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I Can't Get No...

Satisfaction. How many of us are ever truly satisfied with the results of our efforts in our professional endeavors? If you're like me, the answer is probably not very often.

I can normally count on one hand the number of times in a year when I am satisfied with the overall presentation of the golf course. Certainly, I am more often satisfied with particular areas of the facility. Some days the greens look and roll great, but the fairways aren't quite "there." Other times the landscape beds look wonderful, but the tees are lacking.

Some of these frustrations are a function of budget restraints or limitations particular to the specific facility (soil types, poor water supply, etc.). It is one of the aspects of this job which both frustrates and inspires me. The only greater challenge than achieving the condition we desire is to be able to sustain these conditions once they are attained. It tends to make us our own worst critics while simultaneously being our staff's biggest supporters.

Some of us tend to bristle at criticism (at least that tends to be

the initial reaction) probably because nobody can be more critical of our work than ourselves. However, we all require occasional constructive criticism. I'm not referring to the chronic complainer but instead to that person who has the unique ability to point out an area that could be improved without denigrating the entire operation or, even better, while praising another segment of the facility. I think of constructive criticism as a kind of medicine. It's often hard to swallow; but in retrospect, we know that it can make us better. In fact, criticism, approached with the right attitude, can be turned into opportunity.

Now that we are into the winter months and have settled into more routine (40- to 50-hour work week) schedules, it is a good time to reflect on every facet of our operation and accurately

assess what we can do to make it better next year. This should be more than just the course and grounds that we care for; we should include every area that we have responsibility for. Have we been effective managers of our staffs? Have we shown a commitment to a dedicated staff by aggressively arguing their worth to our superiors? Are we taking every advantage to improve ourselves and them professionally through continuing education? If not, what can we do now to lay the groundwork for a better performance in the future?

Satisfaction may be an unattainable goal. It shouldn't be confused with happiness. I think it's easier to be happy about our performance than it is to be satisfied. The key, if we can't be satisfied, is to at least be content in knowing that we have given it our best effort. ■

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