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If you've attended any GCSAA or MAGCS seminars lately, or even read any trade magazine articles, you would know that the subject matters of enhancing our communication skills and promoting the image of the profession of golf course superintendent are being preached to us constantly. They go hand in hand. I think almost all of us, in one way or another, can improve our communication and image skills.

I hate to admit this, but the golf pro, or whoever is at the pro shop counter, can indirectly affect the image of a superintendent. The image can be a bad one if the pro shop staff doesn't give the correct information to golfers' questions. Conversely, if the pro shop staff is kept abreast of what's happening on the golf course, a negative situation can be averted. Communicating with the golf pro, the club manager, and the board can enhance our image. It helps when the key staff members at a club can communicate and work as a team. Unfortunately, sometimes personalities get in the way.

It's a lot easier for the golf pros to control their own public images than the superintendents. They are right there greeting the customers. We, on the other hand, are generally out of the limelight. We're out there silently going about our jobs. It seems like the only time we're noticed is when something goes wrong. Take the 1995 weather, for example. We were the ones being brought to the surface. The Chicago area superintendents did an outstanding job of communicating with the golfers and media. We explained why many of us were experiencing turf loss, and, for the most part, the public understood. That was a classic example of using communication to promote our image as professionals. However, in parts of Illinois, as well as other areas of the country, where communication skills were lacking, jobs were lost.

The image of the golf superintendent is improving. A survey done last winter by *Golf Digest* resulted in 58 percent of the participants saying that the superintendent was the most important person at a golf course. But ask golfers the name of the golf pro and the name of the superintendent of the club they frequent the most, and I'll bet the vast majority could only name the pro, especially at public golf courses. We need to make ourselves known.

Our improving image and worth are beginning to elevate salaries. There are many superintendents making a pretty good buck, but there also are many that are struggling to make ends meet. The MAGCS employment referral service recently sent out a couple of notices for superintendents, but the salaries offered kept many from applying. These were public

clubs that are ranked among the best in the Chicago area.

Participating in various salary and benefit surveys will help communication amongst ourselves and give us ammunition when negotiating for higher wages. Just remember, without a golf course to play, golf wouldn't exist. So take pride in yourselves, the job you do, and the golf course superintendent profession.

Next month's "On Course With the President" will be written by my wife Peggy. Last year, Fred Opperman suggested that for one month each year, the president's wife could write the column. I thought it was a terrific idea, mainly because it meant that I could get out of writing one. She has the rough draft finished, and we've already been in plenty of arguments over my editing of it. So a word wisdom to the incoming president: Just let your wife write it, and don't butt in. She'll be doing you a favor by giving you a month off from your writing duties. Just sit back and watch for the mail to see what she has to say. Oh yeah, Fred, it's going to be a long one, so save plenty of room in the magazine next month.

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