

Want to Improve Your Image? Go APE



Today's golf course superintendent has come out of the closet — he is "the best kept secret in the club." As a result of the last 20 years of progress we, as superintendents, are getting the recognition we deserve and are beginning to be seen as not only highly dedicated individuals but also as the best educated and informed executives in the club business. Still you can hear superintendents say, "How can we improve our image?" Improving our professional image, of course has to start with each one of us at our respective clubs, and I have found that the letters APE stand for six very important words that affect how we look, think, and act professionally.

The "A" stands for *Attitude* and *Appearance*. Your appearance generally reflects your attitude. A slovenly or unkept appearance gives others the impression that you have a "don't care" attitude. If you appear rumpled and rag-tag, your members have a right to ask how you can keep an orderly golf course if you can't keep yourself orderly and clean-cut. A disheveled or dirty appearance, in addition to showing

your lack of concern for detail, filters down through your crew, with undesirable results. But, appearance does not always reflect attitude; the best dressed superintendent can still have a bad mental attitude toward his work, and this may reflect personal problems that are affecting him adversely. Negative attitudes are always counter-productive; your crew will notice them and be affected, and your members will watch carefully to see if your negative approach shows up in their golf course. A positive attitude and a clean, neat appearance are essential to your successful image; improve them, and your image goes up. And if your attitude means you don't like your job, it's time to change jobs.

The "P" in APE stands for *Personality* and *Poise*, two highly important attributes of any superintendent. Poise shows we are relaxed and sure of ourselves under any circumstances, and being prepared for any circumstance, good or bad, adds to poise. We are most flustered by situations that are hard to handle because we haven't prepared for them. If you know your job and plan your work, you should never lack poise, whatever the situation. Personality, on the other hand, is formed early in life, when we develop the character traits that identify us and form our personality. ***The importance of personality is shown in a recent study at a large university regarding success — 85% of success was found to be based on personality and only 15% on ability.*** This means that two superintendents of equal ability will be judged essentially on which has the best personality. Try to determine your positive

personality traits and nurture them, and do your best to eliminate or improve what you see as your negative traits.

Expression and *Education* are represented by the "E." Expressing yourself clearly and intelligently, both in writing, and orally, is vital in communicating with your workers and members and enables you to explain the reasons behind your various programs on the course. Admittedly, oral expression is very tough for some of us; while it may be hard for us to talk to people on a one-to-one basis, speaking before a group can turn us into basket cases. An evening class in public speaking can do wonders for your poise and self-confidence, and such training will help you in your daily work even if you are rarely called on as a speaker.

The importance of education for the superintendent need hardly be explained. We should be continually adding to technical skills, and with so many sources of added knowledge available to use, this is not a difficult task. Local and national meetings and seminars, the volumes of written material in books and magazines, and the everyday give and take with fellow superintendents all offer a wealth of knowledge. Staying abreast of current ideas and applying them to improve our job skills adds greatly to our self-confidence.

Improving in these six areas, then, is the key to an improved professional image. Improving that overall image of the superintendent relies on what each of us can do to improve ourselves — that's where it starts.

Come on, Superintendents, go APE! ■

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