

MIDWEST BREEZES

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Telling the Story

One of the challenges of our position as Golf Course Superintendents is to be able to communicate effectively with our players, members, committees, boards and supervisors. Being located “down in the barn”, maintenance shop, or turf care facility, presents a big challenge to be part of the golfer culture that is based and located in the Clubhouse. As the saying goes, “out of sight, out of mind”.

The ITF Winter Workshops addressed many of the “high tech” communication tools available such as blogs, social networking, websites, twitter, and texting. These presentations were made mostly by Superintendents for Superintendents and were very good. The members came away with a better awareness of just how these new tools work and how others are using them effectively.

Of course, many of the “old” forms of communication still work. Newsletters and signs posted in the locker room or on 1st tee bulletin board are still effective forms of communication. Sometimes an old-fashioned “sit down” meeting with a person works very well. This interaction may still be the most personal and direct form of communication we know. My friends in the high school teaching business tell me this form of communication is becoming a “lost art” as more and more of the younger generation prefer to communicate via text. People still need to communicate with other people. By nature (in most cases) we are social creatures and seek out other people to communicate and bond with as part of life. We have so many more methods now, sometimes it is difficult to choose how to do it.

Every little bit of reaching out helps tell the story.

People are busy in their daily lives. People are busy at work and home, always multi-tasking, always plugged in. Who isn't these days? The danger of not effectively communicating for yourself or your department is that people will

extrapolate their own conclusions, based on their perceptions, no matter their level of accuracy. Rumors, false statements, miscommunication and lack of communication can totally undermine all of the positive things that are going on.

We live in the Age of Communication. People want to/ need to know what's going on. Be pro-active. Get the message out with your “spin”. If you don't, you will have nobody to blame but yourself. Think about it, why do relationships fail? I always think of the movie “Cool Hand Luke” starring Paul Newman. As he is captured escaping from prison for the umpteenth time the Warden says, “What we have here, is a failure to communicate”. It did not end well for Luke.

Whatever your communication format, keep it short and simple. Avoid technical or scientific jargon. Be accurate, be transparent. “Reaching out” demonstrates a strong commitment. Know your audience. Does the person you are telling the story to prefer texts or like to sit down over a cup of coffee? What is most comfortable for them? What is the age, gender, profession of the person you want to receive the message? In most cases a multi-pronged approach will connect with the most people. Try to maximize your number of “hits”.

At one of the MAGCS meetings I overheard a “rookie” Superintendent complain that he was tired of repeating the same message to the same people over and over. I thought to myself, get used to it, this is what we do, and this is what teachers do. Telling the same or similar story is a big part of the nature of our jobs. Just do it and do it well. “Be the ball Danny.” **-OC**