



tively by upper management.

Such rewards are considered too damaging to the bottom line. This attitude seems to be found throughout the entire business world. Everyone is looking out for number one with a survival-of-the-fittest mentality.

Tenure and experience seem to mean little these days because there are many up-and-coming turf professionals willing to work countless hours for less pay. They get a nice increase in salary compared to their prior assistant's position, but very often nowhere near the pay level of the experienced superintendent. The course "saved money" by this move, or at least that was the justification used by management—a corporate downsizing philosophy, I suppose.

I have seen a number of older, very good golf course superintendents released over the years, replaced by a younger person with a college education and maybe two or three years of experience as an assistant. Does this cost-cutting move make up for many years of experience and local knowledge of a property? I don't think so.

In reality, the overall financial position may not have improved other than in the superintendent's salary line item category. A careful look at the entire

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budget in subsequent years might reveal that overall spending increased while course conditioning remained the same. How could this happen? Could the previous superintendent's many years of experience have paid off in more cost-effective management and fewer mistakes? Equal golf course conditioning at less expense? It is possible. I am not implying that all young turf managers are incompetent or wasteful, but remember the adage, "You get what you pay for," and this goes for work experience also.

It is not just employers who have forgotten the meaning of loyalty. Superintendents, both young and old, are also guilty of changing jobs at the drop of a hat. Superintendents will jump ship for a small increase in salary, or make a lateral move for the chance to manage a more prestigious course. This quite commonly is justified as required to move up the ladder.

We all need to stop and think about the good and the bad times we've had over the years. Course officials must ask themselves who it was who stuck by them when the going was rough. Who was there during the lean years when there wasn't money in the

budget to perform needed course improvements or purchase new equipment? Who spent their nights babysitting an unreliable pump station to get the course watered? Or, as a superintendent, perhaps the course officials stood by you in a time of serious need such as a personal family problem or serious illness? If you are fortunate enough to have a trusting and loyal working relationship with your employee or employer, do you really want to throw it away and risk what you have for a few more dollars in your paycheck or budget? Loyal working relationships don't just happen; they must be developed. Once developed, they need to be appreciated

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Mike Huck loyally works as an agronomist in the Southwest Region of the USGA Green Section. Credit: March/April 1999 USGA Green Section Record.

Facts Grind the Rumor Mill to a Halt in a Hurry

Alan Puckett, CGCS of the Lake Region Yacht & Country Club told me recently about a communication tool that has cut the infamous rumor mill at his course by 80–85 percent. Alan's general manager, Mike Fiddelke, picked it up from another club manager and it goes something like this.

All department heads are encouraged to report immediately or at staff meetings any unfounded rumors they hear circulating through the club. The general manager will post a memo titled "Rumor! Rumor! Rumor!" in the pro shop, clubhouse and locker rooms. The memo will simply state the rumor and then present the facts of the matter.

For example, the Lake Region Club recently rebuilt their greens and planted FloraDwarf bermudagrass. When the

first cold snap of the season hit the newly seeded greens, the bermuda turned its usual cold temperature purple. Immediately the rumor spread that the new greens were dead or dying.

The club manager wrote a memo with information supplied by Alan about the normal reaction of warm-season grasses to cold weather and posted it, killing the rumor in its tracks. Other club managers have reported similar results using this program.

It seems people become more reluctant and embarrassed to spread rumors when their gossip proves to be so inaccurate when the facts are posted quickly and everyone knows who spread the rumor. If you have a rampant rumor mill problem at your club maybe this tip can save you some grief from the whiners and complainers.