club steward and chef to achieve the best options.

“Our course manager, Glenn Kirby, worked at The London Club before coming here and has very good relationships with many of the companies himself but, in some instances, if it were, for example, a sand or fuel supplier, he

doesn’t perhaps have such a strong relationship and Material Matters can go out and use their buying power to achieve good deals for us.

“In any event, as Material Matters do look over all the invoices they will tell us if they feel they might be able to achieve a better price, so Glenn and I can then determine whether the relationship is worth that difference in price.

“It may be that we would feel that was the case. We are not tied to Material Matters and can choose to use them when and where we see fit,” explained Dryden.

Mould himself knows when Material Matters can create savings for a golf club and when it might be more difficult: “If a product can be obtained from more than one source, our buying power can bring the price down, but if a product is only available from one supplier, like a particular whisky or a specific seed mix, the supplier knows that in all likelihood that business is going to come their way anyway and that they don’t need to discount to secure the business.”

But it is Material Matters’ knowledge of where to go to solve a problem and how much it should cost which provides Dryden with the greatest comfort: “If I’m quoted a price, I would often have no idea if it were reasonable or not, because it may be about something I may only

deal with once in my lifetime, whereas Material Matters have been there before and know what it should cost.

“They are available 24-7 and more often than not it only takes one phone call and the problem will be solved. For example we had a PA system which was absolutely awful. I mentioned it to Paul who knew someone who could help and within ten days we had a new system in place which works fantastically.

Conversely, the one time I didn’t use Material Matters was when I leased a new coffee machine on price and it was an utter disaster. We were having an engineer visit twice a week and it was six months of hell. In the end I spoke with Paul who got the right one for us, even if we had to buy ourselves out of the contract on the first one,” Dryden revealed.

“I would say that Material Matters helped considerably to make me look good. I’m not ashamed of that. They are offering me a service and why wouldn’t I take advantage of it, particularly as it also saves the club money as well.”

A ringing endorsement from a satisfied customer, and so long as the guys at Material Matters continue to keep drinking that percolated coffee and eating those jammy dodgers they will bring good service and competitive prices to their growing stable of clubs. **GMÉ**