



Class “E” Is for “Excellence”

What an interesting year!

The On Course deadline fairy taps me on the shoulder one month prior to the actual publication date of each issue, and all year long I’ve been making references to the weather, guessing that April will be wet, August will be hot—you know, like it always is.

I am a firm believer in supporting our class E members. I do not buy stuff from commercial types who do not think it is a sound business practice to participate in our chapter’s activities.

WRONG! WRONG! WRONG!

The weather is our wild card (or Joker). You just can’t count on it to cooperate. When I rise in the morning I have a general idea of what we need to accomplish on the course, but I don’t actually decide how to attack the day until I’m standing at the job board looking out at the southwestern sky like I can somehow read the clouds. Doppler radar and weather stations are great, but often it’s still a crap shoot. I’ve lost count of the times that Mother Nature made me look like a blockhead, where the fact that nobody got hurt was the only thing that went right all day.

You’d think that after all these years I’d get at least a little bit better at divining the weather, and I guess I have—a very little bit, but if you told me that we were going to enjoy the mildest summer in recent memory after the crazy spring we went through I would have smiled at you and still ordered enough fungicide for a 36-holer in St. Louis.

Which I did.

Anybody need fungicide? I have cases of it under my desk and I’m sitting on a few of them to write this president’s message.

Which leads me to this issue’s topic. I’ve spent several months writing about various aspects of golf course maintenance, the players, the staff, key management team members, course officials and family, but I’ve neglected a huge component of any golf course operation—purveyors and merchants and vendors—oh my!

Our class E (commercial) members are the pipeline. They sell us everything from rolling iron to ferrous sulfate, plant protectants to UV protection, from bridges to bridging gravel, from . . . okay, okay, I’ll stop, but you get the idea. When we need stuff they get it to us.

I am a firm believer in supporting our class E members. I do not buy stuff from commercial types who do not think it is a sound business practice to participate in our chapter’s activities. I hope most of you “end-users” feel the same. There may be a do-dad that has to come from West Moravia in my shop somewhere, but by and large my business goes to people listed in the MAGCS membership directory.

This is a group of businesspeople who care enough about our little niche market to keep our Association solvent and strong. We owe them our thanks because they . . .

- Sponsor monthly meetings to keep costs reasonable;
- Make our hospitality room at the national the best in the entire GCSAA with their donations to our Platinum Tee Club;

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- Provide educational opportunities for our members;
- Support the existence of this publication with advertising dollars;
- Underwrite scholarships for our members; and
- Defray much of the expense for our fall dinner dance and Kane County Cougars family outing.

All of this generosity is over and above the outstanding service and support they provide in conducting their business enterprises. I urge each and every one of the regular A, B, C and D members to stop and consider how hard the job would be without these wonderful people giving us their hand when we need to be picked up. Say thanks next time you see one of the reps—and then beat him or her up over the crazy prices they charge us for their stuff!

Here's a few tips for those of you out there trying to make a living dealing with the rare breed *golfus superintendicus curmudgeonus*.

DO NOT:

- "Drop by" anytime you're in the area. It's rude; call for an appointment.

If you can't get one—news flash—we're busy or we don't want to buy what you're selling now, and please don't call on the day you want that appointment, do a little advance work.

- Make claims that can't be substantiated with some sort of research. It's not enough anymore to say Joe Blow down the block can't live without your goo. If your spiel rocks, I'll call Joe Blow myself, and if he doesn't gush over your goo—you're history—forever.

- Get too comfortable in the chair in my office. Be sensitive to my time depending on the season. I'll chat it up with you from December through March, but even then a half-hour is about all I can stand. (Don't be hurt, I can barely stand a half-hour with my rich aunt and I have a lot more to gain from her.)

- Think it's all about price. Outstanding service time and again still carries the most weight in my book.

DO:

- Ask me before you use my name as some sort of a "satisfied client" because if I get that call from Joe Blow for a testimonial without warn-


ing, I'll say I never heard of you.

- Give me a heads-up if that gizmo I just ordered is going to cost me an additional c-note for shipping. I have watchdogs who don't like those kinds of surprises on the invoice.

- Remember that leaving a voicemail message is not the same as making an appointment.

One of the reps that I've come to trust over the years told me that his job and his success are based on relationships—how true. I know this business can be hard to break into; we all learn what works for us and can be slow to try something new. For those of you beating your heads against the brick wall that is the superintendent's skull—tough. I make no apologies, but if you work and make a relationship with someone, you may hear the wonderful sound of the dominoes falling.

Getting actively involved with the Association is a great way to start those relationships growing.

Oh yeah, bring a little gossip with the catalogue—I don't get out much. 



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