BEING YOUR OWN BOSS

Over the course of my three decades in this business, plenty of things have changed.

First, the technology has obviously evolved. Second, the business has definitely grown—probably too much. Third—and many of you might not believe this—recognition of what you do has improved dramatically.

The number of articles about superintendents (or greenkeepers or conditioning or the environment or whatever) written by local papers or stories done by TV stations has jumped. I'm not sure GCSAA or anyone else is doing the metrics, but my gut tells me that many more golfers actually understand who you are and what you do.

I'm guessing it's getting easier to introduce yourself to a stranger at a cocktail party. I can't tell you how many times who tell me how much they envy the fact that I do my own thing. They adore the notion of not having a GM, a green chairman or an owner giving them bad direction, distracting them from their priorities or otherwise messing with their heads. I'll bet you're no different. "Hey," you probably think every once in a while, "I could bag this job, go out on my own and be a consultant!"

Before that idea worms its way to far into your head, consider the positives and the negatives of working for yourself:

Positive: It's terrific not having anyone looking over your shoulder. Your choices are your own and you can name your own schedule for the most part.

Negative: There's no one to blame when you screw up royally.

Positive: You can aggressively build your own business.

Negative: You have to do that while also keeping the clients you already have... and you will occasionally lose one, particularly in an economy like this one.

Positive: You get to work with a diverse set of clients—many of whom are facing challenging circumstances—and see how they function from the inside out.

Negative: As Ron White, one of my favorite comedians, says, "You can't fix stupid."

Positive: You get to keep what you earn.

Negative: Except the enormous pile of greenbacks Uncle Sam wants every three months.

Positive: You get to work in a home office and wear your pajamas and slippers all day.

Negative: There's a lot to be said for showering before noon, shaving daily and actually interacting face-to-face with the occasional human besides the UPS guy.

Positive: You are recognized and paid for being an expert.

Negative: You are regularly forced to humbly admit you don't know everything.

Positive: More time with your family and time for what you love.

Negative: No downside to that.

As I write this, I'm a few minutes late to tie on my old football cleats and head out to coach a bunch of fifth- and sixth-graders who know me only as Coach Jones. I started doing it years ago when my sons (now 17 and 13) were in the program and I stuck with it. Even though my kids are now in high school and middle school (and still both playing ball), I've stuck with the little league coaching. Why? Because I love being part of those kids' lives... and because I can.

The reality of being your own boss is a mixed bag at best. But, if it's feasible and you accept the realities, the rewards are tremendous. That said, it's still nearly impossible to explain what you do at a cocktail party. Oh well...