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## President's Message

Anyone who works with the public is well aware of those individuals who like to complain. Superintendents are well aware of those specific members who make an art out of criticism. How do we effectively handle those complaints?

Preliminary research is suggesting that being the recipient of complaints may contribute to excessive worry, burnout, and perhaps physical ailments. Yet, inherent in the simple complaint is a wealth of information. As a result, progressive superintendents use the information to their benefit and find the positive effects far outweigh any momentary discomfort.

In order to deal with a complaint effectively you should approach it in three ways: problem solving, a change of mind, and future thinking. With this type of approach the basic complaint can be seen as information rather than criticism; an opportunity for improvement; a displeasure with a situation rather than a personal attack; and most important of all, a chance to inform and get the complainer on your team.

When dealing with complaints there are several steps that will help you succeed. 1. The first is to never promise what you can't deliver. Set realistic expectations for your golfers. 2. Don't deny that problems exist. What may be perceived as a problem to a golfer may only be a misinterpretation but it still exists in the eyes of the golfer until you explain the logical reason. 3. Treat each complaint as unique. After accepting the uniqueness, then explore. Why did it happen, and is it a symptom of a bigger problem? 4. The next step is to react. After you analyze the problem figure out what can be accomplished with the solution. 5. Put the operations in motion to correct the problem. 6. The final step, and most important, is to follow up. The follow-up has two purposes. First, check to see if the problem has been solved and if the individual who complained is content. Next, follow up and verify that the golf course has used the information provided by the complainer so that the problem will not occur again.

We all realize that not every complaint is a valid one. However, you should give each complaint or criticism due consideration. Half of the so-called problems on the golf course are only perceived as problems due to a lack of knowledge or mis-information. Through good communications and public relations we can work wonders with complaints. Some of the worst complainers can be converted to support your efforts if you take the time to respond to their criticism in the proper manner.

**Bruce R. Williams, CGCS  
President, MAGCS**

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