

In 2004 I Resolve... To Become A Better Golf Course Superintendent

Edited by Joel Jackson, CGCS

As I read the various trade publications and chapter newsletters over the years, I clip and save articles that I think are worth sharing. Since this is the time of year we make New Year's resolutions to get organized and overcome or resistance to changing ourselves and our operations for the better, I pulled out several articles that I thought might be helpful. The following is a collection of articles designed to help you make improvements in your personal growth and development as a golf course superintendent and provide some helpful hints in self promotion and communications.

Things That Affect an Image

From "Enhancing Your Value as a Professional Golf Course Superintendent," presented by GCSAA

Personal appearance: Are your clothes clean, neat, and well fitting? Are they appropriate for the occasion? Are your shoes shined, is your hair neatly trimmed? Are your mustache and beard clean and neat? Is your personal vehicle clean and well maintained? And is your home and lawn well manicured?

Staff appearance: Is your staff well organized? Does your staff know its role? Are staff work areas clean, neat and well organized? Is your staff well informed of the staff organization? Does your staff wear a uniform or appropriate clothing that distinguishes it from other employees of your club? And is your staff well informed of the role of public relations?

Work appearance: Is your maintenance facility neat, well organized, well maintained and generally clean? Is your office clean, neat and well maintained? Is the staff bulletin board well organized and up-to-date? Are emergency evacuation plans conspicuously posted? Are neat, well-maintained and appropriate signs displayed? Are work vehicles clean and well maintained? Are organization charts posted? And are grounds, flowers and shrubs adjacent to your facility well cared for?

Other areas in which a golf course superintendent's image can be affected and improved include:

- Attitude
- Job performance or results
- Communications: expressing oneself orally and in writing

- Job knowledge: overall knowledge of the profession
- Good record keeping
- Speaking ability
- Presentation of reports
- Well organized and well written plans
- Confidence in abilities
- Promptness and timeliness
- Cooperativeness
- Friendliness
- Flexibility
- Willingness
- Decisiveness
- Efficiency
- Use of good judgment and common sense
- A sense of humor
- Showing respect and appreciation of others
- Supportive of other club officials and employees
- Understanding
- Ability to handle unexpected situations
- Accessibility to golfers and various other publics
- Participation in civic and community activities
- Participation in local golf course superintendent associations activities
- Participation in GCSAA activities
- Relationships with local media
- Working relationships with staff and others at club
- Education (Continuing education)
- Certification (Class A PDI)
- The condition and beauty of your golf course

In order for the golf course superintendent and golf course superintendent profession to continue to improve its image as "professional," attention to these actions and behaviors will be required from each and every one. Strive to be the best that you can be in all aspects of the golf course superintendent profession.

Reprinted with permission from Georgia GCSA's "Through the Green."

Editor: That list of image factors might be daunting on the first look, but like any undertaking, if you break it down into smaller chunks it's easier to undertake and accomplish. This next article provides some step-by-step actions you can take to change old behaviors. Superintendents are always hard working, but often weak in the area of self-promotion, but in today's world you'd better be tooting your horn in a positive and proactive way to insure your success.

The Power of Self Promotion: From the CGCS Owner's Manual Published by the GCSAA

You know that keeping your job is up to you. You dress appropriately. You speak clearly and are easily understood. You've been published. You continue to learn.

So what else can you do?

Set up and execute a plan to gain greater awareness of you as a person and the job you do.

Here are strategies that successful people in businesses across the world have used to promote themselves. They can work for you, too!

20 Strategies to Success

1. Take responsibility for your own mistakes and for those of your subordinates. Blaming others, however justifiable, makes you look small-minded and weak. Earn a reputation as a "fixer" of errors, someone who can snap back from setbacks and learn from mistakes.
2. Acquire skills beyond those needed for your own job so that you help colleagues solve their problems. Offer to cooperate on projects, but do it without seeming pushy or threatening. Once you are seen as a team player and not a threat, you'll get new opportunities to shine.
3. Set goals for yourself in public. Intelligent risk-taking is an integral part of savvy career management. You will be noticed if you fail, but you will be noticed even more if you succeed.
4. Don't shy away from your critics. Look for ways to get your message across.
5. Associate yourself with those of status, those who are credible opinion leaders.
6. If you feel you lack personal charisma, imitate someone who has it.
7. Get along with others. Be a team player, whether you are in a leadership or team-member role.
8. Control your reactions. The champions in business are able to shrug off distressing situations and regroup emotionally - that is one important reason why they are successful.
9. Be honest. Build an ethical business reputation. Exhibit good values.
10. Make others look good at every opportunity.
11. Roll up your sleeves. Never be afraid to do what it takes to get the job done.
12. Set and maintain high expectations for all who work with you. Encourage others to do their best.

13. Do what you say you will. Keep promises and follow through on commitments.
14. Get involved in your community: school systems, philanthropic organizations, Little League, homeowner's associations and public service venues such as serving on the parks and recreation commission.
15. Become involved with fundraising and other charitable causes.
16. Always answer criticism in a professional and courteous manner. Explain why there is a problem and what you plan to do about it. Never let it be assumed that you do not care. Take immediate action on complaints.
17. Use time management strategies. Decide exactly what is to be accomplished and why. Plan and organize. Set daily priorities within the list. Finish projects. Delegate work. Filter out unnecessary information.
18. Empower employees to make their own decisions.
19. Make a point of thanking employees and praising them when they do a good job.
20. Think big. Look for ideas that will excite people.

