

Getting the Word Heard: Marketing PDI to Employers

Editor's Note: This article is part of a series highlighting aspects of the proposed Professional Development Initiative (PDI).

The first step in any marketing program is to create the identity that you want to promote to a specific audience. Our audience is employers and influential golfers. PDI creates the identity of educated, knowledgeable and competent superintendents, which can then be promoted.

Our national public relations efforts have been laying the groundwork for this initiative during the past several years, positioning the superintendent as key to golfers' enjoyment of the game, and consequently having a direct impact on the golf course's economic success.

A "Yes" Vote

If the vote at the annual meeting and election supports PDI, the next step will be the execution of a multifaceted marketing campaign during the next several years. Communicating the benefits and value of PDI is a long-term process that involves the joint efforts of the association and its members.

A Rewarding Goal

Our goal in communicating the benefits of PDI to employers is to have employers acknowledge the value they receive from employing a general member, a class 'A' member and a certified member. We do not plan to explain the intricacies of the classification system but focus instead on the results this system will provide. Consequently, employers will recognize and reward their superintendents for the competitive edge that they bring to their golf course operations and golfers will enjoy the results of superintendents' work—a superb golf experience.

GCSAA Marketing Strategy

The association will use external and internal communication methods to position the benefits of certified, class 'A' and general superintendents to employers and other audiences.

We will continue to use national media, such as television and magazines, to promote the superintendents' role and value in managing golf courses. Our national public relations efforts have been laying the groundwork for this initiative during the past several years, positioning the superintendent as key to golfers' enjoyment of the game, and conse-

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quently having a direct impact on the golf course's economic success.

To effectively reach employers, GCSAA will target the publications they read and the Web sites they access. We will send press releases and articles to golf trade and consumer publications and Web sites about PDI's approval, and what it means to the business of golf, the golfer and the employer. In addition, we will work with our allied associations to get the message out through their publications, such as NGCOA's *Golf Business*, CMAA's *Club Management*, the NGF's *Golf Market Today*, their Web sites and in other appropriate venues.

GCSAA also uses many publications and materials today to market the golf course management profession. We will continue to use those vehicles. Information

will be placed in *Golf Course Management*, *Leader Board* and on our Web site. Other resources that support the profession, such as standard job descriptions, information on certification, the benefits of joining the association and materials that employers use in hiring superintendents, will include information on the competencies of superintendents. In other words, the message that PDI allows us to develop about the superintendent profession will become a standard business practice for GCSAA materials and resources.


Members' Marketing Responsibility

Members have the opportunity to prove and communicate the benefits of PDI to their employers. Demonstrating effective management of the golf course is perhaps the most important validation of competence. Discussing with your

employer your commitment to continuing education, achievement of proficiency and, if certified, use of the Professional Development Resource (PDR) is strong support during your annual performance review.

GCSAA will also provide you with the resources to help you communicate the value of PDI to your employer. We will develop a package of information in an easy-to-understand format, with suggestions on how you can present the specific benefits of PDI to your employer on a continuing basis.

A "No" Vote

If the vote does not support PDI, an identity around the commitment of golf course superintendents to competency-based education and professional development will be created and promoted to employers. 

Visions of PDI Dancing in Your Head? How to Cast Your Vote (continued from page 5)

individual votes assigned as part of your chapter's voting block.

If you have any questions about your rights as a voting member or want the necessary forms to vote as an individual or by proxy, contact our executive secretary, George Minnis.

The MAGCS is fortunate to be one of the largest voting blocks in the GCSAA. Our chapter delegates, Don Cross and Don Ferreri, carry a big stick when it comes to leveraging candidates on our behalf, so while it is completely acceptable to vote individually, it erodes our collective strength. Both the PDI and annual elections are tied together from the standpoint that if you want to vote individually for/against PDI, you must vote individually in the election. Again, regarding the PDI, the Board of Directors has authorized our voting delegates to split our block

according to our voting members' poll at the January meeting. You make the decision.

One other thing I want to touch on while I'm on the soapbox is our education sessions at our monthly golf meetings. Our survey responses overwhelmingly supported continuing our education at these meetings, so we will. As Education Committee chair last year, it was my responsibility to arrange these sessions, with the following strings attached. No infomercials, keep it less than half an hour, free or nominal fees (i.e., expenses and printing charges for handouts), and a topic of interest for all membership classes, not just supers. Last year's golf event education topics included collective bargaining issues, investing and the stock market, plans for research at the Midwest Golf House, and an interesting presentation on watershed issues and an innovative idea on capitalizing remediation efforts. All

of the speakers took time out of their schedules to be with us for little, if any, remuneration.

I've talked with other education chairs and they all agreed that planning these talks was their biggest pain, because of the above conditions, and the fact that you can't please all of the people all of the time. However, it just makes the job that much harder when you have to run around and try to gather a large-enough audience to prevent embarrassment to the speaker. In the spirit of the season, and on behalf of my successor as Education Committee chair, I would implore you to remember that if you come to one of our monthly golf meetings, please don't consider the education session optional. After all, the survey was clear that it's wanted—please be courteous enough to show up for it.

Okay, I feel better now. Happy holidays, everybody. 