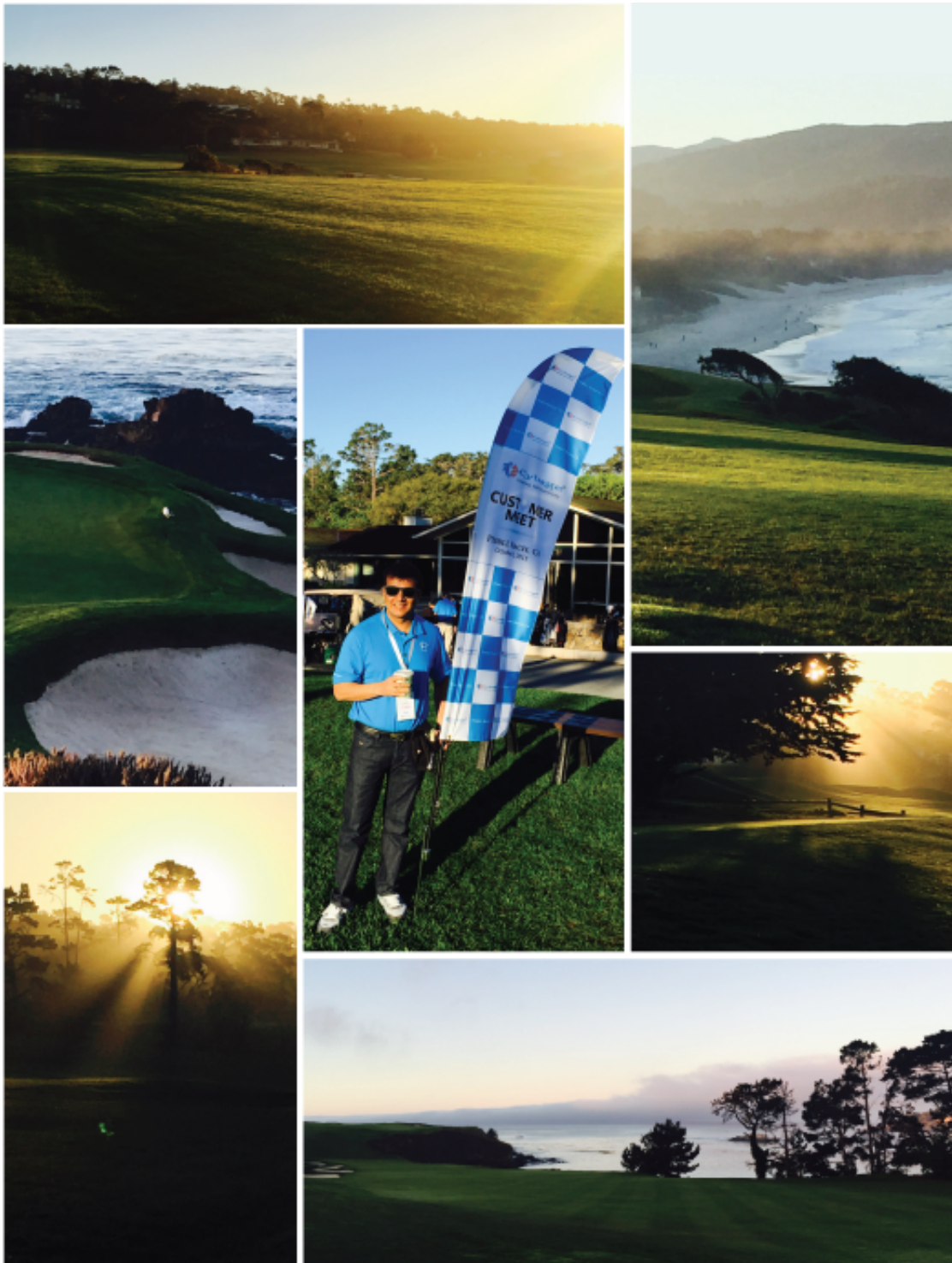


The Field of Holes

A host-to-guest journey...

6:00am, Nov 1. A picture speaks a thousand words. Not today. It was picturesque beyond pictures. I have seen sunrises before. But not like this. The hide & seek of the first rays. Playing with the trees, the mountains, and the thin clouds. Golden shades of light touching the curvy fields and the endless ocean. The breeze carried a fragrance of the greens, the winds relayed music of the blues. Serenading the three of us—the birds, a deer, and me. There was no one else. Mother Nature at its manmade best! I was the reigning champion at the world's most exclusive golf course for a few hours. I didn't need anyone else. I was finally at peace. I was now ready. It was time to pack, head to the airport, and return home. Then my phone rang...