Editor: We never talk about professional development without talking about communication. If there is one thing I have found over the years it is that the most successful and secure superintendents are the ones who take the time to communicate with the people they work with and work for. The last article from my files is from a superintendent in Texas who

gives good advice on writing articles for his club's newsletter. Hopefully, this "how to" article will make that chore just a little easier from now on.

Member/Golfer Communication: Writing an Effective Newsletter

*By Jay Shine, GCS
Canyon Creek C.C.*

As department heads, many of us are often asked to write newsletters and articles for our golf facilities on a regular basis. Let me begin this article by stating that I am no literary genius, nor do I claim to be. I have however, developed a successful formula for writing my club newsletter articles that reduce the amount of time spent staring at the computer monitor with a blank look on my face. In the past, I have always dreaded the e-mail from my member-relations director, which requested my article in three days. My formula may or may not work for you, but hopefully, some of you can use it to streamline the process.

Obviously, the newsletter article is one of our most effective tools for communicating with the golfers at our facilities. I try to write an article that is informative, brief, humorous and non-technical, which I feel is essential to keep the attention of the reader and maximize the impact of the message. By combining all of these attributes, I feel that I can

produce an article that they will actually look forward to reading, while at the same time learning something every month.

My typical newsletter has four main components that allow me to get all of the information on one page or less. The first piece of the puzzle is the monthly preview, which I use to explain what effects the typical weather pattern for the month will have on the golf course. I stress the word "typical," because many of our articles are written one or two months in advance so they can be edited and printed on time. I certainly do not attempt to predict the weather, but I do try to tie in the expected weather conditions to the expected course condition. I also use this paragraph to explain any new techniques or procedures we may be using on the golf course. Also I will use this paragraph to communicate any department headlines or big events we may be preparing for.

The next part of the newsletter is the cultural practices summary. In this section, I preview the major cultural practices that will be completed on the golf course in that month. Typically, this includes aerification, overseeding, special chemical applications, fertilization schedules, or any other practice that informs them as to how hard we are working out on the golf course.

The third component is the "word of the month" feature. I am often surprised at how uninformed some golfers are about some of the terms we use on a daily basis. I introduce a word and then

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explain what it means and how it relates to what we do on the golf course. Some examples are: "transition," "Poa annua" (two-word bonus), "overseed," "verticut," "Primo" and the list goes on and on. Again, these words sound so simple to us, but I'm sure most have been asked what they mean or what they are. I feel that this part of the newsletter is very important, because it will bring the reader back each month, just so they can learn something new.

The final part of my typical newsletter is my "declaration of availability." I use this paragraph to emphasize that I am welcome to any feedback or suggestions from all golfers. Some might think this opens us up to an endless barrage of questions, suggestions, recommendations, etc, but I think most of us have actually received some good ideas from golfers at some point. Letting the golfers know that you appreciate their input can help you build some good relationships, while letting them know that you are trying to make their facility better with their help. In this section, I list my e-mail address and work phone number. I also encourage them to visit with me on the golf course or around the club.

This formula is my personal technique for preparing an article that is interesting, educational and easy to read. Many of the characteristics of my formula I have picked up along the way by reading many of your articles in your newsletters. My formula may not work for you, but it has made the process much simpler for me, while significantly improving my level of communication and helping me build better relationships

with my members.

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USGA Update

Success Is Not An Accident - Plan For It!

By Chris Hartwiger and Patrick O'Brien

Successful golf courses do not happen by accident. As USGA agronomists we visit more than 200 golf courses each year of all sizes, shapes, and budgets. The most successful clubs, regardless of budgets, all share one characteristic. These clubs have a clear vision of what they want to be and are characterized by excellent working relationships between club management, membership, and the golf course superintendent. To help realize their vision, these clubs develop long-range plans and maintenance objectives.

To maximize the return on the dollars spent on the golf course, we recommend that your course create a long-range plan and maintenance objectives for the golf course. The following steps are helpful in the development of maintenance objectives for the golf course:

1. Define expectations for the golf course - An open dialog among management, the board and the superintendent is needed to define expectations. Rank the major playing areas from the most important to the least important. Define the standards of condition for all these

areas. There will be differences of opinion, but compromises can be offered until all parties arrive at a consensus. The golf course is going to be managed in some fashion, so it is possible and beneficial to work through any conflicts.

2. Develop an agronomic program to meet these objectives - The superintendent and USGA Green Section are excellent sources of information.
3. Make sure funding and staff can meet these objectives - Reallocate resources from lower priority areas, change the budget or staff size, or reduce the level of expectations if the existing staff and budget cannot complete the agronomic program required to meet these objectives.
4. Implement the plan - Implementing the maintenance objectives and a long-range plan will benefit your course in several ways. First, the budget will be spent as efficiently as possible. Priorities will be well defined and inefficient use of resources will drop dramatically. Maintenance objectives will provide continuity over time and will be an excellent means to show the progress being made on the golf course.

The topic of maintenance objectives is discussed during many USGA Turf Advisory Visits. We have collected numerous examples of maintenance objectives and can provide your club with more specific direction. Contact your regional USGA Green Section office to schedule a visit for your club and our agronomists will be ready to discuss this important issue.

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