Professional development starts with understanding the marketplace—what the employers of golf course superintendents need, want and value from the people who manage the game’s most critical asset.

Competency analysis fleshes out the generalized profile from marketplace analysis by detailing the knowledge, skills, and attributes required of superintendents to satisfy the needs of employers.

Education in its many forms and delivery methods provides the means for superintendents to fill any gaps between current competencies and needed competencies.

Marketing: The value of a GCSAA branded or credentialed superintendent is "sold" to employers. Members are encouraged to pursue professional and personal growth through a variety of means.

The PDI provides the means to link together the components that will permit us to achieve our goals—namely, better recognition, better compensation, more opportunities and at the same time, improve the game of golf.

Before you see the details of the PDI, here’s a brief history of how it came to be. In early 1997, GCSAA embarked on a journey to develop a system that would elevate the professional qualifications and recognition of golf course superintendents through enhancements of their knowledge, skills and abilities.

A volunteer member group, the Membership Standards Resource Group (MSRG) was appointed to lead the development of the initiative. Four committees supported their efforts: Education, Membership, Certification and Career Development.

In July 1997, the MSRG approved four major research projects to advance the Professional Development Initiative:

1. Job Analysis Study -- to determine the range of knowledge and skills necessary for the golf course superintendent now and in the future.
2. Membership Study -- to learn more about members’ educational needs and preferences.
3. Employer Study -- to determine what employers value in their superintendents now and in the future.
4. Education Study -- to analyze current GCSAA educational strategy and programs.

SRI International, formerly the Stanford Research Institute, was retained to conduct the research studies. In October 1998, SRI submitted a report with their findings. SRI's strategic recommendations were unanimously adopted by the MSRG and the GCSAA staff was directed to immediately begin implementation of the recommendations.

After a national search where more than 30 vendors were considered, Franklin Covey of Salt Lake City was chosen to assist GCSAA in implementing the SRI recommendations. Franklin Covey was chosen because they have extensive expertise and experience in bringing together the various components that will permit us to achieve our goals—namely, better recognition, better compensation, more opportunities and at the same time, improve the game of golf.

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be parts of the Professional Development Initiative. Franklin Covey has been tasked to do 8 things, as outlined. Among the most important tasks that Franklin Covey has been hired to do is to prepare superintendent competency profiles. "Superintendent competency profile" is an academic term that means "figure out what successful superintendents do and write it down."

Let's see why competency profiles or models are important to each of us.

As the name suggests, the Professional Development Initiative is all about improving our knowledge and skills and making good decisions about career choices. The key to professional development is the competency model. A competency model is a catalog of the knowledge and skills required to perform successfully as a golf course superintendent.

The competency model provides the facts necessary to make good decisions about your career development. By assessing yourself against the model, you identify opportunities and pathways to improve your skills and take control of your career.

Let's look at a competency model for superintendents.

As explained earlier, SRI conducted research (superintendent focus groups and interviews) to identify the superintendent competency categories and organized them into the cluster. Franklin Covey conducted additional superintendent focus groups to validate and "flesh out" the competency model data.

So, the information in the superintendent competency model comes from working superintendents from around the country. In fact, you may have been involved in either the SRI focus groups or those conducted by Franklin Covey.

The competency model consists of three major components: competencies, levels of proficiency and performance statements. Competency categories (superintendent skills and knowledge) organized into appropriate clusters. The Franklin Covey consultants were amazed at the range of knowledge and skill required to be a superintendent. Some of our employers would also be amazed by this list.

Proficiency levels. Below each competency category is a series of five boxes labeled Level 1 through Level 5. These boxes are used to classify the level of proficiency or skill that a superintendent has in each competency category. Proficiency ranges from a Level 1, who is a novice, up to Level 5, who is an expert in that competency category.

Performance statements. Within each Proficiency Level are performance statements describing the observable behaviors of superintendents performing at that level of proficiency.

Let's look at what these performance statements might look like and discuss what they mean.

Level 1 proficiency is not much more than awareness of the category. Level 2 means that the performer needs considerable help or coaching in the category. Level 3 involves less assistance in performing. Level 4 is the ability to perform well in the category without assistance and to coach others. Level 5 indicates mastery of the category and the ability to invent new approaches in that area of knowledge or skill.

