

Take Advantage of Information Resources

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During high school, a teacher of mine asked the class to name the capital of North Korea. Of course, no one knew the answer. Standing near my desk when he asked, the teacher turned to me and sarcastically said, "Although not one person knows the answer, nobody will look it up." I took his remark as an invitation to find out the answer. Something told me I would hear that question again and that I should go to the library and find that answer.

How many of us make use of all the resources that are available? It seems that each month, 10 to 15 trade publications land on our desks. If your summer is shaping up anything like mine, you never can find the time to read them all. Luckily, with some of the bigger magazines, you can scan the table of contents to see if anything piques your interest. Some articles that appeal to me are those in which a superintendent tells how and why he/she did things a certain way. Obviously, many things are going to differ between his/her golf course and the one at which I work. Still, quite often, a few things in the articles make me question if that may work for me.

By far, my favorite articles are those of the "how-to" variety. In fact, a recent article pertaining to troubleshooting irrigation wiring caught my eye. The timing of it was uncanny considering my multimeter seems to be a permanent passenger in my cart. Granted, I was already familiar with most of its content, but the article was a great help to refresh

my memory and fill in some of the gaps.

Although magazines are a readily available source of information, the Internet is right on its heels. By using the World Wide Web, we can traverse different

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sites for information. In fact, I have found the GCSAA site to be very useful. While browsing, I typically go to the Members Only section to read the postings in Shop Talk and Talking Turf. As their names imply, Shop Talk focuses on equipment and Talking Turf on turf maintenance. Users can post a specific question on

either board and wait for colleagues from around the nation and world to reply.

A very enjoyable and more personal way to swap ideas is at the monthly meetings. The education portion of these meetings features speakers who perform a service either directly or indirectly related to our industry. The golf portion allows us to get into the trenches and play another course. This is a great opportunity to pick out some ideas that may be helpful at my course—for instance, ways to deal with traffic patterns, annual and perennial plantings and course signage. The golf portion of the meeting is also a good time to talk with other superintendents from the area to find out what they are doing and how their seasons are panning out.

We owe it to ourselves and to our members or players to offer the finest playing conditions possible. Greater knowledge provides choices—choices that may be cheaper, quicker or more environmentally friendly than the ways we are currently doing things. Knowledge will also give us more confidence in communicating with players and members about problem situations as they occur: what happened, why it happened and what we plan to do about it.

It does not take much time to thumb through some magazines or browse a few Web sites, but the small investment of time may pay big dividends later. By the way, I earned 10 bonus points on the next test for the five minutes it took me to learn that P'Yongyang is the capital of North Korea. 