

The Back Nine

A column for writers and members to air and share their views on golf greenkeeping topics

Twins Alex and Stephen Edwards are joint managing directors of Inturf, a small family company that has supplied professional sports turf for 25 years. Here they reflect on the enormous potential behind the relationship between greenkeeper and turf supplier

The recent revelations about large-scale drug taking in all kinds of sports, the horse meat in our beef lasagne, and the seemingly endless supply of bankers on the make might create the impression that nothing in today's world is as it should be.

But a sense of proportion is important here.

First, whilst food purity is important for us we should count ourselves lucky that, as citizens in a developed nation, we have clean drinking water on tap and – for most of us – enough to eat.

Second, the fact is that most of the people we meet in the course of our turf growing business are as honest as the day is long – there just aren't many wrong 'uns in the world of golf.

Reflecting on this led us to think about the importance of relationships and the power of partnerships.

For a greenkeeper anywhere in Europe today there is an almost bewildering choice of turf suppliers of which Inturf is one.

Whittle that choice down to suppliers who – like us - belong to the Turfgrass Growers Association and subscribe to their aim of advancement of quality turf production and you are still left with a good choice of businesses – any one of which could probably meet your requirements.

So, if the turf is grown to the same standards, how does a greenkeeper choose between them?

This brings us back to the importance of relationships and the power of partnerships and a plea to greenkeepers which might surprise you, coming as it does from two fiercely competitive animals.

Stick with your supplier through thick and thin because doing so will unlock the enormous power of real partnership between grower and greenkeeper.

Of course your grower will make



mistakes (as everyone does!) but the trick, having chosen the turf and chosen the people, is to stick with the people so that you all have a stake in getting the turf right and keeping it right.

Theodore Levitt was a professor at the Harvard Business School who observed that when a man walks into a hardware shop to buy a quarter inch drill he doesn't really want a drill he wants a hole in the wall (and he'd probably rather be playing golf).

He isn't interested in the technical features of the drill just whether it will create that hole he needs.

In our opinion golf is similar to this analogy.

When your members tee off they are not interested in the turf (unless it's not playing well) what they're after is a round of golf with

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about the authors

Twins Alex and Stephen Edwards are joint Managing Directors of Inturf, which was started by their father Derek in 1985, assisted by their mother June. They have exhibited at every BTME and the whole family attended BTME 2013. Alex and Stephen have both worked in 'hands on' roles as members of site installation crews and have moved on to senior management level. Alex's main focus is business development while Stephen is responsible for every aspect of production.

all its connotations of competition, companionship and so on.

Working together, grower and greenkeeper can make sure that golfers get the best experience possible and that the best use is made of everyone's resources.

Long-term partnerships bring tangible benefits through better planning, benefits which – although they remain unseen, mean that golfers, unlike some consumers and sports fans at present, get exactly what they are paying for.

The views expressed within this column are not necessarily those of Greenkeeper International