

load this information to the computer to adjust the daily watering times. However, before we allow the computer to do this, we check the current radar and the forecast map to insure that rain is not imminent. Even though the irrigation system is hooked into a rain sensor, if the computer has already begun to run the nightly irrigation schedule the water that was applied might have been unnecessary.

I think the moral of the story, or the lesson I have learned, is that things are not always black and white. If you look hard enough into something you will find many functions or uses that are not always evident at first glance. We have a tough job that isn't getting any easier and every tool that we can utilize to help us accomplish our duties is of benefit to us.

Professionalism, Part II — Is Your Image a True Reflection?

Do you consider your professional work responsibilities comparable to that of an airline pilot or a judge? If you answered "yes" then I like your attitude. If you said "no" then we've got something to discuss. Do think they are superior to you?

Just why do we look up to the profession of an airline pilot? When we see the pilot and flight crew walking to our gate, don't you expect to see a certain "image" in the pilot? A crisp neat uniform, confident attitude, walking tall, in command. How would you feel if instead you saw an unshaven, staggering, bleary eyed individual with alcohol on his breath. Would you be inclined to board the plane? Probably not! No matter what you do for a living shouldn't you have the expectation of positive traits and behavior that define a professional's career?

An airline pilot's or judge's image can be easily identified with life and death responsibility in their work. Have you thought about the golf course superintendent's responsibility for proper administration of pesticides. We have to guard against improper exposure to our employees, golfers and the environment

in general. How can our image presumed to be any less important? How can we afford to be any less professional?

On my return flight from the GCSAA Conference, we hit a patch of turbulence over the Rocky Mountains that sent the plane dropping, dipping and veering off course. The plane was stone quiet as we sat frightened to death as the "professional" in the cockpit fought to control the plane. In a few minutes the plane was stabilized and the pilot came on the intercom and apologized for the inconvenience. He explained that the unstable air we hit is caused by the mix of warm and cool air blowing over the mountains. It doesn't show up on radar. You can't see it coming. You just have to deal with it when it happens.

I didn't see a single passenger go up to the cockpit and chew him out or disagree with his answer. Why? Because we're not qualified to dispute his answer. It seems that we, as golf course superintendents, are always second guessed. Our explanations and answers are often disputed and challenged. Golfers seem to think because they mow grass they are qualified to pass judgment. They don't have much empathy for that "unseen turbulence" we experience like low oxygen levels in lakes that might cause a fish kill. They immediately point a finger at the "pilot" superintendent and think something incompetent has happened.

If we can form a visual image of that commanding pilot or a wise judge, what is the image of a golf course superintendent? More and more everyday we are being called upon to be leaders and stewards of a very valuable resource, the green space and wildlife sanctuary in the ever sprawling urban environment. The mantle of environmental responsibility is being placed on our shoulders.

Our professional image will be formed by our ability to provide thorough and accurate information that educates the public and dispels the negativism to golf that has been so widely publicized. Our image will also be reflected in the behavior and appearance of our staff from the rookie greensman to the Superintendent. It will be manifested in the cleanliness of our shops and equipment.

Professionalism has to come from the top. If you lead by example, that professionalism will trickle down to the most inexperienced person on your staff. Professionalism to the utmost is what every golfer expects of you whether you like it or not. What do they see? Is your image a true reflection of a professional?

*Mike Bailey, GCS
Boca Rio C.C.*

Professionalism, Part II — The Assistant's Role in Golf Course Operations

In recent times, the image and responsibilities of the golf course superintendent have greatly changed. In the early years, they were thought of as greenskeepers with little or no formal education. Today, many golf course superintendents hold a specialized degree in turfgrass management and are recognized as golf course managers. As challenges and opportunities for the modern golf course superintendent have changed, so has the role of the assistant.

Today, many golf course superintendents are busy with committee meetings, budget tracking and preparation, as well as dealing with numerous government regulations. For these reasons, a superintendent places greater responsibility on the assistant superintendent.

It is the assistant who carries on the day-to-day tasks of the golf course. He or she works directly with the golf course crew in scheduling, training and ensuring assignments are completed properly, efficiently and safely. Self-confidence in his or her abilities to supervise the golf course staff and deal independently with a variety of issues, without daily guidance from the superintendent, is necessary.

An assistant superintendent must display strong work ethics through hard work, honesty and dependability because he or she is a positive role model for the crew. The assistant must also project a professional image to other club employees as well as to the club's membership.

A good assistant will employ the ideas and philosophy of the superintendent. The assistant may not understand why some things are done the way they are, but he or she must trust and support the superintendent's judgment. You learn to use tact when inquiring about certain decisions the superintendent makes, not to question, but to learn.

A variety of skills are essential to be an effective assistant superintendent. One is good communication skills, not only with the crew, but also with the superintendent, vendors, other professionals and club members. It allows the assistant to effectively inform the superintendent on the status of the golf course, its employees and events that may directly or indirectly affect the golf course operations.

Problem solving is another necessary skill. Making the right decisions in the superintendent's absence, based on experience with the superintendent, the assistant will solve many small and less difficult problems. These problems can range from turf and pest practices to personnel issues. He or she will also be aware of the guidelines and limitations regarding certain types of decision that require the superintendent's input and final decision.

Computer literacy is yet another needed skill. The assistant is usually the one that operates, or assists, in the operation of a sophisticated computerized irrigation system. A data base management system may also be used to track pesticide and fertilizer applications.

Having a degree in turfgrass management, or equivalent knowledge, is a definite advantage for an assistant superin-

tendent; education plus experience is an even greater advantage. This combination provides knowledge not only for field diagnosis of problems and turf and pest management, but also in how to build resources and network with various agencies and peers. Resources, and an active network of peers having various degrees of practical experience, supply a vast pool of knowledge to draw from or simply exchange ideas.

In order for the assistant to be successful, it will take more than hard work, honesty and dependability. He or she must work for someone who has the same values and wants to see the assistant succeed. The superintendent must give the assistant guidelines to

work within. In most cases the guidelines are in the form of a job description. The superintendent and assistant should talk often to ensure they both share the same priorities (i.e., if the assistant has the responsibility of doing crew schedules). As more responsibility is delegated to the assistant, a good superintendent will support decisions the assistant makes because the superintendent will realize there is more than one way to get things accomplished. If the assistant makes a mistake, a good superintendent will inform the assistant, not in a condescending manner, but as a teaching experience. By so doing, the assistant will not be reluctant to make more decisions.

The assistant's role today is nearly as demanding and diverse as the superintendent's role. It can also be just as rewarding. Attitude, dedication, hard work and a superintendent who motivates and teaches his or her assistant su-

perintendent is what will make tomorrow's knowledgeable and confident superintendent.

Matt Taylor

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