A Golf CXO networking event for our key customers was not my idea. Especially considering the proposed venue was the exquisite [Pebble Beach](#), consistently ranked the #1 course in the US by [Golf Digest](#). The price tag burnt a hole in the pocket. Such flamboyance is not Cybage style. Moreover I don't play golf. But our COO, my brother Deepak (an avid golfer himself), championed the idea. I fell in love with the proposal. To ensure exclusivity, only twenty-three invitations were dispatched to our key customer partners. The response was overwhelmingly exciting. The excitement rubbed off on me. Then followed two months of exhaustive planning.



The Breathtaking

Exclusivity

I left for the US a week prior to the event. It made sense to double up with a business sprint on the West coast. Five weekdays opened up five cities: Los Angeles, Phoenix, Salt Lake City, Seattle, and San Francisco. There was a reason why LA was the first destination. And that cuddly reason was a [sophomore](#) at [Pomona College](#). An opportunity to spend a weekend with my daughter was more than a tiny perk. I was aware that Misha's life had been hectic of late, with nonstop action on all fronts—academics, social, and extracurricular. I was hesitant. I just

hoped my presence wouldn't be too intrusive.

The weekend breezed by. I wasn't a mere spectator. I got pulled into the thick of the action—sitting through her [mock trial](#) practice as a guest, socializing with her dorm neighbors, gatecrashing her professor's 'home meal' for Asian students, ice cream binging with her batch mates, taking her gang out for dinner, and watching a student cultural show in the college auditorium. We crisscrossed her campus a dozen times in my short stop-over. I met a zillion

students; many amusingly christened me "dad"

The rest of the trip was routine business. Then the big day arrived. The breathtaking Pebble Beach. Excitement was in the air. All of us wore co-branded Cybage-Pebble Beach t-shirts and caps. There were six teams, each with four members. A lot of thought had gone into crafting the composition of each team—with due weightage to personal, professional, and sporting behavioral synergies. The tee off time for the first team was 8:30 am. Then every ten minutes for the subsequent teams.

The only playing Cybagian was Deepak. There were four more of us from the host side. Our role was cheerleading. I was the captain. I had chalked out a strategy. My team was going to run back and forth for the entire five hours. From hole to hole. Tracking each team's progress. Delivering running commentaries. Invigorating players. Applauding good putts. Encouraging the disheartened ones. I had made a silent resolution. I was going to lead from the front. They needed me. These players had never met each other. I was the bridge. I was going to bring life to the event.

It took only a few minutes for realization to sink in. Golf doesn't work that way. The strangers within teams are reunited quadruplets. They bond from the word go. They interact in [golf lingo](#): nip it, nuked, on fire, watery grave, rainmaker, snowman, sand bagger, pin high, robbed, whiff, peel-putt, yank, ugly, and so on. They don't need cheerleaders. It is their game. It doesn't mean their approach is non-inclusive. In fact, our guests were very warm and appreciative. But I realized each team was self-sufficient. I was on the sidelines. I walked out within an hour. To work on my presentation that didn't need any work.

The evening's secondary show went well. My presentation received claps. Our guests were profusely thankful for the sponsorship. But I was uneasy. For one thing hadn't changed—my inconsequential role during the primary event. I had been unnecessarily excited. My strategies had been meaningless. My team didn't need me. The event was destined to be a bumper success. With or without me. My travel had been redundant.

I had a disturbed sleep that night. I got up while it was still dark. I wanted to see the golf course in a different light. Where the society and I didn't need each other. Where I was not on the

sidelines. Where I was self-sufficient like the golfers. The trick worked. I had my peace back. I didn't need anyone for those few hours. The walk had revealed a secret sauce on the art of living. Then my phone rang. The ring shattered the tranquility and my newly discovered myth...



The Breathgiving Inclusivity

"Papa, I just called to say goodbye and thank you for coming. You made my weekend!" She is innocent. She doesn't understand. Why is she thanking me? She took her old man in. She allowed me to peep inside her world. She made me an insider, and not an awkward parent intruding her young world. She taught me about inclusivity. She made me realize that we are never too busy to lock out those who mean something. The art of living is not about self-sufficiency. It is about filling holes of those who may not be as self-sufficient. Applies to our personal sphere, applies to our professional sphere. Shutting out the world to seek inner peace for a few hours works beautifully on the golf course. After all, it is just a game. But life isn't. I thanked my daughter and hung up. Then I dialed my mom...