

P.D.I. — Futuristic thinking?

P.D.I. — By now superintendents should have heard the acronym, but if they have not, this writing will catch them up to date.

By RAY DAVIES
and MARK ESODA

The Professional Development Initiative has become a buzzword in our industry to the likes of how "paradigm shift" became a buzz phrase in industry years ago to describe a change in thinking patterns. Neither the "PDI" nor "paradigm shift" are new ideas. They are simply different names for old ideas.

The Professional Development Initiative is taking the ideas that continuing education, training, experience, formal education and minimum standards are important and good. Since they are good things, they should be part of our professional development and communicated to the people who employ us to make sure our contributions are appreciated.

As a side note, employers think these aspects of the professional development

initiative are important as well. These issues are not new. They have existed since the beginning of professional organizations. Certainly, they have been around the profession since the beginning of the Certification Program.

Why now?

There are three reasons. First, the idea of having a minimum standard for Class A and communicating it back to employers was endorsed by the voting delegates in 1996, and in 1997 the GCSAA board of directors formed the Membership Standards Resource Group to work toward that end.

Next, the research conducted in the following 18 months showed that the golf industry was changing and that the superintendent was in a unique position to be able to effectively market his/her credentials — that is, if they had any to market.

Lastly, we must act now to be proactive and provide the means for change in the



Ray Davies



Mark Esoda

future.

Additional research into our profession uncovered an important fact: We all perform the same tasks, but in different degrees based on the needs of our individual situations. We all have a minimum level of competencies (skills and abilities needed to do our job). This fact is the basis for minimum standards.

Next, we had to look at ourselves. We studied the membership to see if educational needs are being met. No. The members needed better education systems that are both affordable and accessible. Members who attend the conference and show appreciate the seminars and other educational benefits. Those who cannot afford to attend have little access to continuing education tailored to our profession.

Our members also feel under-appreciated and underpaid. What do employers value in superintendents? How do they perceive the superintendent now and in the future?

We asked them the same questions in research conducted during the same 18-

month period. Some of the answers were surprising — some were not. They value formal education and continuing education.

The employer thinks we do not have adequate business skills. We have limited people skills and frankly do not value them. "Superintendents like to hide in their barns and leave at 2 p.m."

These are generalizations and perceptions, but ones we cannot ignore. We agree superintendents need these business and people skills as shown by the competency study. Do we have the means to acquire them?

The last study we did was of the GCSAA education system. We found that as good as it is, there were definite holes in the system. There is also a need to upgrade to the best practices in education, including new delivery systems and interactive learning opportunities. We need to make sure education is affordable and accessible. All members need access to effective continuing education. The key to this is using technology to bring the education to the members, instead of making the members go to the education.

A minimum Class A standard

The combination of all the ideas and

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research make up the Professional Development Initiative. We need a minimum standard for Class A superintendents that employers understand and value which will return a greater appreciation of our skills and abilities as they relate to the business of golf.

We need to support the skills and abilities with affordable, accessible education. There needs to be a marketing program for these credentials to the employers so they understand the value of what we do. This process needs to be supported by the members.

Part of obtaining member support is getting the message to members and getting feedback. That is what we are doing now. Some of the program involves change and emotion. We understand this very well, as many hours were spent debating the issues and finding consensus during our meetings.

Members of the Membership Standard Resource Group have been traveling around the country giving presentations to chapters and collecting feedback. The PDI presentation is on the GCSAA web site for view and comment. The voting delegates and other committees have seen presentations and been giving feedback and making recommendations. The process is still in the development stage and evolving.

THE KEY ISSUES

Following are some of the key issues that have been raised to date. They include the educational requirement, use of the planning tool, grandfathering and costs. During presentations these issues are raised most often.

✓ Formal Education

The most discussed subject is the requirement of a two-year degree in turf or a four-year degree in another subject. Often the concern is that we are closing the door on anyone who is not fortunate enough to get a two-year degree, much less four.

Many current superintendents without a degree perform at an excellent level, so the idea that they must have a degree is untrue. The degree closes the door forever on those who cannot go to school for whatever reason. This is not consistent with the way we have managed the certification program, where an alternate path is offered. For most of those who express this position, an alternate path is the solution; set a requirement for CEUs that will be considered an equivalent.

