

# Professionalism Through Participation

BY Ted Woehrlé

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What is professionalism? How do we achieve it? How do we improve it? If we sit down and ask ourselves the question "what is professionalism?" some interesting thoughts crop up.

We all have images of people who are generally considered professionals in our eyes (doctors, lawyers, dentists, teachers, and ministers), and people who are not (tradesmen, office workers, farmers, etc.).

Next, we ask ourselves "are we professionals?" - we would like to think so. I think we appear to ourselves as professional, but does the general public consider us professional? Perhaps not.

"What makes one man profes-

sional and another a non-professional? In my opinion, it has to be the standards that one projects. Standards on conduct, standards of dress, standards of ethics and standards of behavior. There are others to be sure, but in the final analysis, it is a matter of the image that is projected. It is a matter of being viewed in a favorable light. To be sure, there are as many variations of this image as there are people, but throughout the years certain groups or job categories have become known to be "professional" and basically it is a matter of "image." And the standards they have met.

Professionalism and image are synonymous and if we project a

good image, we are far ahead. How was this image of us formed, and how can we improve it? Who sets the standards? The answer to all these questions is your professional association. There is, to be sure, some governmental involvement, but even the government has to reason with the American Medical Association and the American Bar Association.

So, in the final analysis, it is ones professional association that plays a big role in establishing the image that will prevail, that plays a big role in setting standards which will be acceptable, and that acts as a catalyst for all activities relating to a profession.

There are exceptions to profes-

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sionalism and that would be the rather rare person that projects a professional image because of special qualifications earned through experience or education.

What has participation in these associations done for the turf management industry and for the professional turf manager? Participation in the collective activities of an association by individual members has taken turf managers out of the shadows and into the sunlight. Participation in the collective activities by individual members has helped to move turf managers from tradesmen to professionals.

All of this has been accomplished by those in the turf industry giving of their time, money and efforts toward a common interest within a fixed code of rules and conduct, the purpose of which was focused toward the upgrading of the industry and the professionalism of the turf manager.

Fundraisers such as "Golf Day" are an important part of

upgrading the industry. The monies given to research help find answers to the many complex problems facing us today. The need for the superintendent to stay abreast of changes in the field has always been important. But the need is increasing with alarming speed. The superintendent who does not keep abreast of new developments in turf management, of changing technology in science, or of the restrictions and regulations in chemical usage will be about as effective as the man who tries to cut fairways with a hand push mower.

Every professional does not have to have a Ph.D. or have spent most of his life as a lawyer or doctor to earn the respect and esteem that comes with knowing his job. It was not too long ago that very few universities offered professional training for golf course superintendents. Today, numerous institutions offer some sort of training for those interested in pursuing a career as a golf course superintendent. (The

secret is the application of the knowledge gained from education and research.)

Additional help for us comes from Universities and industry in the form of research. In many cases we control the direction of research through our requests. Our needs are attended to by those we support. The complexities of today's standards, which are always more demanding, cause us to look for all the help we can get. Some of the most active associations involved in the distribution of monies for research are GCSAA, USGA, O.J. Noer Foundation and Musser Foundation. Additional research is done by individual states. In all cases, the majority of the monies raised is the result of superintendent involvement in fund raising projects. Some states raise \$30-50,000.00 per year - Ohio and Michigan. Certain state legislatures support turf research if all turf interests are satisfied.

Projects presently being worked on include: Grass breeding (drought resistance); transition zone problem; soils; irrigation and drainage; aerification - compaction; nutrition; weed killers - selectively (*Poa annua* eradication); plant growth regulators; disease control; insecticides; development of disease models - in conjunction with computers; water shortage problems; new cultural practices; mowing - height of cut - picking up of clippings; cultivating; and sand use - top dressing - sub-soils - bunkers.

Examples of Turf Research include: USGA Green Section 1953 - GCSAA S & R Funds 1956 - Midwest Regional Turf Foundation originally provided professional guidance for seven states - Wisconsin; Michigan; Iowa; Illinois; Indiana; Ohio; and Kentucky. As the years went by, all six states outside of Indiana started their own turf grass research programs to solve individual problems. This holds true for all 50 states. Extension programs take care of most problems, but concentrated research must still

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be conducted in individual states.

Changing our "vocational occupation" to a professional occupation is important - become active. Your professional association is more important than ever, and your participation is necessary to support

**CONTINUE TO CHERISH YOUR MEMBERSHIP, CONTINUE TO GIVE OF YOURSELF, CONTINUE TO PARTICIPATE. YOU AND YOUR PROFESSION WILL BE BETTER FOR IT.**

the programs that are proposed for the successful future of GOLF.

Some of these associations include educational opportunities at conferences, seminars, and through correspondence courses ultimately leading to certification, which most of you know will eventually lead to the equivalent of a college degree. By offering a Continuing Education Program, you will be able to earn a "Certificate of Professional Education." This, coupled with Professional Internship requirement for the apprentice superintendents, will insure quality in the next generation of superintendents.

By the year 2005, the requirement of a Bachelor of Science degree in an applicable major, or its equivalency, will be necessary for entrance into professional certification. College graduation or equivalency will be required. Completion of the GCSAA Continuing Education Program is considered as equivalent to a B.S. degree.

The association is making your

profession more recognizable with a strong public relations program. Their PR program was quite evident during some of the recent television broadcasts of ESPN coverage and on ABC covering the U.S. Open. Allied Golf Associations have recognized our profession and its importance to the well-being of the game of golf.

Your association is the catalyst. The forum for expression of your ideas. The source of your education, your growth.

Certain members in your profession will gravitate to leadership within your association and by representing the will of the other

members, will set the standards, the consensus, the image.

I charge you to allow your association to tell your story to the nation in order that your "image" will be established in the public eye. In turf management, professionalism is already here for some, near for others. You and your association are the only ones that can make it happen. Associations large or small, national or local, technical or social, give you an avenue to professionalism through participation. Continue to cherish your membership, continue to give of yourself, continue to participate. You and your profession will be better for it. ■

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