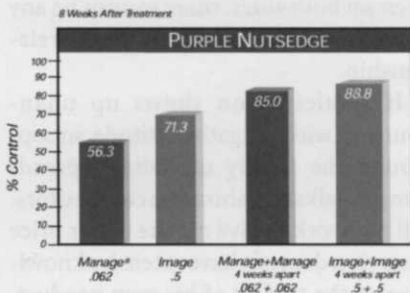


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Many superintendents have made it a practice to purchase only from those companies that support our events and projects. That's one of the reasons we print those "Thank you" ads in the magazine, so you can see the vendors in your area that are supporting our causes.

In this issue a couple of superintendents and suppliers write about what the superintendent and supplier relationship means to them.

### **Good Relationship is Built on Positive Traits Both Ways**

**W**hat do you look for in a good superintendent/vendor relationship? Good Prices. Fast reliable deliveries. Solid technical knowledge. Good golfing partner! These are all major components of a good relationship.

As a former superintendent for over 20 years, I have seen quite a few vendors come through my office door. I always seemed to be closer to the salesman when I felt confident that he wasn't trying to shove a product down my throat that was going to solve all my problems.

I was always comfortable with the sound technical sales rep that really went out of his way to get an order to me when it wasn't a normal delivery day. One that called me back quickly to confirm an order I had placed. One that wasn't afraid to recommend a competitor's product if it was the best answer to my problem. The vendors I respected never talked badly about another company's product or personnel.

I also learned over a period of time that, while price was important, good service also had a value that could be factored into purchasing decisions.

As the North Florida rep for United Horticultural Supply, I have tried to maintain those very positive traits of what I believed to be right. I have noticed that I have an excellent relationship with all my customers, no matter what amount of business they do with me.

In this day and age of short stints that superintendents are faced with at some

clubs, it is very important that all sales reps continue to strive for the highest professional standards that our industry demands.

Be a friend and a source of reliable information and we won't ever have to worry about the relationships that superintendents and vendors have

GARY MORGAN  
*United Horticultural Supply*

### **Salesmen Are Part of the Course Management Team**

**W**hen one defines the word "team," you can get varying degrees of definitions from literary sources such as the Oxford English and Webster's Dictionaries. Team is defined as a group of individuals working together; or a group of individuals coming together to achieve a common goal. Team spirit is the feelings of camaraderie among members of a group, enabling them to cooperate and work well together.

This is essentially what a superintendent would use in his description to envision his maintenance staff. However, one person who is not thought as being in "the family" or team but is an extremely important key person in the overall operation is the golf course salesperson.

For many years this traveling mix of ex-superintendents, professional turf maintenance suppliers, fertilizer, equipment and chemical vendors has gotten a bum rap about what they do, their knowledge of the field of golf and the technological intricacies associated with their products.

When one considers the salesperson's background and education it may just overwhelm you with a whole different light into where they are coming from. That is why whenever a salesperson calls on me for the first time I make sure that when they make an appointment I let them know when would be the best time to come to the course and the ground rules under which we will conduct business.

If a vendor drops by without an appointment be courteous but let him/her know you have your set of procedures on

how and when to make an appointment. A professional salesperson in this field will follow the wishes of his client to uphold the company's name and reputation. Making future sales is their desire. Therefore it is mandatory to call ahead.

A friend can be hard to come by in the dog-eat-dog competitive golf industry but, if given the chance, the salesperson can be that as well. I recall many times talking about personnel problems to a select salesperson that had gained my trust through their knowledge, devoted service and friendship.

There are unwritten codes that I explain to all salespersons calling on my golf course for the first time: nothing discussed during the day will be repeated like the products I use or any aspect of the operation or its personnel without my permission. That way no unsubstantiated rumors (which are epidemic in south Florida) can be started.

If this code is broken, then it is pretty clear that the salesperson and their products will not be making any return trips to my golf course. It is trust and professional ethics that bind good quality vendors to quality operations.