A few others feel the educational requirement should be eliminated completely.

But the degree was included for many reasons. Employers value the degree and superintendents are the most educated group as part of the management team

in golf. So it has great value in our effort to communicate what we bring to the game.

Employers also desire more from superintendents in non-technical skills. Superintendents will receive training in non-technical skills in college, especially with a four-year degree. This is why the four-year degree in another subject was included. We have an abundance of college-

trained assistant superintendents and even spray techs, working for their first opportunity as a superintendent. The degree is becoming the standard whether we make it one or not.

No one has disagreed that the best way to prepare for the profession is with a college education. No member has said the best way to prepare is to go to work on a crew and forget a degree.

The most fundamental question is not the value of a degree, but the appropriateness of including it in our standards. All the issues raised by members will be reviewed by the MSRG. This issue was the most difficult to gain consensus during our preparation of the first draft — and for good reason. There is significant support for an alternative path.

HR WEB

The HR WEB is a planning tool that uses the Internet to allow members to compare their current competencies against the minimum standards, the demands of their current position, or the demands of a future position they desire. The tool is outstanding in its ability to identify the areas of continuing education.

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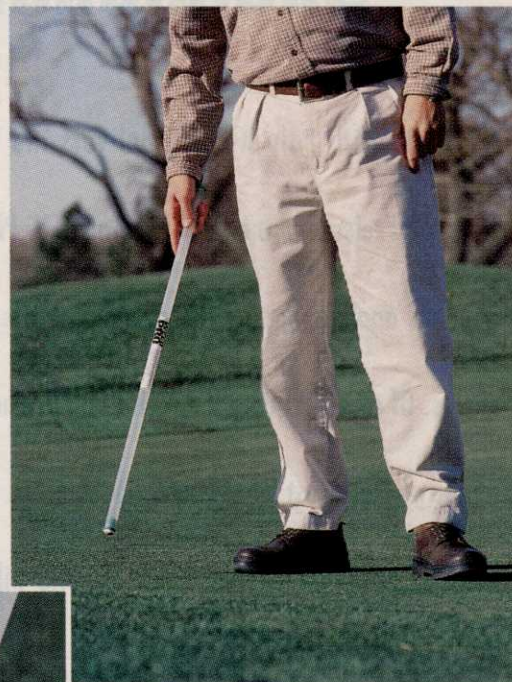
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tion that will be of most value to a superintendent for his current position and in preparation for career advancement.

It will link to education providers and allow the superintendent to access education of their own choosing. It is based on task analysis and includes all the competencies discovered in the research.

Some of our members are concerned that this tool, though effective for planning, could be misused and abused. There is concern that the personal information would not be adequately protected, that the competency could be used by employers in selecting superintendents, or that GCSAA would use them to recommend individuals in response to job-opening announcements.

Others are concerned the use of the planning tool and continuing education would be mandated for those who desire Class A status.

The basis for minimum standards is that all superintendents do the same tasks. This allows us to set minimum standards. The planning tool is critical if we choose to have minimum standards. The only access allowed to the system will be individual mem-

bers using their password. Therefore, no one not authorized by the superintendent shall have access to the information. GCSAA will contract for the use of the tool and its management, so even staff access will not be a concern.

The more difficult question to address is, what will employers do with the knowledge that our membership has a profile? Will they require us to bring them to

interviews and use them inappropriately in the selection of superintendents? This will require a better understanding of what employers will do when we communicate competencies to them.

GRANDFATHERING

The grandfathering recommendations are liberal and were the outcome of our recommendation that no current superintendent be required to go back to school to keep their Class A. Some feel that to have any integrity, the new standards should not allow anyone to grandfather. If the new standards are so important, then they should be applied to all, not just new superintendents after July 2002.

Others believe that without the grandfathering, the new standards would be unfair. It has been correctly pointed out that the grandfathered superintendent who does not continue his education or participate in any local chapter meetings, would lose the Class A after a three-year period.

Grandfathering is what it was intended to be: a period of adjustment to the new standards which protects current superintendents who do not meet the new requirements. The MSRSG feels this is a tried-and-true tool that was effective in establishing the certification program and has an effective historical record.

