



Springtime: When The Winds of Change Blow, Fly a Kite

I hope this message finds everyone with a fond anticipation of the approaching golf season. Spring is a wonderful time of the year, when changes abound. The changes in spring we always accept without hesitation. The change in turf from dormant to actively growing, the change in weather, trees leafing out, golfers infiltrating our courses. You get the idea. These changes are met with an open mind. We tend to have an open mind to events we have no control over. What about events over which you may have control? You all know me pretty well through my articles during these past seven years. You know what I stand for. I love being a golf course superintendent. I don't know anything else I would rather do. This industry provides all of us a great outlet to earn a living.

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I try very hard to keep an open thought process during my day-to-day activities. Sometimes this is much easier said than done. We deal with our guests generally on the best day of their week, the day they play golf. We are in the entertainment business, but I think sometimes we forget this. In reality, the world would survive without golf. So this being said, who is willing to change? I hope I am. I would like to do a spring-cleaning of my perspectives if possible. I would also encourage all of you to try the same evaluation on yourselves. I have been blessed with good personal health, family health and a good living—all this, along with loving family members who support 100% of what I do, is as good as it gets. So how do I give back? I need to be open-minded to the needs of those around me. I need to listen to the concerns of my family first. Having accomplished these goals at home, what about the workplace?

Communication, communication, communication—you can never have too much. It is the most important tool we have as individuals. I am a firm believer that all conflicts can be solved with communication. I am going to listen to staff, golfers, employer and yes, you the member, better than I ever have before. I will not refer to comments as “complaining” or “griping” any more . . . from now on it will be constructive criticism. I find it difficult to take criticism, no matter how hard I try. But I do know it helps an individual grow. Many times we are our worst critics and that is counterproductive. We should always include those around us in the rewards and positive outcomes of our

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jobs. Likewise, we should include those around us in the not-so-desirable results of our efforts. This will keep you in a team environment when it is needed most. I really don't think one unfortunate event in our jobs is ever enough reason for change. We need to build a strong foundation through good communication.

I have always communicated well with my staff in the past. But I am going to change my approach. Instead of my existing open-door policy, I am going to actively seek out thoughts and ideas from staff. Some of the most productive ideas at Seven Bridges Golf Club come from seasonal staff—not easily, though. In the past, I have made staff reiterate their good ideas somewhere around 50 times before I was open-minded enough to put some sound logic behind it. This has afforded me aggravation I might

otherwise never have known. Another change I intend to make might prove to be a mistake; time will tell. I plan to listen to the consumer this year. I generally put off their compliments as well as their complaints. I always thought I could dismiss one complaint out of 200 golfers . . . or one member out of 700. Thinking about this I shudder, but I feel it could possibly give me fuel to grow.

So, as I've noted, change is all around us and it is up to each of us to decide how we will deal with it. For example, we have played golf into December the past two years. This has never happened before in my career, but I was open-minded to this change and left the flagsticks out (a wise decision according to my boss). Our green fees continue to escalate so I feel the presentation of our golf courses needs to be enhanced as well. This will no

doubt involve change. I hope you all feel as invigorated as I do this year with the prospect of a great season. It is as simple as I say to my ten-year-old soccer players: it all starts with a PMA (positive mental attitude). Time is our most precious commodity, use it wisely. When was the last time you took a break to fly a kite?

I thank you for your time in reading a message that may not seem particularly earth-shattering. But I guarantee I feel better for having written it and I hope you will find it beneficial as well. If you remember towards the end of the year, check back with me and see how well I have adapted to change. I hope I can give you a favorable response. Meanwhile, I wish for all of you to have a joyful and meaningful Easter holiday. God bless.



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