



GCSAA LEADERSHIP ACADEMY UPDATE

"Change is Good"

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My father has a group photo in his office of nine sales colleagues and himself in the Bahamas. His sales team earned this vacation for exceeding their sales goals in 1992. As the years passed he put a sticker by each individual indicating the order his colleagues were removed from the company. After a 29-year career my father, the only sticker-less person on that picture, retired in July. As I go through life, "Son, Change Is Good" he always professes to me. My father was able to accept change as a positive process in his career. It allowed him to flourish in the corporate world of ever-changing personnel, job titles and management structures. My father figured it out.

Change Is Good

Recently I attended the GCSAA Leadership Academy. There was some hesitation upon hearing from Leann Cooper, GCSAA Chapter Services Manager, that I was nominated to attend. Over the last couple years I found myself distancing away from the GCSAA, wondering what I was getting out of my membership. A magazine that I would flick through in an evening, a web site I could peruse for jobs and the industry show in warmer climates than Minnesota was all I could come up with. There were concerns of how the association was being driven. Has environmental stewardship been set to the side as vendors try to gain the upper hand? Had big business entangled them to push their agendas? Without a slight bit concern for me are members thought merely as profit potential? Aside from all my built-up skepticisms, I wanted to represent the MGCSA and knew it would be a great opportunity to see if the GCSAA mission statement still held true:

"GCSAA is dedicated to serving its members, advancing their profession and enhancing the enjoyment, growth and vitality of the game of golf."

Mark Woodward, CGCS, GCSAA CEO, spoke about the initiatives of the association on the first day. The association has a new Class A outreach campaign with an objective: "To continue to build

the awareness, understanding and demand for GCSAA Class A members and the association in the marketplace by reaching employers and avid/influential golfers." Consisting of integrated messaging vehicles to reach the target audience, while continuing to utilize consumer media to drive demand by reaching the avid/influential golfer audience, the proposed Class A outreach campaign targets

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employers. The campaign goal is to communicate the following key messages to the target audiences:

Employers believe GCSAA Class A Members and GCSAA represent:

- Qualified professionals (stewards of the environment, golf course managers, facility leaders).
- Keys to the customer's golf experience and revenue generation at a facility.
- Business managers and mitigators of both expenses and risk.

Avid/Influential golfers believe GCSAA and its members deliver:

- Enjoyment of the game.
- Quality playing conditions.
- The golfers "Third Place."

Reaching out to these two audiences is accomplished through many elements. Golf Channel and the GCSAA have built great media relations. Helping us produce over 400, 30-second commercial spots on television. At tournament locations they are producing 10-12 live interviews with a GCSAA member. The association reaches over 650,000 subscribers on the Golf Channel's weekly internet newsletter. In print media advertisements are being run in employer-based publications like Golf Business, Club & Resort Business and Club Management. These elements are

paid by the association through revenue creation. The campaign is compromised without a strong membership, Golf Industry Show and fiscal responsibility.

Beyond the new campaign there are many ongoing efforts. The member/chapter assistance and education strives to have various communication resources and strategic planning/execution. Through exhibition, presentations and special meetings, the association has a presence at many events such as the CMAA conference, PGA merchandise show and the Business Management Institute. On a regular basis the association is represented by editorial placements in employer focused publications such as Boardroom, Earthshaping News and PGA Magazine. The public relations of the GCSAA have been bolstered by involvement in Special Olympics Sponsorships, Play Golf America and many other outlets.

Dedicated members of the association contribute time advancing our profession in these efforts. The association is always looking for new ideas and involvement from the membership.

After Mark's presentation the Midwest Regional Director of Agronomy for Billy Casper Golf, Bryan Stromme, led a great discussion on "Taking the Lead in Environmental Issues in Golf." Golf management companies are becoming a large driving force in the industry with companies like Troon, KemperSports and Billy Casper Golf leading the way. Encompassing over 100 golf facilities Billy Casper Golf has a large footprint of innovative golf course management. Bryan addressed many important questions pertaining to management companies, and water consumption.

Feelings of a management company led me to a "Big Brother" mentality. Most in the room agreed to a certain degree. My perception has always been a Midwest Regional Director of Agronomy walks on property and starts creating programs for a course he hasn't spent more than 10 hours on in the last year. Essentially this

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would leave a superintendent merely with guidelines and no opportunity to innovate on their golf course. Bryan's approach with the superintendent, aligned with the GCSAA's current campaign, is to allow innovative/forward thinking decisions throughout the facility. Facilities take on a stagnate position without this approach. This is detrimental to the vitality of the game. The topic of water usage created a great discussion. I was looking forward to it considering all the steps we at Northland Country Club are taking to reduce inputs. It is something everyone agreed we need to reduce. Looming mandates in regions coupled with areas already restricted. The superintendent needs to be innovative in this area. A 2005 report from NASA approximates acreage estimates for lawns in the U.S., including golf courses, is 31.7 million. Golf's 1,198,381 acres of irrigated turfgrass would account for approximately 3.2 percent of the 31.7 million total estimated acres of lawn (NASA's earth observatory features section, 2005). A very small portion but heavily scrutinized by law makers. It is impressive how the association helps promote the superintendent on this topic.

