

Professionalism and the Golf Course Superintendent

The Golf Course Superintendent comes across the term "professional" on a regular basis. Whether it be watching professional football, basketball, baseball or hockey players compete or watching the Golf Professionals compete on the PGA Tour, it is a word that comes into view quite often.

The word *profession* as defined in the American Heritage Dictionary is "an occupation or vocation requiring training in the liberal arts or the sciences and advanced study in a specialized field." The word *professional* when used as a noun, according to the American Heritage Dictionary, is "one who has assured competence in a particular field or occupation."

The term professional, when it applies to the Golf Course Superintendent, is a combination of both previously mentioned definitions: one who has training in the sciences through advanced study (hands-on experience and continuing education) in a specialized field (golf course maintenance) which creates an assured competence in that particular field. It sounds like nonsensical rhetoric, but it really does make sense.

To be viewed as a professional by your club or employer requires different sets of circumstances in varied situations.

Some clubs want to see their Golf Course Superintendents clad in golfing attire without a trace of grime or grit on them. Fine.

Other clubs or companies want to see their Golf Course Superintendents dressed in jacket and tie and carrying out only administrative duties from their offices while delegating other responsibilities. This is fine. Some clubs want to see their Golf Course Superintendents dressed in blue jeans, wearing sneakers or the like, and not minding one bit if they had to jump in and help out in certain situations on the golf course. This is fine also. Each situation is different, and one is no more professional than the other.

In being considered a professional by your peers or employers, there are some definite requirements. While at your place of employment to be always clean shaven, hair neatly combed or brushed, teeth clean and dressed as neatly as the situation dictates is of utmost importance.

When representing your club at a Golf Course Superintendents' meeting or at an educational seminar it is important to



wear a jacket and tie or a jacket with a golf shirt at minimum. Looking good never hurts in these situations.

While attending board or green committee meetings, always dress as the situation dictates. Some clubs have laid-back dress requirements at those functions; others don't. Dress accordingly.

Being considered a professional by your employers obviously will hinge a great deal on your finished product—the golf course. Producing the best quality golf course possible with the particular funds available while always giving one hundred percent effort in all categories will gain the respect of most people.

Being viewed a professional by your fellow Golf Course Superintendents has its own set of criteria. Participation at the local level is of utmost importance. Involvement at the board level, on a committee, at monthly meetings, hosting monthly meetings and contributing when asked are all vital in being considered a professional. Everyone's involvement in a local association will only help solidify our being viewed a group of professionals. So get involved; it's only going to help.

The Golf Course Superintendents' involvement with available continuing education is a must in becoming a professional. Through GCSAA, regional seminars are offered. They are excellent and you're missing out if you don't participate. Local Golf Course Superintendents' associations offer educational seminars with varied topics. Try to participate; they also are excellent and, above all, local Golf Course Superintendent Associations' monthly golf/educational meetings are on-going and excellent. When speakers are present, they are usually excellent and interesting. I learn more at times just talking with my fellow

Golf Course Superintendents about related problems than I do in many other situations, educational or other. Having five or six Golf Course Superintendents sit down and discuss whatever comes to mind can be a tremendously educational experience.

Another part in being considered a professional is in how you treat people. Always treating your employees with respect and dignity will show in their work on the golf course. Your ability to communicate with golfers and members at your club while treating them with respect will help insure your being viewed as a professional. Having a solid line of communication with the commercial people in our industry, for they are very important, is a must.

Remembering that it is a two-way street is important, and to give them a chance when warranted. Sometimes it works out, but other times it doesn't. At least you tried, and they will respect you and view you as a professional for it.

In conjunction with the aforementioned subject matter, to be viewed as and to become a professional, four matters are of the utmost importance.

First, you must always use common sense. Taking unnecessary chances and not thinking things through are examples of not using common sense.

Second, one must become adept in the art of people management. Properly communicating with people from all levels of society is a must in succeeding as a Golf Course Superintendent.

Third, you must be or become educated. Whether you are a two- or four-year college graduate, a holder of an educational certificate, a holder of a Masters degree, or a person who is involved with continuing education as a Golf Course Superintendent, becoming educated is vital.

Fourth and last is participation. To be considered a professional, you must have participated or are participating on a local level. Remember, everyone's involvement on a local level will solidify our being viewed as professionals. Get involved. You'd be surprised how it will help.

—The Hole Nine Yards
March 1991