

Perception vs Reality

Green Side Up



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Perceptions are hard to change. They live like myths and folklore handed down from generation to generation with

embellishments added along the way. Here are two common ones we hear all the time and one from left field.

Perception #1: The golf course is "always" overwatered.

Reality: What people mean is they came across some "wet areas" on the course. Why do people automatically assume the superintendent is blindly watering without regard to conditions or need? Water Use Permits and restrictions make water too valuable to waste. We know that overwatering causes algae, saturated root zones, compaction and complaints. Why would we do that on purpose?

So why are there "wet spots?" Leaking pipes and fittings. Trash in a valve. Diaphragm failure in a valve. Leaking control tubes. Booster pump failure. Human error in setting up run time. Late night/early morning rain after regular cycle ran. Stuck head. Above normal rainfall. Poor soil drainage. High water table. Course in a swamp. You see the irrigation running in the morning to water chemicals and fertilizer and you make assumptions.

Solutions: Perceptions are perpetuated by uninformed comments and assumptions among staff, management and golfers.

Keep the pro shop and other staff who have contact with the players informed about any unusual occurrences with rain or the irrigation. Tell as many people as possible right down to the beverage cart drivers.

Keep the course on the "dry side" by prudent planning and scheduling of irrigation. Use more wetting agents in chronic wet and dry areas. Use more hand watering on dry spots, but be sure and tell your superiors about the impact on labor and other jobs.

Perception #2: The superintendent is "never" around. He's "always" gone.

Reality: What is meant is that the superintendent wasn't available when "someone" wanted him that minute! In the most recent GCSAA survey, Florida superintendents averaged 40 to 50 hours Monday to Friday and 5 to 9 hours on the weekend.

That means 5.5 to 7 days of spending time at the course. We start early. Pardon us if we're not always there when you play golf after work or for every act of God or emergency.

We have families with working wives. Kids in Little League, soccer and Pop Warner football. Some of us even coach them. Kids with music and dance lessons, orthodontist and doctor appointments. Kids in high school and college sports and activities.

Like any other manager in a business that attends conventions, sales meetings or product and service trade shows, we do too! It keeps us up to date and competitive and we use that education and networking to make our (your) courses better.

Solution: Be visible and make contact with key management and staff every day you're on property. Take a time management course.

Advise those same people when you're going to be gone and why, so it's not a surprise if there is an emergency. They will

happen. There are so many educational opportunities available these days, that you can't possibly attend all of them. Pick and choose wisely based on your course's activity schedule.

Perception #3: A superintendent's job security would be better if they weren't so busy "running for political office."

Reality: Most professionals have associations. People who take a real interest in that profession often give back by serving as officers or directors. Most are volunteers or are asked because not enough people are willing to give of their time.

Officers move up from Director

to President of a local chapter by rotation not by campaigning. All any of them try to do is attend monthly chapter meetings.

The only people who actually "run" for office are the two to four people nominated for one or two spots on the board of the GCSAA.

Since Florida has a 12-month golf season, none of us has really considered "running" for the GCSAA board. Only one did in my 21 years, and his club backed out of supporting him.

The only reason Florida had the past president of the GCSAA was because he moved here while on the Board already and his club agreed to let him finish his service.

Solution: Obviously, you must take care of business at your home club first and foremost. Just make sure your club understands how satisfying and valuable your service on superintendent association boards, water management district committees, turf advisory committees and Audubon-adopt-a-school programs is to you and your profession.

Thank them often and include them as much as possible so they can also make a positive contribution to the golf industry.

Perceptions are a reality of life. They're just not always the facts of life!



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