Could the timing be adjusted to be more fair? Could the certification window be larger or smaller? What happens if a superintendent loses his job? These issues will be reviewed by the MSRSG, but we are confident that the grandfathering tool is important and will be effective.

COSTS

How much will it cost for education requirements after superintendents are grandfathered? How much will these other education providers charge for their training? How much has the GCSAA spent to date on the PDI and how much more will it cost before we are done? How much will the HR WEB cost for ongoing operations?

These are very important questions. Those who are opposed to the present proposal have questioned the costs and expressed concern that money not be spent on an effort to make changes with which they disagree. This is an understandable position.

We feel that with the modifications that will come from the continued work of the MSRSG, a proposal that gains the needed support of the membership will be developed. The studies were expensive, as is the cost of bringing the MSRSG and other committees together for meetings. GCSAA has a budget of more than \$15 million per year and well over \$45 million the past three years. The costs associated with the PDI are reported to be \$900,000 to date

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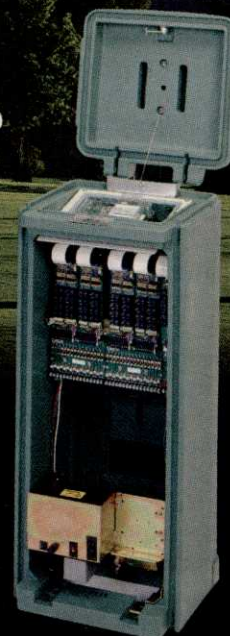
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president in 1962 and is a consultant living in Brewster, Mass. — received the most votes among active/retired nominees. Following Moore were Eb Steiniger, Robert Williams, Gordon Witteveen, Walter Woods, Paul Latshaw, Palmer Maples, Robert Mitchell, Randy Nichols and Edward "Ted" Horton.

Bidwell was an Owensboro, Ky., native who began his turfgrass career in the ninth grade on the maintenance staff of Homestead Golf Club in Cincinnati. He joined the GCSAA in 1934, remodeled Olympia Fields Country Club in Chicago in preparation for the 1961 PGA Championship and later worked at Philadelphia Country Club and Congressional Country Club in Bethesda, Md. He served on the national GCSAA board from 1969 through 1971 and, after retiring from course management, traveled worldwide as a turfgrass management consultant for Tee-2-Green and Turf-Seed Corp..

"He was a true visionary who led by example," wrote Ken Krausz of the GCSA of New Jersey. "He trained many future superintendents and was the consummate professional."

Morley and Chet Mendenhall were two of the original founding members of GCSAA.



John Morley

Born in England, Morley emigrated to the United States before the turn of the century, became head greenkeeper at Youngstown Country Club and served as the GCSAA's first

president from 1926-31. "He was the first to exercise a future vision," wrote Robert Williams.

Mendenhall, who served as GCSAA president in 1948, was the association's last surviving charter member when he died a few years ago. Born in 1895 on an Oklahoma farm, his golf career started on a city-owned course he designed and built in Wichita, Kan. He later worked at Wichita Country Club and Mission Hills Country Club on the Kansas/Missouri border and also designed a number of courses in the two states. "He was the original superintendent," wrote MAGCS President Don Ferreri.

No one is held in higher esteem among the active/retired superintendent ranks than Moore. Moore attended the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts concentrating on turfgrass management and horticulture. He worked at several New Jersey courses before accepting the head superintendent post at Winged Foot Golf Club in New York. He had two tours of duty at Winged Foot, hosting the U.S. Open and Senior Open. Moore was the first superintendent to receive the Old Tom Morris Award, GCSAA's highest honor, and was a frequent contributor to *Golf Course Management* magazine.



Chester Mendenhall

"He had that All-American boy image," wrote Robert Williams of the man who would follow him as GCSAA president four years later. "He had a great track record."

Another voter cast his lot with Moore "for the work he did overseas and his infectious enthusiasm."



Eb Steiniger

Born in Germany, Steiniger spent 53 years at Pine Valley Golf Club, the suburban Philadelphia layout annually voted the top course in the world by most major golf publications. He nurtured the course along to its eventual No. 1 ranking and earned the GCSAA's Distinguished Service Award in 1988. The turfgrass maintenance museum at Penn State is named after Steiniger and fellow course manager Tom Moscaro. "He was the nicest, greatest and most talented man ever to serve in a golf course maintenance capacity," wrote Joe Owsik of the Philadelphia Association of Golf Course Superintendents.