Every salesperson that calls on me for the first time will get a tour of the facility and the golf course. They cannot sell me their product unless they see the product I am trying to achieve or the operation I manage.

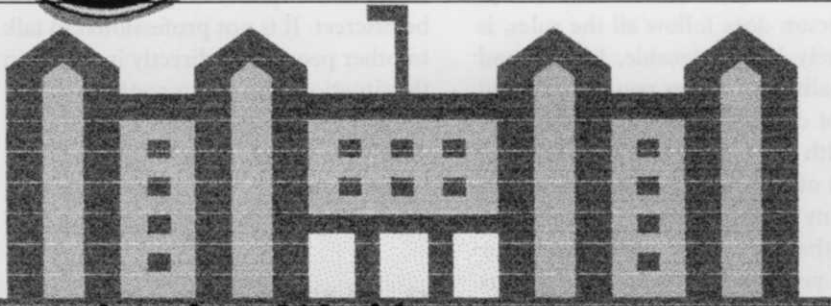
Usually in that one-hour ride, I interview them for their knowledge, their personality (a salesperson should never argue or tell a superintendent how to run his operation) and their ability to listen. This also allows them to hear my philosophies, get used to my personality and see our team in operation. With eyes open on both sides, there cannot be any hidden agendas to strain the future relationship.

If a salesperson shows up unannounced, with a negative attitude, snoops around the facility uninvited, spreads rumors, talks bad about his competitors, will not work to give me the better price or service, does not have extensive knowledge of the turf or of his own product, then this person will not have many op-

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### Monday, August 9

- ◆ University Tour
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### Tuesday, August 10

- ◆ Exhibitor Set-Up Day
- ◆ GCSAA Seminars
- ◆ University Tour
- ◆ Golf tournament
- ◆ Toro Event

### Wednesday, August 11

- ◆ Concurrent Sessions
- ◆ Tradeshow
- ◆ Equipment Demonstration
- ◆ Annual Meeting, Awards Dinner

### Thursday, August 12

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- ◆ Tradeshow
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opportunities to call on me.

Anyone I just described (I have seen it all before) will probably not be in the industry very long anyhow. However, think about what I just described. If a salesperson does follow all the rules, is extremely knowledgeable, has a good personality and serves you well, should you not consider a long term relationship with this person and give them the respect of their position in your operation. Any person who can be a salesperson in the competitive golf industry for several years and maintain their clients and reputation has earned my respect and the privilege to help our operation.

There are a few exceptions to the rule. Sometimes there may be a product that is so important to the operation — and one company has the monopoly to sell it — that there may not be a choice as to whom you deal with in a salesperson, good or bad. When this occurs with a bad one, I will usually call the president of the company explaining that I will no

longer deal with his field representative and will make all my orders direct from the company itself.

At this time, be truthful about your reservations about that person and also be discreet. It is not professional to talk to other people not directly involved in the situation about your conflict with an individual. Life is too short and the industry too closely knit. Your reputation is also at stake.

*JOE HUBBARD, CGCS*

### Good Vendors Can Be Excellent Resources

**V**endors, just like superintendents, come in all shapes and sizes, and with a wide variety of experience and knowledge. A quality supplier can offer solutions to the challenges facing superintendents and be an excellent resource to him/her and their staffs.

It is an exceptional supplier will offer advice similar to Kris Kringle's in the

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movie, "A Miracle on 34th Street." Kringle, while working for Macy's department store, said Macy's "doesn't have what you want, but Gimbel's store does!" In other words, "If I don't have a product to solve your problem, I will steer you in the right direction."

A vendor can be a wealth of information for many reasons:

- Trained by a manufacturer on product usage
- Access to manufacturers reps and research data
- Background in the turf business
- Shared experiences of others in addressing similar issues
- Knowledge of a wide variety of products

Most of the problems facing a golf course manager are not unique to the business. A quality vendor can share the successes of other golf course managers who have dealt with similar problems. As a territory manager I see 80 customers and, as we know, most of them want to see their peers succeed and are happy to share information.

