



VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

Bruce Williams, CGCS *The Los Angeles Country Club*

What We Have Here . . . Is a Need to Communicate

Golf course superintendents do a wonderful job of providing great golfing conditions. Some have learned the trade through formal education and others have learned through hard work and good mentors. At some point, we all have the skills to keep the turfgrass looking super within the constraints of our budgets and weather conditions. However, there is one area that I believe to have a wide variance in competencies, and that is our ability to communicate.

I have a couple of theories on communication and how it can affect superintendents. By sharing them in this article, I am not expecting everyone to agree with me, but it may start a few people thinking about the value of communication.

More people lose their jobs over poor communication than poor turfgrass conditions.

Many superintendents miss opportunities to shine by not telling their story.

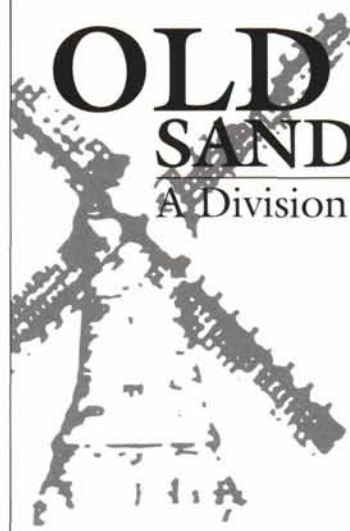
Writing, speaking, providing reports, etc. is not a natural talent but one that is acquired. It takes practice and effort.

Let's look at a few things that you might be able to put into practical application at your golf course.

I hope you have some vehicle to

convey your message to your golfers. Standard vehicles would be a golf course newsletter, a Web site, bulletin boards in the pro shop or lockerroom, etc. Every month I receive about 100 newsletters from clubs, all across the country, via our GM. Only 20% have monthly articles from the superintendent, yet all of them have monthly articles from the pro and GM. The same is true with Web sites. Some superintendents have done a marvelous job of contributing to their golf course Web sites, but again, the golf pros and managers outshine us in this category. It is easy to say that you don't have time to write a monthly message, but I would say that you can't afford not to take the time to communicate clearly the great and

(continued on page 43)



OLD DUTCH SAND COMPANY

A Division of Jack Gray Transport Inc.

- VARIOUS BUNKER SANDS
- CART & ROAD MATERIALS
- COBBLES AND RIP RAP
- ALL GOLF COURSE AGGREGATES

Call Richard E. Mika (773) 374-2303 (847) 228-9607 (219) 938-7020



You take care of the course...

...we'll take care of the mosquitoes.

That's what we do. That's all we do.
Clarke's integrated pest management approach keeps nuisance mosquitoes off your course, and happy golfers coming back.
Call us today.

e-mail: georgebalis@clarkemosquito.com
1 800 942 2555
website: www.clarkemosquito.com

"Serving communities for over 50 years."



Clarke Environmental Mosquito Management, Inc.
159 Garden Avenue • Roselle, IL 60172

exciting things that are happening on the golf course.

I can't tell you how many times I have had peers tell me the Rodney Dangerfield line, "I don't get no respect." Perhaps it is because we don't do a great job of developing our own public relations campaigns. It has been said that the three key steps to promoting your success are:

- Do the right thing.
- Do the right thing.
- Tell people that you are doing the right thing!

To be successful and receive the respect you are due, you must recognize opportunities and take advantage of them. When you get a chance to attend board meetings, committee meetings, golf advisory meetings, etc., welcome the opportunity. Prepare well for these meetings and be certain to present your message professionally, either verbally or in print. Too many people shy away from these opportunities. When you are invited to the guest day banquet, don't turn the chance down. Sure, you got up at 4 a.m., but you owe it to yourself and your crew to rub elbows with the

players and receive the accolades for the great golf course.

When problems arise on the golf course, don't allow someone else to tell your story. I never want to depend on a waiter, bartender, golf shop employee, etc. to explain why we have some thin areas on the golf course. The message is sure to get mixed up and perhaps put you in a bad light. Be accessible when problems exist. People typically want to know three things when trouble happens on the golf course.

- What happened?
- What are you going to do about it?
- When will it be back to normal?

Nobody can carry the message better than you. Communicate it every way you can until the problem is resolved.

A picture is worth a thousand words. Use pictures as a vehicle to communicate your successes or to demonstrate areas that need improvement. In this era, we should all learn to utilize digital photography and PowerPoint to make powerful presentations to promote programs and projects. It is a tool that can make us all look

pretty good in front of our employers.

While space does not allow me to expand on the subject, suffice it to say that the largest area for communication improvement is the skill of listening. If you go to the library, you will find hundreds of books on public speaking. However, I doubt if you can find any that deal with listening. Listen to what your golfers want. This can be done through customer evaluations or personal feedback. Don't hear what you want to hear, but try to understand what people are really saying. Don't be defensive. Learn to accept constructive criticism. Employers want people that bring them solutions rather than someone who gives excuses.

Think about the top five superintendents you know. What puts them in this special category of high esteem? Is it their ability to grow grass or is it their ability to communicate? I feel strongly that today the grass-growing is the fundamental part of the job but the ability to communicate is paramount to career success.



Recognizing 2004's MAGCS Scholarship Winners . . . (continued from page 25)

Anthony Doruff

Dear Armed Services Man or Woman,

I would like to personally thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything you have done and will do to maintain our freedoms. Your tireless efforts to protect the United States, along with many other countries, are greatly appreciated by everyone.

I understand some of the risks that you are taking and I don't know

if I would be able to handle such an overwhelming task. You have received possibly the best training in the world, been given many hi-tech pieces of equipment, but you also have to rely on your instincts, which cannot be taught.

I also understand some of the sacrifices you, your family, and friends back home have made for you to be able to defend our way of life. I know they are thinking about you and praying for you every available minute, as

I am sure you are of them.

We are all proud of you and your accomplishments. There aren't the words to tell you how much your work is appreciated. I wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors and a safe trip home to you and all your fellow soldiers. Thank you and God bless.

Sincerely,
Proud American



Paving the Finest Golf Courses on the North Shore

KAPLAN
TRUCKING & PAVING CO. INC.

847 • 949 • 1500

M.A.G.C.S. Member

P.O. Box 200 • Lincolnshire, IL 60069 • www.KaplanPaving.com



Master of the Links®

Course Accessories and A Lot More

www.masterofthelinks.com

Toll Free (888) TURF-888

Local (630) 545-2474
Fax (630) 545-2782