

Huh???

by Bob Maibusch, CGCS, MGC

I think that the most important area that we can improve ourselves professionally, once we've gained adequate training in the technical aspects of our jobs, are in our communication skills. I can think of very few instances over the last fifteen years where golf course superintendents have lost their jobs for reasons strictly related to their golf course presentation. In almost every case their problems seemed to originate with an inability to communicate to their employer the management problems that they were facing, and their worth to the operation. The exceptions to this are the golf course superintendents that have been released because they did not "fit" with the new management style of the facility (Translation: We want to find someone that we can pay half the amount of money to and increase our short-term net income. Are you listening general managers and golf management companies?). Conversely, I know of golf course superintendents who might well have lost their jobs because of poor golf course conditions, but were able to retain their position because of their superior communication skills.

Your communication skills can manifest themselves in many forms. Writing a monthly article for your club membership newsletter, being a well prepared presenter at committee and board of directors meetings. Being available to answer members questions on a daily basis at the pro shop, in the clubhouse, or on the golf course, particularly during those times when the golf course is experiencing problems, are just a few examples of ways you can communicate. Another thing to remember is to be honest. If you don't know the answer to a question be truthful, but be sure to find the answer and follow up with that person as quickly as possible afterwards. Also, don't be afraid to admit that you have made a mistake, but be prepared to learn from it. Good communication, in my opinion, can do more to justify your worth and reinforce your importance to your employer or membership than any other thing, assuming your technical and management skills are adequate to provide them with a well manicured golf course. Good communication skills help you to justify bigger budgets, larger salaries, and hopefully, some measure of security in knowing that you will not be released without being given a chance to right a wrong. With good communication you can educate your employer regarding the difficulties you face and the value that you give to their organization.

We are by nature of the profession the least known department in our facilities. I have always felt that if my staff is doing its job correctly the membership will never even notice that we are there. That is fine while the members are on the golf course, but once they are back in the clubhouse or pro shop we must be assertive in reinforcing in their minds that we are the most important part of their management team, and that our staffs are the clubs greatest asset. This can be difficult at times because you have to emphasize your importance without appearing self-important.



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