



Getting the Word Heard:

Marketing PDI to Employers

Editor's note: This is the third in a series of articles from GCSAA concerning the Professional Development Initiative. The GCSAA Board has reviewed all the input from the Member Services Resource Group, the GCSAA delegates meeting and the membership at large. Contrary to the vocal minority, it appears that the PDI will go up for a vote in February in Dallas. In answer to how would PDI be marketed to employers GCSAA has provided the following article for chapter publications.

The first step in any marketing program is to create the identity that you want to promote to a specific audience. Our audience is employers and influential golfers. PDI creates the identity of educated, knowledgeable and competent superintendents, which can then be promoted.

A "Yes" Vote

If the vote at the annual meeting and election supports PDI, the next step will be the execution of a multi-faceted marketing campaign during the next several years. Communicating the benefits and value of PDI is a long-term process that involves the joint efforts of the association and its members.

A Rewarding Goal

Our goal in communicating the benefits of PDI to employers is to have employers acknowledge the value they receive from employing a general member, a Class "A" member and a certified member. We do not plan to explain the intricacies of the classification system but focus instead on the results this system will provide. Consequently, employers will recognize and reward their su-

perintendents for the competitive edge that they bring to their golf course operations and golfers will enjoy the results of superintendents' work — a superb golf experience.

GCSAA Marketing Strategy

The association will use external and internal communication methods to position the benefits of certified, class "A" and general superintendents to employers and other audiences.

We will continue to use national media, such as television and magazines, to promote the superintendents' role and value in managing golf courses. Our national public relations efforts have been laying the groundwork for this initiative during the past several years, positioning the superintendent as key to golfers' enjoyment of the game, and consequently having a direct impact on the golf course's economic success.

To effectively reach employers, GCSAA will target the publications they read and the Web sites they access. We will send press releases and articles to golf trade and consumer publications and Web sites about PDI's approval, and what it means to the business of golf, the

golfer and the employer. In addition, we will work with our allied associations to get the message out through their publications, such as NGCOA's *Golf Business*, CMAA's *Club Management*, the NGF's *Golf Market Today*, their Web sites and in other appropriate venues.

GCSAA also uses many publications and materials today to market the golf course management profession. We will continue to use those vehicles. Information will be placed in *Course Management*, *Leader Board* and on our Web site. Other resources that support the profession, such as standard job descriptions, information on certification, the benefits of joining the association and materials that employers use in hiring superintendents, will include information on the competencies of superintendents. In other words, the message that PDI allows us to develop about the superintendent profession will become a standard business practice for GCSAA materials and resources.

Members' Marketing Responsibility

Members have the opportunity to prove and communicate the benefits of PDI to their employers. Demonstrating effective management of the golf course is perhaps the most important validation of competence. Discussing with your employer your commitment to continuing education, achievement of proficiency and, if certified, use of the Professional Development Resource (PDR) is strong support during your annual performance review.

GCSAA will also provide you with the resources to help you communicate the value of PDI to your employer. We will develop a package of information in an easy-to-understand format, with suggestions on how you can present the specific benefits of PDI to your employer on a continuing basis.

A "No" Vote

If the vote does not support PDI, an identity around the commitment of golf course superintendents to competency-based education and professional development will be created and promoted to employers.

Administrative Assistants Are Life (and Job!) Savers

There is absolutely no way I could live without an administrative assistant! It is certainly easier to justify the need on larger operations such as multi-course facilities. At Indian River Club our owner expected professionalism — especially due to the Audubon Signature Status that we had obtained — and he actually wanted members or other clubs to call us for information.

Of course guess who they called? The superintendent's office. A live voice is able to provide accurate information and helps the general public or members gain confidence in our operations.

While most people think of a "secretary" as one who just answers the phone, this is not true. While any golf maintenance operations receive way too many



A good, self-motivated administrative assistant is as valuable as any of your technicians. I actually classify this position as a technician position

phone calls a day, this person is also my liaison to the crew.

I think more of their time is spent on personnel issues than any other thing. They are always answering questions such as vacation time, sick time, uniform problems, etc. They can also save the superintendent and mechanic a lot of time by ordering supplies, parts, etc, or by following up on lost orders. They are especially

helpful when calculating payroll and of course at the end of the month when matching invoices and packing slips to statements.

Many superintendents wait until the end of the month when accounting is screaming for the paperwork before pulling them out of the file drawer. These assistants can perform this on a daily or weekly basis, especially if money is tight.

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This also helps with accuracy. My administrative assistant works at least 40-50 hours a week now, and if she did not do this work, then I don't know where I would be!

Earlier in my career I had proposed the idea of an administrative assistant to the owners and they thought it was ridiculous due to the fact we were a small crew of 10 -12 and maintaining 18 holes, so they didn't feel administration took that much time (in their eyes). In truth, I was spending more than 20-25 hours per week performing administrative duties, especially considering the amount of paperwork expected of management companies these days. My work week averaged 55-60 hours per week... or more.

This began to get old, especially considering that I could not see the golf course as much as I wanted. I proposed that I would take a person from the crew and work him only 20 hours per week on the course. The other 20 would be dedicated to an office assistant. This person

worked Monday to Friday from 9:00 to 1:30 with a half hour for lunch.

These are perfect hours for a working mother! She only works while the kids are in school. She sees them off in the morning and is home when they arrive from school. I had a waiting list for this position!

I told the owners that we could get the same amount of work done on the course because I could run the operation more efficiently by being able to spend more time on the course. This was very true and now I had a person who could do all the time-consuming little things that I had to do because there was no one to delegate to.

The operation certainly runs better. The crew is happier. The mechanics are real happy, because they do not have to answer the phone or deal with salesmen in the middle of grinding reels.

What is actually happening is that more and more is placed on your department that may have been performed by

other departments in the past. You also begin to find that 20 hours a week for an office assistant never is quite enough. I started off at Indian River Club with 30 hours and it went to 40 very quickly due to the fact we also maintained all the Property Owners Association areas and 22 employees!

My administrative assistant has saved me a great many hours here at Champions Gate due to the fact she was already experienced with golf operations. Starting up a new project is very time consuming and I did not have to train her in what to do. A good, self-motivated administrative assistant is as valuable as any of your technicians. I actually classify this position as a technician position. With today's fast-paced world where everybody wants it now, this position is a must! Leaving a message on a recorder is the thing of the past.

*BOBBY ELLIS, GCS
Champions Gate G.C.*



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