Truly professional suppliers will try to understand the unique problems of your course and your needs. They can help by providing proper training related to the products they sell to you and your staff. They can offer assistance on how to best use the tools they supply. Not just ensure that you use their products but that you use the products efficiently to achieve the best bang for your buck.

Often a problem on the course really can't be addressed by something a vendor has to sell. Correct cultural practices are the most important ingredient in healthy turfgrass growth — things like spiking and topdressing to reduce algae pressure or raising the height of cut for overcoming decline symptoms are important factors in turf health.

When faced with these problems do your vendors offer these solutions or do they try to sell you an unproven product with no good Southeastern United States university research on the product's application on the turfgrass you manage?

For golf course superintendents the amount of information available out

there can be overwhelming. Recognizing how a particular vendor and their product can help you is important. You must use the resources employers entrust to you in the most efficient manner possible. Knowing who can help you best accomplish that goal is essential.

I have been fortunate to see the super-

intendent/supplier relationship from both positions. My impression of this relationship is if I, as a vendor, can help a fellow superintendent succeed, then our company will succeed. We will all benefit by working together.

*BILL LANTHIER, CGCS, TERRITORY  
MANAGER  
Golf Ventures, Inc.*

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## The Little Tournament That Keeps on Growing

We started having a gathering of vendors and staff members in 1995. We invited our vendors and asked them to bring a gift worth no more than \$10 (preferably something with their company logo).

These were to be selected by the staff (kind of like a raffle). During the event the staff and vendors will play a 9-hole tournament, for bragging rights mostly. I will cook lunch while they are golfing. The first event showed me a lot about the appreciation that vendors have for our staff. This told me it needs to also go the other way.

In 1996 we talked about the party all year long. We added a new twist to it that year. We decided to involve our greens committee members.

I would say about six or seven members came to the party. I received a lot of positive feedback from everyone: staff, vendors and members

In 1997 the Men's Golf Association became involved and supplied key chains with our club logo to the staff. We had more involvement by the greens committee. This event had developed into an information exchange and camaraderie event.

Last year we eliminated the vendor prizes. We just wanted them to come and have a good time. The staff and members' involvement has increased tremendously. We now have members coming that are not on any committees.

We had about 75 to 80 participants in 1998. The event has evolved into an enjoyable and much-anticipated good time. We went from fewer than 30 people to more than 70.

This tells me it is working, especially when people start asking about the event in June, wanting to get their names on the list. This event has helped change the members' perception of the staff and our department.

This year the members changed the name of their annual "Tree Tournament" to the "Golf Course Maintenance 'OUR COURSE, OUR PRIDE' Beautification and Appreciation Tournament." The highlight of the evening was the awarding of the GCM Employee of the Year.

The award comes with a nice bonus, certificates and plaques to be displayed in the 19th hole etc.

The great thing about it is the evening festivities are held at our GCM facility not the clubhouse. Staff members have the opportunity to stand up and introduce themselves and give brief descriptions of their duties here at San Jose.

I feel this member appreciation is a direct byproduct of the small event we started in 1995 with one or two members, 15 staff members and 10 vendors. This has become one of our biggest events of the year.

CLAYTON ESTES, CGCS  
San Jose Country Club

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## The Blueprint Board

The scenario... It is 8:45 am on Monday . The crew is all set with its morning assignments and you are trying to clear some of the mounds of paperwork off your desk in order to get ready for your 10:00 a.m. meeting with your green chairman, Mr. Jones. After all, it is an important meeting, your first chance to sell him on the \$900,000 irrigation system rebuild.

"What was that? Mr. Jones is here? Here, now?" "Oh gosh that's right, it was 9:00 a.m. not 10:00 a.m." Panic sets in, your desk has piles of paperwork on it, "Where can I show him the blueprints?"

