

How to get the most out of the GCSAA conference and show

By RAY DAVIES

There are 63 things on the "to-do" list and only sufficient resources to accomplish a handful today. Which five or six tasks are most important? What is to be done about the man items on the list that have been there all year, or could it be - many years? Do you accept the problems as beyond the budgets reach, or do you continue to wage war on them until a solution is found?

The value a superintendent brings to the operation of a golf course maintenance operation is directly proportional to the quality of his decision-making skills. Some may accept this perspective at first glance as too simple. But, in its simplicity lies a truth that should motivate you to action prior to getting on the plane for Anaheim the first week in February.

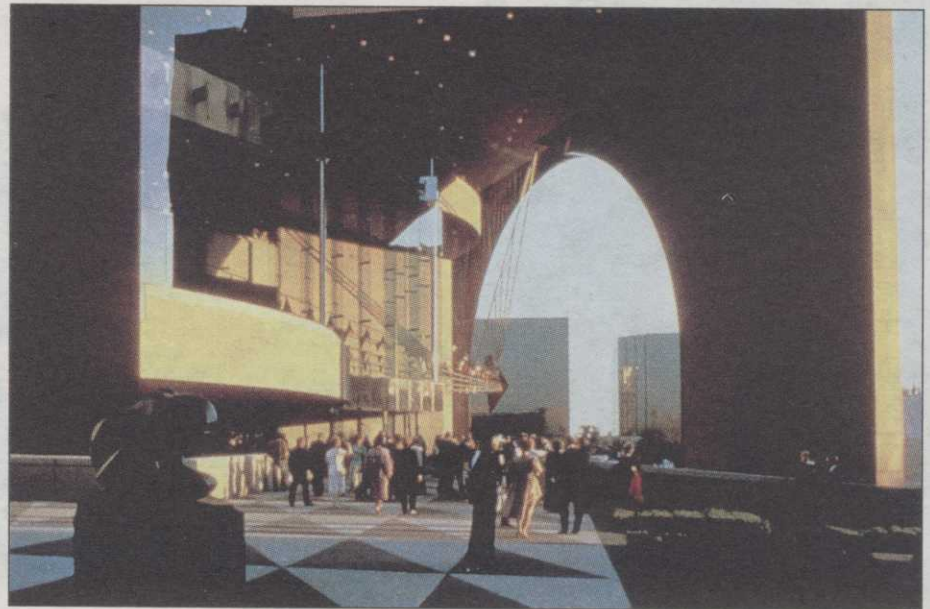
Each day we make many decisions regarding the utilization of assets commit-

Ray Davies is regional superintendent for CourseCo, a course management company

ted by our boards, committees, or owners to the maintenance of the major profit-producing asset of the business. Much of our decision making is based on the implementation of the routine maintenance plans for course set-up and mowing. But it's the highly leveraged activity of utilizing discretionary labor is where we solve the nagging problems faced by the golf course. This is where we make our reputations as superintendents who dramatically improve our courses.

The GCSAA conference and show presents many opportunities to improve the quality of your decisions. The quality of our decisions is directly correlated to the quality of the information we have at our disposal prior to making the decision. We will solve more problems and implement more effective programs by attending the conference and show with a plan to obtain the information we need to make effective decisions.

1. Determine what information you need.



The Orange County Performing Arts Center is just one of the many attractions in Anaheim.

2. Make a plan to meet with the people best able to provide the information.
3. Follow the plan.

I always make a list of all the information needed that could come from the conference, the show or the participants. It helps to put down all the issues you are faced with in your current position. This

calls for an assessment of your course. I try to look at the course from a number of perspectives - the more the better.

1. The membership's, or golfer's.
2. The owner's or upper management's.
3. The golf professional's.
4. The club manager's.

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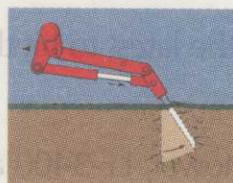
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Getting the most

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5. The worker's.
6. A woman's.
7. My own.

I also try to think about seasons. Many of the issues that we are working to improve are affected by the seasons.

Good questions are the key to creating this list. Here are a few of the questions I ask myself

prior to attending the conference each year:

What issues do the golfers want addressed for the next season?

It is important to be working on solving the problems that our customers feel are most important, as well as the ones we know are important. Now comes the hard part. Write them down.

What issues have been on the back burner because of a lack of resources?

The major reason a fresh eye brings solutions to problems that have plagued a course for many years is quite simple. Years have passed since anyone has attempted to solve an accepted problem. During this time the profession has developed solutions that have gone unapplied at the particular course. The fresh eye simply applies current knowledge to the old problem.

What problems do I have that

if remedied would have the biggest payoff to the membership?

The mind of the superintendent needs to be set upon the problems that will bring the most improvement. A critical decision is in selecting the most important problems to solve.

What needs do I have related to irrigation?

Changes in this area are fast and furious. It is usually a rich area for new information on old problems.

What needs do I have related to equipment?

This is the primary attraction at the show. What new machine is available that will cut labor costs or improve performance over my current beast.

What labor needs do I have?

It doesn't matter what the issues are: training, retention, seasonal workers, a mechanic, or regulatory compliance. This is an area that is getting more attention from superintendents and the market. It may not be as easy to access as finding a new fairway mower, but information on these topics are becoming more plentiful each year.

What materials that I use are not producing the results I require?

This includes sand topdressing, fertilizers, pesticides, or any other material that affects the quality of the golfing experience we provide.

This process generates the list of questions to be discussed at the conference and show. With a little thought you will be able to bring with you a list of informational goals that will guide your activities, or at least influence your conversations.

I usually take a notebook with me to the conference and write one question at the top of each page. Each night I review the notebook to see what I learned that day. It also makes me aware of opportunities to gain the information I require.

How you perceive the conference will have a direct effect on how productive the experience will be. If you plan carefully and work the event, you will find plenty of time to meet with old friends, make new ones, and improve your decision-making by providing yourself with the informational resources.

Grund introduces Snap-In

Grund Guide will introduce its new Snap-In Marker, which is compatible to the Toro 730, 750, 760, and 780 series sprinkler head covers. Simply remove the existing snap-in and insert the Grund Guide adaptable part. For more information, contact Grund at 800-971-7233.

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Otterbine introduces Giant Fountain

Otterbine Barebo Inc., a manufacturer of pond and lake aeration systems and fountains, will announce its new giant fountain series. Pricing, availability and specifications for this spectacular fountain will be made available beginning in the year 1998. For additional information on the Giant Fountain series contact 1-800-AER8TER.

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