Some people ask: "Shouldn't a successful superintendent need or want to perform at Level 5 in every competency category?" The answer is an emphatic no! This is not like grades given in school where the goal is make parents proud by getting "As." The goal is to perform at the level of proficiency required for a particular job. Only rarely would a superintendent be expected to perform at Level 5 in any competency category. More typically, expected proficiency will range from Level 2 to Level 4.

For example, a superintendent at an Arizona course may need to be a Level 4 in competency regarding irrigation systems, but a superintendent in Northwestern Washington State may only need to be a Level 2 or 3.

Expected proficiency levels in each competency should (Continued on Page 15)
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be established in performance discussions with your employer. The competency profile can be helpful in that discussion if you choose to use it.

Now that you know the components parts of the competency model, let's talk about how you might use the model. The model permits the several profiles to be developed for individual superintendents:

- My current competencies
- My current job
- My next job
- Member classification
- Member Certification

As stated earlier, the competency profile can also be used for performance discussions with your employer if you choose to use it in that way.

In short, the competency profile provides fact-based information to assess where you are and how to get where you want to be in your career.

Let's see how a competency profile can help you in career planning and development.

Let's suppose that you have done your personal assessment and it looks like a graph.

The graph line shows how you might have assessed yourself against the proficiency levels in the various competency categories. The graph line does not extend over into the personal skills cluster because these competencies, while important at the personal level, are not likely to be measured as part of career development.

This personal profile provides the baseline for analyzing gaps between your current profile and the profiles that may be required for career advancement or attainment of professional credentials.

Take a look at a hypothetical superintendent -- Forest Green -- and show you how Forest could use the competency model for professional development -- which could involve such things as:

Developing needed skills to enhance performance in his current job.

Preparing for his next job.

Preparing to meet the GCSAA requirements for member classification or certification.

Forest currently works for a 9-hole municipal course, but eventually wants to be the superintendent at a large private club course.

The competency model can assist him in understanding his current competency status. The graph represents an assessment of Forest's current proficiency levels for each competency. This assessment could be based on a self assessment, self and boss, or self and several others, including boss and peers.

The green graph represents the required proficiency levels for his current job, as determined by discussions between Forest and his boss.

(Continued on Page 17)
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Notice that by analyzing these graphs, we can easily identify Forest's strengths as well as developmental needs in his current job. In some competencies he is performing above his employer's expectations and in other cases below expectations. In the places where he has a negative gap -- performing below expectations -- Forest has a need to strengthen his knowledge and skills. He can use the gap data to tell him where he needs additional education, training, or perhaps mentoring. Helpful in improving performance in your current position and in preparing for a new position. The profile is also very helpful in preparing to meet professional credential requirements.

This chart illustrates what the GCSAA "Branded Class A" membership proficiency may look like. These are mock graphs. Members will determine what the actual levels will be. For our purposes let's assume the orange line represents the competency profile of a branded Class A member.

Forest appears, based upon his self assessment, to meet or exceed most of the requirements for Class A membership, with a few gaps to close. After he takes steps to close the gaps, he will be ready to take the GCSAA classification test.

By using the competency profiles, Forest has three simple but powerful charts that point to competency areas he should strengthen in order to meet his career goals. He can use this information to decide what development activities he should pursue.

At this point you may be wondering how Forest created his competency profiles. Glad you asked. Forest (and all of us) can quickly and easily create these profiles using a web-based software tool called HR Web. A video will soon be available to show you how the software tool works.

A paper-based version of this profiling tool will be available for superintendents who don't have access to computers or the web.

As you can well imagine, competency modeling involving multiple competencies, five proficiency levels, and 20,000 plus members generates a lot of data. To manage this whole process, we will use the HR Web. HR Web provides a data management tool that has these outlined features and characteristics:
- Is easy to use and interpret.
- Is based on the competency profile created by superintendent focus groups.
- Does individual "competency gap analysis" for professional development, member classification.

(Continued on Page 24)
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