Robert Williams, who served as GCSAA president in 1958, spent most of his career as head superintendent of Bob O'Links Golf Club in suburban Chicago. An eloquent speaker, talented writer and capable businessman, he is credited with helping elevate the position of golf course superintendent from a menial job to a profession. "He was the leader of GCSAA during the transition from greenkeeper to superintendent," wrote one voter.

The survey was conducted in November and December. Voters were asked to rank the top 10 superintendents in each category (Deceased and Active/Retired).



Robert Williams

He was a true visionary who led by example. He trained many future superintendents and was the consummate professional.'

— Ken Krausz of the GCSA of New Jersey on Warren Bidwell

Nominees received 10 points for a first-place vote, nine points for a second-place vote, eight points for a third-place vote, and so on.

Also receiving votes in the "Deceased" category (in no particular order of finish) were Arthur Anderson, Bill Beresford, Andrew Bertoni, Fred Burkhardt, Phil Cassidy, Angelo Cammarota, O.B. Fitts, Joe Flaherty, Raymond Gerber, John Gray, James Haines, Lester Hall, Norm Kramer, Frank Maples, Casper McCullough, John McGregor, Mal McLaren, Roy Nelson, Jack Ormond, Emil Picha, William Sansom, Hans Schmeisser, Robert Scott, Robert Shields, Bill Smart, Colin Smith, John Steel, Clarence Wolfrom, Paul Boizelle, Fred Roth, Joe Hadwick, Adolph Bertucci, Art Benson Sr., Leon Lambert, Paul Weiss Sr. and Frank Ermer.

Other "Active/Retired" nominees receiving votes (also in no particular order) were Walter Boysen, Tom Burrows, Paul Frank, Gary Grigg, Dan Hall, Keith Ihms, Dan Maples, David Moote, Keith Nisbet, Sid Puddicombe, John Spodnik, Paul Voykin, Cliff Wagoner, Bruce Williams, Theodore Woehrle, Steve Cadenelli, Bob Alonzi, Doug Peterson, Mike Bavier, Oscar Miles, Richie Valentine, Sonny Debose, Tom Leonard, Donald Hearn, Kevin Downing, Fred Klauk, Tim Hiers, Mark Jarrell, Paul Crawford, Charlie Tadge, George Morgan, Jim Wyllie, Louis Miller, Peter Smith, Carl Beer, David Gourchy and Mel Lucas.

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and a detailed report on a breakdown of costs has been requested.

The costs are appropriate for the work that has been accomplished. Even those who are most aggressive in their views that portions of the proposal must be changed, feel that there is much good in the proposal, if we can simply address their concerns. We agree with this view and expect to address concerns sufficiently to gain the support required.

Our membership is detail-oriented. Before taking our proposal to them, concern was expressed that all details had to be worked out prior to exposing the members to the proposal. The thinking was that if we had any unaddressed issues, the members would reject the proposal. The majority felt it important to show that we had a work in progress and that we desired membership input.

We made many tough decisions, so no one would feel we were unwilling to address core issues. But to give the impression that there was no room for movement, and all decisions were final, was inconsistent with our intentions.

We do walk a fine line. We are exposed to criticism that we should have the answer to every question on one side and on the other that we have already made up our minds, so why are we even asking for input from the membership. Exposure to criticism is a price that leadership must always pay. It cannot be any other way and we do not shun it. We do not glory in it, either.


Our members want to know how the decisions will affect them.

Change is hard for any organization. The issues we are dealing with are important enough to pay the price change requires. We are proud of our membership, especially those who have raised their voices to express concerns. It is a great profession!



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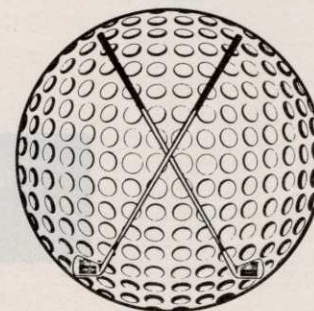
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