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WOW card one of the latest marketing innovations

■ Two advertising firms are rolling the concept out nationally, and Principal Charity Classic is the first to try it locally

By Sarah Bzdega

Most golf professionals receive a polo shirt or set of golf balls for playing in a tournament, so the Principal Charity Classic decided to do something different this year. It purchased 650 WOW cards, and will give one to every PGA Champions Tour and ProAm player. The players can call the number on the card and receive help with anything from making a restaurant reservation to finding directions to a hotel to setting up a wake-up call.

"It's definitely something different," said the tournament's sales and marketing director, Scott Fuller. "Typically you give golf gifts and shopping sprees with different golf companies, and this is just something that's unique and innovative." It also satisfies a need players expressed for concierge service off the golf course.

Joe Nicholson, co-founder of O Thirty-Two Design Group, who sold the tournament directors on the idea, believes the WOW card is the first major innovation in the marketing industry he has

seen in a long time.

"It's personal concierge service via your cell phone," he said, or "411 on steroids." But from a marketing standpoint, it offers clients a chance to give their customers an extra perk that's branded with the company logo and plays a personalized message at the end of each call, which can be changed to advertise new promotions or products.

Newton-based Maxim Advertising introduced the concept to o32 through a partnership between the firms, where they share marketing ideas and talent as well as collaborate on concepts.

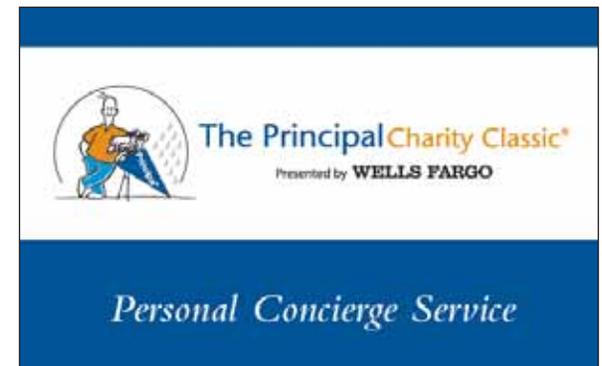
The two firms are the only Iowa distributors for the cards, manufactured by Texas-based Maestro LLC, which also runs the Dallas-based 24/7 call center for the cards. Maxim has signed on Sub-Zero Inc. and Wolf Appliance Inc. as clients, and o32 has sent out 40 to 50 proposals to major national and international companies in an attempt to start widely distributing the product.

"It's one of those things where you could almost apply it to any company in any industry and figure out how to make it work,"

Nicholson said, adding that the low cost of the card is what makes it most attractive as a marketing tool. Prices vary depending on how many minutes the client wants on the cards (which usually go between 20 and 100 minutes) and quantity of

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— Dave McNeer
president, Maxim Advertising



Rendering submitted

The card design for the Principal Charity Classic.

cards purchased. Prices can range from under \$10 to around \$25 per card.

Once the card is set up, the person using it can call in and be greeted by a live person by name to compare car prices, reserve movie tickets, check flight information or even get help in deciding on an appropriate wedding gift.

The user can also add minutes to the card, giving the distributors residual business.

"We always try to find, seek out or come up with two or three new products or services or a combination of those that will give us something to differentiate ourselves from the competition," said Maxim co-owner and president Dave McNeer. "This is probably one of the most unique items I've seen in a long, long time." □