



# Superintendent Public Relations

*It's Frequently Much Harder Than Growing Grass:*

**S**ometimes, when the subject of golf course superintendents' image and visibility comes up, people either get angry, anxious or ambiguous. The word "image" today can conjure connotations of spin doctors and Madison Avenue hype... inferences of smoke and mirrors or sound bites. There is definitely something about the terminology that seems foreign to the traditional perceptions of the superintendent's role in golf.

Perhaps it's because the superintendent's traditional role has changed not so much in substance but in scope that many think special emphasis on our "image" is indeed warranted. Image is perception and perception is a person's reality. There is nothing wrong about superintendents being perceived as professional businessmen. The fact that part of their day may be spent getting their hands dirty is not a complete reflection on the rest of their responsibilities. A surgeon gets bloody hands, but he is also highly respected for his knowledge and skill.

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I learned that lesson the hard way. I will never forget the day I was standing with the golf pro on the steps of the Isleworth clubhouse and a member pulls up in his cart and says to the pro, "Hey Dave, the course is looking great!"

Here I was busting my butt trying to manage bentgrass greens in Orlando, working 358 days straight my first year and the pro is getting a compliment on course conditions! Obviously, I was doing my turf job very well, but my public relations and image needed some work.

For all those who view efforts to enhance the superintendent's image as

misguided, off target or a waste of time, please remember that communications and information are the currency of the times. A superintendent's image should not be a veneer and visibility should not just a photo op! Thoughtful, factual communications paired with performance and timely appearances will generate the kind of positive image and visibility our profession is seeking.

## **Salesmanship - From A Superintendent's Perspective**

**T**he image that a superintendent has of himself as a turf manager is certainly understandable. What I see is the lack of conscious understanding by many of my peers that a superintendent is re-

## The Superintendent as Salesman

### **Selling your budget will include:**

- Financial compensations for yourself and your staff.
- Projects, renovations or course improvements.
- Reasons to replace old and worn out equipment.
- Reasons to attend educational and chapter meetings to better yourself.
- Long range programs.

### **To your members you will have to sell:**

- Specific maintenance procedures and how it effects golfers like topdressing, aerifying, pesticide applications, etc.
- Specific maintenance/playing condition/pace of play issues like green speed, rough height, cup positions, etc.

- Yourself as a complete business professional not just a turf manager or a greenkeeper.
- Solutions to problems whether they be a result your decisions, your staff, your superiors or natural disasters.

### **To your staff you will have to sell:**

- The why's and how's of specific maintenance procedures.
- Membership requirements.
- Club rules and policies
- Training and compliance with safety procedures and requirements.