Sound familiar, or at least possible? Well, there is an answer. One of my previous employers, Marsh Benson, golf course superintendent at Augusta National, is an extremely organized individual and this "Super Tip" is an idea that I adapted from him. The idea is a blueprint board that folds down off the wall and can be used for displaying prints or working on them.

The blueprint board is attached to the wall so it takes up no extra space. It can be completed for less than \$50 and in a few short hours. The blueprint board attached to the wall in my office is the handiwork of my shop and equipment manager, Kim Ellis.

### Measurements/Specifications;

- \* The blueprint board itself is a 41 by 37-inch piece of "cabinet grade" plywood that is 1/2 inch thick.
- \* The board that it is hinged to, that is attached to the wall, is 41 by 3.5 inches (a 1x4)
- \* The legs that are attached with hinges to the back of the board measure 13.5-inch 1x4s. The length of the legs can vary dependent upon the height of the desk or table that the board will fold down on to.
- \* The hinges that attach the legs to the board, as well as the blueprint board to the support board are all 3 by 2 inches.
- \* At the top of the board (or bottom if the board is in use) is a 1-inch piece of molding mounted to the blueprint board in order to keep the plans from sliding off when in use.
- \* To secure the blueprint board to the wall when it is not in use, a small piece of 1-inch wood is mounted to the wall and a sliding barrel bolt is screwed into the piece of wood.
- \*Once all of the boards have been cut, sanded and stained, if so desired, it is ready to be mounted. We feel the easiest way to install the blueprint board is to leave the large, "fold down" piece unattached to the board that is secured to the wall. After a location is chosen above a desk, filing cabinet or similar item you are ready to proceed.
- \*With a level and measuring tape, place the 41 by 3.5-inch support board to the correct place on the wall. Attach this board with screws directly into the studs or into hollow wall anchors.
- \*After the board is secured, the plywood can be attached to it with the hinges. It would be best to have two people perform this task.
- \*Finally, the small board that you will mount the barrel bolt on to can be secured to the wall above the blueprint board.

The blueprint board is an inexpensive, unobtrusive tool that can assist the golf course superintendent in maintaining an organized professional looking office. Money is not a limiting factor with this tool so all levels of budgets can benefit. Good luck, and by the way if the Mr. Jones scenario has ever happened to you, you may want to also work on your appointment organizational skills!

*Darren J. Davis*  
Golf Course Superintendent  
Olde Florida Golf Club



The blueprint board folded up flat against wall in storage position.



The blueprint board extended down in use. Photo by Darren Davis.



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# Course Design is a Team Effort!



*These bunker faces at the Hunter's Ridge G.C. in Marion, Ind. have been designed to be maintenance friendly and can be maintained efficiently with a riding mower. Photo courtesy of Bob Lohman's Golf Designs/Golf Creations, Inc.*

## **Architect, Superintendent Can Work Together to Create Golf Courses Friendly to Maintenance**

BY BOB LOHMANN

*President, American Society of Golf  
Course Architects*

**I** recently met with a golf course superintendent, clearly frustrated after we had walked his course. He was concerned about the long-term maintenance challenges that had developed from excessively sloped bunkers and poorly sized tees.

The superintendent said that the

course was an excellent aesthetic design, but it demanded a level of maintenance that could not be met with his budget. He asked, "Could this have been avoided?"

"Certainly," I told him, explaining "there is nothing more important than working with the golf course architect to ensure a layout that compliments maintenance capabilities and players' skills."

Granted, it's difficult to find the balance between aesthetic excellence and easy maintenance for a golf course — but golf course superintendents and architects should work together to formulate a design that best meets the needs of a given project.

### **Build A Partnership**

There are many issues to consider. For new or existing courses, the first and most important step to assure a golf course that will thrive for generations is for our professions to continue to work together. The superintendent and architect should discuss the maintenance capabilities, types of players and vision for the course at hand. Architects work within the maintenance guidelines and support superintendents with a thorough understanding of the maintenance implications of a design.

### **Maintenance Factors**

The superintendent and architect should detail a plan together to meet the