

Guest Editorial

By James E. McLoughlin

Editor's Note: Because of recent superintendent job changes in Florida, we feel that the following editorial reprinted from the April 1986 issue of the Tee to Green is very apropos to our situation.

COMMUNICATIONS ARE THE KEY TO JOB SECURITY

Over 20 golf course superintendents positions opened and were filled through this past Fall and Winter within the Greater New York Metropolitan area. About a third of these moves were precipitated by employing clubs; the balance represent the "domino affect" as superintendents replaced each other from job to job.

A careful examination of the situations where a superintendent's employment has been terminated by a club (not only this year, but for recent years as well) presents a relatively consistent pattern, an insight and the opportunity for a valuable lesson to be learned. Virtually, in every case the primary factor why the job was lost was due to a breakdown in communications and not because the superintendent was not capable of executing on the job.

Clubs and their Green Committee do not expect perfection from a golf course superintendent. They readily accept the variables of nature and the margin for human error. When faced with problems that will always arise from time to time, however both the club and golf course superintendent fail to communicate adequately, or frequently enough about situations at hand. As a result, misunderstandings build on one another, educational opportunities are not taken advantage of and pressure situations do not get diffused - with the overall result that the golf course superintendent becomes vulnerable when he need not be.

Clearly, a different scenario can be orchestrated and should be, with every golf course superintendent taking the initiative at his own club to do so — regardless of his level of performance. The fundamental concept here is twofold: (1) an accurate job description should be written for the position of golf course superintendent that would be reviewed periodically; and (2) the club Green Committee and the golf course superintendent should meet annually, presumably in the Fall of the year, for a balanced review of performance based on the stated job description. Positives would be recognized and acknowledged; questions stated and addressed; and problems identified for immediate attention and review the following year. *meeting results should become part of the permanent club record, with a written copy of the "minutes"* of such meetings being given to the golf course superintendent — for his file and review with trusted counselors.

An interesting variation on the above would be for both the club and the golf course superintendent to evaluate management performance on the golf course simultaneously via two identical check lists — then compare results. A meaningful exchange will always evolve from this approach.

It might take some courage to seek out annual meetings of this kind, but the results will justify the effort every time. By inviting a constructive annual evaluation and balance exchange — the golf course superintendent created educational opportunities that will abound, presents himself as a secure manager and identifies problems that can only become dangerous when left unattended. (JMCL.) ■

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