

Agronomy in Flight

Bryan Stromme, Billy Casper Golf

On a flight last week, I sat in the back row near two flight attendants discussing how they couldn't understand why most people were in such bad moods on their flights.

So why would a customer dislike flying?

Think back to the last time you flew somewhere, the entire experience was one hassle after another. It all started with sitting in traffic to the airport, followed by the parking lot bus to a crowded tram which, of course, took you to the last terminal. Next, you stood in line to pay for your overweight bag. Then it was off to the line at security where you hoped a stranger didn't determine you needed "additional searching." Then you waited in another line to go through the gate, waited in the extremely cold or hot jet-way and finally waited in line on the plane to get to your tiny middle seat. You thought you were in the clear, but then you landed and had to wait for your bags, rental car shuttle and rental car.

And they were curious why someone would not enjoy flying?

In full disclosure, flight attendants don't get paid unless the door is shut and the flight is in progress. When there is a flight delay or cancellation, the staff sits there like most of us...stuck and not working.

This story made me think about the customer experience at the golf course. We, as superintendents, know all the necessary agronomic steps to create a great product, just like a flight attendant knows everything involved to get us safely from one place to another.

So the question we need to ask ourselves: are we also looking at our agronomic practices (flight process) from the guest's point of view?

Are we taking the extra step to ensure all the topdressing is brushed in, machinery moves out of the way for each group, hand watering is completed in a courteous manner, employees are acknowledging the guests...you get the point. All of our necessary cultural practices have the same effect on our guests when interrupting their round of golf as do the various processes at the airport.



Customer surveys take a few moments to fill out and can help retain players by allowing them to voice their concerns about the product we produce.

The golf industry is experiencing people having less time and opportunities to play each season. Golf course operators are not only competing against other courses, we are competing against all the demands for people's time including; family, work, vacations, reduced disposable income and everything else you can imagine. So when a person does get the opportunity to dedicate 4-6 hours to play our facility, we need to ensure each and every guest gets a great experience, no matter when he or she plays.

With the reduction of resources we are all experiencing; we know there is a necessity to complete cultural practices with guests on the course. But, as you create your plans for the upcoming year, ensure you view each maintenance practice from the guest's eye. Put yourself in their shoes – would you tolerate the interruptions or level of service if you were a paying guest?

The next time you catch yourself saying, "It's Tuesday morning, what do they expect?" think about your last flight and create a plan to treat your guests to a fun and enjoyable golf experience.

Bryan Stromme spends enough time in the air as the Regional Director of Agronomy for the Midwest & West for Billy Casper Golf. 