Even with the heavy burden law maker's put on us, our industry moves forward. The innovative superintendent and the GCSAA continue to elevate our platform. The Sierra Nevada GCSA, in collaboration with the association, has put together a video series of best management practices for water usage in their region. A great example of what the association is providing at the chapter level. The Environmental Institute for Golf, GCSAA's philanthropic organization, has the "Golf Course Environmental Profiles" that provide new insight into water usage. It creates a solid position for us at the national level. Our association is allowing turfgrass managers to learn through research and collaboration. Through data they show lawmakers our continued efforts to be environmental stewards and lobby for us in the legislature. The industry without the GCSAA and its members collaborating, are certainly not in an advantageous position.

Our association continues to identify and place leaders from within its membership base. On the second day the leadership talk, "360 Degree Leadership: Developing Your Influence From Anywhere in the Organization," was pre-

sented by Steve Keating, CME, CSE. As the Selling Skills Manager at The Toro Company he oversees the professional development of the entire sales force. He has quite a reputation for his leadership insights with nearly 15,000 followers on his Twitter account and he follows nearly everyone in return. His account states, "Builder of People, Improving the Sales Profession, Developing the Next Generation of Leaders, Not selling a thing on Twitter, only giving back," which sums up this man quite well. He reaches out in every direction, a true leader from the middle, which is the basis of his presentation.

As a 360 leader you possess the skills to make significant impact in your organization even if you are not the main leader. Whether leading up, across, or down, they influence people at every level of an organization. Adept at leading their superiors and their peers, a 360 leader is more than capable to lead their followers. In this position they help others to help themselves. Challenges that face them are many, but tension, ego and vision are just a few. To lead in all directions there are principles in which they must conduct themselves. I would love to talk more in-depth on this topic but could never do it justice compared to Steve's abilities. It is a must see presentation.

On a side note, when I came to Northland two years ago I persisted through the leadership struggles. An area I knew needed improvement. During a visit home my father, knowing my struggles, gave me a packet of information from a leadership seminar he attended through his company. The seminar was "The 360 Degree Leader" and the packet included a lot of the material that Steve presented so well that day. I felt very fortunate to have read and known some of the topics.

Another must see is GCSAA Headquarters and the staff that it houses to make it all happen. Many of the staff members made presentations throughout the academy. We toured the headquarters and walked by every cubicle in the building. I was very impressed with the way we were all treated for three days. First class all the way. The level of commitment to the membership truly is seen through these employees. I won't name everyone but here are a few of the Member/Chapter Services team.

Leann Cooper, Manager/Chapter Services, one of the nicest ladies I've met, takes great care in making sure all affiliate association members are receiving the services they need. Email responses with

in minutes. Email: lcooper@gcsaa.org

Dave Fearis, Director, Membership, a wealth of information coming from a well-respected former superintendent. Key player in helping Class C MGCSA members have future involvement at the board level. Email: dfearis@gcsaa.org

Steve Randall, Sr. Manager, Chapter Outreach - My golf partner and a heck of a stick. He will travel to any affiliate chapter meeting at our beck and call. Has helped many affiliate chapters be rejuvenated with new goals. Email: srandall@gcsaa.org

You can contact anyone at the GCSAA by going to staff contacts on the web page.

The take away from this experience brings me new belief in the association. No longer is it a magazine to flick through. It is an opportunity for every researcher, vendor and anyone tied into the industry to be seen and heard. It provides entrepreneurs with new ideas, an opportunity to tap into a wonderful market. Environmental stewardship has never left the GCSAA. They need more involvement from the chapter/facility level and from its members. There is a need for new leaders and ideas. The thought of GCSAA being big business will never cross my mind again. Certainly it takes money to create an association with considerable stake in our industry and economy. We need to be thankful for all the opportunity corporate sponsorships and donations generate for us. The service we receive as a member is very commendable and the central effort for the entire staff.

The doubts I had about the association have been changed.

I now realize without the GCSAA the Superintendent will not prosper and without the Superintendent the GCSAA ceases to exist. If you are in the position I was in, think about changing your approach. Help lead the association in an ever changing industry. The best place to start is at the chapter level and I am happy to say the MGCSA is regarded as one of the best chapters in the country. Being adept to change in our industry will provide you opportunity. In a down economy never cut GCSAA or MGCSA memberships from your employees. Encourage them to be part of the associations that help create successful careers. In the end this helps the greater good of our industry and vitality of the game.

The Leadership Academy was a wonderful opportunity and I hope the MGCSA is able to identify a person to send every year. I thank everyone who played a role in my being there.