How to get the most out of the GCSAA conference and show

By Ray Davies

There are 63 things on the "to-do" list and only sufficient resources to accomplish a handful today. Which five or six tasks are most important? What is to be done about the man items on the list that have been there all year, or could it be - many years? Do you accept the problems as beyond the budgets reach, or do you continue to wage war on them until a solution is found?

The value a superintendent brings to the operation of a golf course maintenance operation is directly proportional to the quality of his decision-making skills. Some may accept this perspective at first glance as too simple. But, in its simplicity lies a truth that should motivate you to action prior to getting on the plane for Anaheim the first week in February.

Each day we make many decisions regarding the utilization of assets committed by our boards, committees, or owners to the maintenance of the major profit-producing asset of the business. Much of our decision making is based on the implementation of the routine maintenance plans for course set-up and mowing. But it's the highly leveraged activity of utilizing discretionary labor is where we solve the nagging problems faced by the golf course. This is where we make our reputations as superintendents who dramatically improve our courses.

The GCSAA conference and show presents many opportunities to improve the quality of your decisions. The quality of our decisions is directly correlated to the quality of the information we have at our disposal prior to making the decision. We will solve more problems and implement more effective programs by attending the conference and show with a plan to obtain the information we need to make effective decisions.

1. Determine what information you need.

2. Make a plan to meet with the people best able to provide the information.

3. Follow the plan.

I always make a list of all the information needed that could come from the conference, the show, or the participants. It helps to put down all the issues you are faced with in your current position. This calls for an assessment of your course. I try to look at the course from a number of perspectives - the more the better.

1. The membership's, or golfer's.
2. The owner's or upper management's.
3. The golf professional's.
4. The club manager's.

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5. The worker’s.
6. A woman’s.
7. My own.
I also try to think about sea-
sons. Many of the issues that we
are working to improve are af-
fected by the seasons.

Good questions are the key to
creating this list. Here are a few
of the questions I ask myself
prior to attending the conference
each year:
What issues do the golfers want
addressed for the next season?
It is important to be working
on solving the problems that our
customers feel are most impor-
tant, as well as the ones we know
are important. Now comes the
hard part. Write them down.
What issues have been on the
back burner because of a lack of
resources?

The major reason a fresh eye
brings solutions to problems that
have plagued a course for many
years is quite simple. Years have
passed since anyone has at-
ttempted to solve an accepted
problem. During this time the
profession has developed solu-
tions that have gone unapplied
at the particular course. The
fresh eye simply applies current
knowledge to the old problem.

What labor needs do I have that
if remedied would have the big-
gest payoff to the membership?
The mind of the superinten-
dent needs to be set upon the
problems that will bring the most
improvement. A critical decision
is in selecting the most impor-
tant problems to solve.

What materials that I use are not
producing the results I require?
This includes sand topdressing,
fertilizers, pesticides, or any other
material that affects the quality of
the golfing experience we provide.

This process generates the list
of questions to be discussed at
the conference and show. With a
little thought you will be able to
bring with you a list of informa-
tional goals that will guide your
activities, or at least influence
your conversations.

I usually take a notebook with
me to the conference and write
one question at the top of each
page. Each night I review the
notebook to see what I learned
that day. It also makes me aware
of opportunities to gain the infor-
mation I require.

How you perceive the confer-
ence will have a direct effect on
how productive the experience
will be. If you plan carefully and
work the event, you will find
plenty of time to meet with old
friends, make new ones, and
improve your decision-making
by providing yourself with the
informational resources.

Grund introduces
Snap-In
G
rnd Guide will introduce
its new Snap-In Marker,
which is compatible to the Toro
730, 750, 760, and 780 series
sprinkler head covers. Simply re-
move the existing snap-in and
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contact Grund at 800-971-7233.

Otterbine introduces
Giant Fountain
Otterbine Barebo Inc., a manu-
facturer of pond and lake aera-
tation systems and fountains, will
announce its new giant fountain
series. Pricing, availability and
specifications for this spectacu-
lar fountain will be made avail-
able beginning in the year 1998.
For additional information on the
Giant Fountain series contact 1-
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