

THE SUPERINTENDENT'S PUBLIC RELATION PROGRAM

Superintendents today are in a mixed-up critical period! Members are more critical than in the past. They play golf courses throughout the world and compare your course to the finest in existence. No two courses are the same; their budgets vary; soil conditions differ; the amount of play also varies. On a given day a course may be beautiful and less than desirable a few days later; yet your course is compared to other courses when they may be at their best.

Some weeks ago I was discussing the subject of public relations with Bruce Williams of Bob-O-Link Golf Club. Bruce stated that there are several aspects to public relations. Relationships with the Golf Course Superintendent and the Pro, the Club Manager and the Greens Chairman. Relationships with the Greens Committee, the membership, the City Fathers and with distributors and manufacturers.

Development of favorable atmosphere with employees and last but not least, relationships with the Golf Course Superintendent's Association and Universities. The old adage that "no chain is stronger than its weakest link" is true of a Golf Course Superintendent's image. All factors must be kept high! The best line of offense is a beautiful golf course. This is a must! Yet, all of you have seen Golf Course Superintendents fired even though their golf course was in perfect condition.

It is imperative that superintendents and the pro know each other's schedule of important events. The pro needs to know when you plan to aerify. He is in constant touch with the membership. This is also necessary information for the General Manager and the Green Chairman. Doing thoughtful favors for the pro will pay dividends!

The superintendent needs to communicate with the members. Some superintendents write a newsletter; others post important activities on the bulletin board in the club house. The manager and the green chairman can act as a buffer between you and the membership if they are aware of your program. Lyn Hazlett, late superintendent of the Country Club of Cleveland, posted pictures under glass on the first tee showing how the course would be when a Poa annua removal program was in progress.

Greens members should understand your program and the desired results. Regular communication with the group is desirable with both formal and informal meetings.

Superintendents are faced with the possibility of valuable tools - fertilizers and pesticides - being deleted from the market-place. We need to act together to prevent this disaster! In 1970 seven pesticides were being banned in New York State. Mel Lucas, past President of GCSAA, with the aid of the National Association, was able to defend pesticides and keep them on the market.

The superintendent must maintain a beautiful golf course. He must understand the principles of soil, management, irrigation, budgets, and landscaping. Needed information can be obtained by attending seminars, GCSA meetings, and working closely with University experts.

One of the greatest enemies of the golf course is compaction - thatch - lack of air resulting in poor water penetration. This results in poor plant growth subject to disease. We must follow a program of aerification. Bruce Searing, Superintendent of Glenview Club, has taken a unique attack by aerifying his fairways with a greens aere.

We need to prevent resistance of fungicides by constant rotation of fungicides. Rotating among products such as Duosan, Chipco 26019, Fungo 50, Bayleton and Acti-dione. This is important because EPA agencies are still thick with venom against chemistry. The only source of chemicals are spin-offs from chemicals from farm crops developed in Europe.

Working closely with Universities has been demonstrated with dedicated, thinking superintendents such as Dudley Smith, working with Dr. Couch and other researchers attempting to solve the C-15 problem.

Superintendents need to work closely with competent distributor salesmen, such as John Lebedeus, Jim Reed, Don Spier, Jerry Adank and Rick Johnson. There are many other competent salesmen including Steve Stewart and Wayne Trometer. Superintendents need the technical service, immediate delivery, adequate inventory from educated, responsible salesmen. If the needs of the superintendent are met, suppliers are entitled to a reasonable profit. Buying from the lowest bidder does not save the superintendent job.

It is important that employees are recognized as important people. James John, superintendent of Northmoor Country Club, has made attractive rustic name plates identifying each employee's parking space.

The superintendent should train and delegate responsibility to his assistant. Mike Bavier, superintendent of Inverness Golf Course, is fortunate to have a competent assistant in Mike Vogt to share management while he is leading our National organization; however, the price tag of management freedom is responsibility. This is a trait that employees must develop.

A well-maintained shop can create a favorable image. The most efficient and neatly organized shop I have ever seen is John Ebel's shop at Barrington Hills Country Club. This is public relations at its best!

Golf Course Superintendents should not bury their head under a bushel basket, but tell the story of their profession to Rotary Clubs, Chamber of Commerces; newspapers, television and radio. Let the community know what you are doing. Yours is a professional occupation.

The superintendent should maintain a beautiful landscaped image throughout the course from the entrance, to the Club House, from the tee to greens.

Harold Frederickson, superintendent Edgewood Valley Country Club, effectively uses bedding plants throughout his fine course. His sandtraps are attractively edged. Warren Bidwell, Superintendent Olympia Fields, has always maintained beautiful tulip beds in front of the Club House. Beauty has been Warren Bidwell's trademark!

In order to insure a sound public relations program; superintendents should maintain desirable relationships among the managers, pros, employees, green committee, membership, community, golf course superintendents, distributors, manufacturers and universities. These relationships will provide a climate of Professionalism that will build a fine total program.

Cecil F. Kerr
Mallenckrodt Inc.

NATIONAL CHEMSEARCH CORP.

222 South Central Ave.
St. Louis, Missouri 63105