



Within the Leather

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“ People see what they want to see, and what people want to see never

has anything to do with the truth,” – Roberto Bolano

Perception is the ultimate double-edged sword. We come to understand our environment, our surroundings and our relations through perception. We perceive something to be one thing, and sometimes it is, and sometimes it is not. Truth is universal, perception of truth is not.

For that reason we should always question our perceptions. Trust our instincts, but question whether or not our perception is clouding our judgements. It is an easy trap to fall into, and when our perceptions fail us, the results can give us feelings ranging from insignificance to downright stupidity.

When I first moved to Minnesota, my perception was that this was the land of integrity and kindness. The people of Minnesota were deemed upstanding, and well, nice. The perception of “Minnesota Nice” was

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never lost on me, and having lived and traveled in a wide variety of places I would put the people in the upper Midwest against any other place I have been.

When I first arrived, I traveled to just about every golf course shop facility on the east side, and a few in the north and south looking for any kind of assistant position. Since it was August, there was nothing there, but after explaining my situation, almost every superintendent I had contact with wished me luck and said they would keep me in mind. I did not have one bad encounter. Not one guy said he did not have time, or told me to go away even though I had showed up unannounced. I even had one guy at a golf course named North Oaks Golf Club look me right in the eye after relaying my family situation and said: “Why don’t you stay home with your children.” That was exactly what would happen the next two years. My perception of Minnesota became truth, and that guy at North Oaks’ perception was spot on as well.

When I became the Superintendent at Prestwick, I started to go to MGCSA meetings, attended the GCSAA show and Minnesota Room as it was called back then, and began trying to get to know fellow

superintendents. Naturally, I felt like an outsider, although nobody in particular made me feel that way. One day I had a conversation with another area superintendent who was not a native, and he kind of convinced me that the MGCSA and the local native guys were fine, but very tight. He related that he never really felt comfortable or included, and kind of re-enforced a feeling I was getting. Our perception was that of the “good old boy” network in Minnesota, one that was tough to infiltrate.

Fast forward a dozen years later. After three unsuccessful attempts to serve on the MGCSA (One in which I was one of three candidates for three spots and still lost), I was finally elected. I quickly realized after a few meetings that the good old boy theory was just plain wrong. I found the executive branch was not from the area, and had zero feelings of not being included, wanted, or anything of the sort. My perception had failed me, and I felt like a complete idiot for ever thinking it.

After serving one year on the Board in 2012, the 2013 board features four new members, whom I got to know well last week at the MGCSA board retreat. One of the new guys stated that he had thought the board was a bunch of good old boys, and that after just a few hours of quality time with

everybody that perception was blown out of the water. Just like mine.

So the question is, how many of the MGCSA’s current members and even non-members feel like I did- that the MGCSA, or even a small get together of regional superintendents not in an MGCSA setting are exclusive and non-inviting. How did this perception become truth in my mind? It was simple- by not questioning the perception, and not trying to find the truth.

Wars have been waged, and millions have perished from the perception of a false reality. Always question your perception. In my case, the reality was that the MGCSA needs me, and others like me, to further the progressive endeavors of the association, and give substance and quality to every person involved in the MGCSA and golf course industry. My perception delayed the truth, as it did with the new board member.

Do not let false perception get in the way of finding truth in all you do. One needs to be perceptive in their endeavors, but take the time and effort to define the truth and avoid the double-edged sword.