



Surviving the Information Age

What do you want to learn today?

The Police (rock band of the late 1970s and early '80s) may have been thinking about the future back in 1980 with their release of *Outlandos d'Amour* and their song "Too Much Information." A couple lines of the track read:

*Too much information running through my brain,
Too much information driving me insane.*

In our "Information Age," these lyrics strike a chord that most comprehend. We are continually bombarded with news, events and data every single day. Certainly it is nice to be "informed" of what is going on in our world, but how do you pick out what is really important to know?

In our world of golf course maintenance, look at the multiple avenues through which information reaches us. As the first of the month approaches, periodicals (including our fine *On Course*) start to flow across the desk. As our golfing season wanes, seminars and conferences are offered and meetings are planned. Fellow superintendents have an abundance of information and are willing to share if asked. And let's not forget the ever-present World Wide Web and all it has to offer. How do we discern which information is good and useful and which isn't?

The answer to this question begins with more questions. What do you want to learn? Can you apply this information to your practices? Does it have the potential to make a positive impact? Is the information just trivial and nice to know? Of course, this questioning process is what keeps us looking for answers. However, the key to making sense of our digital age is to have a plan. After all, our time is limited.

When skimming a magazine, take a look at the headlines. Don't be drawn in too quickly, just get an idea of what the written word is about. Skip to the last paragraph of an article and see if there are any concrete conclusions. Judge to see if the details are worth your time and read the first sentences of a few paragraphs. If the preview is interesting and has potential, give the article a full read; if not, look to the next headline.

When selecting a seminar to attend, read the description carefully. Is the topic apropos to your goals and expectations? Does the seminar have the potential to provide you with information that you can use? Before attending the seminar, create a list of the information that you wish to gain from it. This list outlines your goals for the seminar and becomes a tool to use while in attendance. Often, we are unintentionally misled during a sem-

inar and the questions we bring are never answered. Take an active role in the seminar and use the list to find answers to questions that were not answered directly.

The World Wide Web can certainly send any of us into information overload. Far and away, the most effective way to use the Web is by searching as specifically as possible for your answer. Again, the key to the World Wide Web is not to wallow or wander, but to have a plan. Know what information you desire and look for it. Take a look at the sources of the material and judge for yourself if it is worthwhile to you.

Talk to the people in our profession. Use their knowledge and experience. Pick up the phone or post a question on a bulletin board. If one of our colleagues does not have the answer to your questions, somebody may offer a valuable lead, a place to start.

Remember when you took a class in school? The teacher, professor or instructor took care of lesson plans. Goals and expectations were all laid out for you on that first day of class in that sheet called a syllabus. The year was mapped out. Your knowledge grew. The goals set forth by your instructor were met. Who holds your lesson plan now?

You do.

