forty-eight percent of the people polled in a recent Golf Digest magazine survey said that the superintendent is the most important person at a golf facility. Where did they take that poll? At a GCSAA convention? It gives me a warm, fuzzy feeling to think that flesh-and-bone golfers think that of superintendents, but actions speak louder than polls.

And actions show me that superintendents find themselves in the middle of a range of industry issues. It's time for a change of attitude on the part of owners, general managers, golf pros and golfers when it comes to dealing with superintendents.

By the same token, it's time for all superintendents to personify the leadership position conferred in that poll.

Rather than helping to set the standards at clubs, superintendents can be found in the middle of playing-condition debates between high handicappers and scratch golfers. Regardless of all the new equipment and super grasses, the rough can't be at two different heights or the greens at two different speeds on the same day.

The green committee or management team should evaluate the needs and desires of its customers and work with the superintendent to define what conditions he or she should manage. Then both sides know the expectations and goals of the programs. The superintendent's performance and the club's support is then realistically measured — instead of by the whims and politics of a new green chairman or general manager.

There's nothing for a superintendent like being in the middle of the beer budget and champagne taste paradox. Clubs want to be like Augusta, Winged Foot or Pebble Beach, but they don't have the money or special events that generate the volunteers and equipment to create those picture-perfect venues seen on television. If club management or members can't count and a superintendent can't educate them with facts and figures, there will be a lot of headaches over that no-win situation.

Superintendents could and should be lead-