intendents but slighted suppliers and others who are affected when a management company takes over a course.

Code of Ethics

In the final analysis, the biggest question many superintendents have relates to ethics.

How can a company follow the GCSAA Code of Ethics and not solicit jobs while a golf course superintendent is still employed? Is a mass mailing advertising the company any different from a superintendent who randomly mails resumes to clubs?

IGM says that they do not mass mail, relying instead on word-of-mouth communication, magazine advertisements and trade shows. Zakany says that when an owner or club calls, he answers their general questions.

If it goes beyond that, he requests to talk to the superintendent. Zakany feels comfortable that IGM is following the Code of Ethics.

Zakany added that in most cases clubs have liked their superintendent and did not pressure IGM to replace him or her. If a management change is requested, IGM has tried to relocate the superintendent to another IGM location provided the person shows competence and ability.

I know that we have received phone calls and mailings from management companies at my club. Is this ethical? On the other hand, our club has also received mass-mailed resumes from superintendents wanting to relocate to the Sunshine State.

Are we just dreaming when we expect everyone to follow the Code?

Has the business world finally caught up with golf? It would be nice to know that if you do a good honest job, your employment will be secure. I hope in most cases this is true.

The best advice I can give is to do a good job and let the chips fall where they may. Just as there are good and bad superintendents, there are good and bad management companies. Do they all behave in the same manner? Probably not. Are they good for our industry? Friend or foe? That's for you to decide.

Management firms mixed bag for superintendents

Reprinted from Golf Course News, November 1996

Should superintendents see the growing influence of management companies as a good thing or bad thing in terms of career development, professional responsibility, salaries, benefits, etc.?

Josh Lesnik, Marketing Manager, Kemper Sports — In our case it's a good thing. We stress the importance of maintenance, which means a talented superintendent would mean as much or more to us than at a single-course operation. Superintendents are very appreciated [well paid].

Our superintendents are in charge of their individual courses. They may answer to someone in the home office. But they make up their own budgets and submit them to people here [corporate office] who understand what they are talking about. You could compare it to the relationship to a managed health care setting.

Marc Bergschneider, Chairman, National Fairways, Inc. — It's definitely a plus. There are more opportunities for career development by enhancing the services provided at a single course, grow a particular operation, manage multiple courses or go back to school.

Entry-level positions may not be as lucrative [as salaries at non-management company courses]. But that's offset by salaries paid head superintendents and those overseeing multiple courses.

Tommy Witt, GCSAA board member, chairman of GCSAA Career Development Committee and head superintendent at Wynstone Golf Club in Chicago — Management companies may represent a threat to one superintendent and an opportunity to another.

They generally provide more job security, the opportunity to move to another job without leaving the company and benefits that often surpass those at individual-owner golf courses.

But salaries tend to be lower. When a management company enters an area, they tend to pull down or slow salary increases at surrounding courses. And when a management company superintendent is put in charge of several courses, the increased salary often doesn't match the increased responsibility.

Management companies are here to stay, but they still control a small part of the marketplace [an estimated 5 percent of U.S. courses]. Superintendents should view them as an another option. The key is to figure out what the upside potential is and then make an intelligent decision.

Tim Hiers, head superintendent, Colliers Reserve in Naples, Fla. — There are places where management companies can be successful, especially in large, multi-hole facilities. However, I believe it could be extremely difficult for a management company to equal the quality output, level of care, constant attention to detail and the overall efficiency of an experienced, qualified and skillful golf courses superintendent on his or her home turf.

If management companies continue to emerge, there could be fewer traditional superintendent jobs. However, other opportunities within a management company, such as a consultant, could present themselves.

Depending on the variety of situations and circumstances, a superintendent who continues to demonstrate value to his or her organization through ongoing education, top-quality management, desire to excel, and a balanced personal life, shouldn't be overly concerned.

There will be exceptions to this. But if the superintendent produces a quality product for a competitive amount and communicates it to the necessary powers, that person will probably continue to be a successful individual in this profession.