

Relocating GCSAA

GCSAA has debated the relocation of its headquarters from Lawrence, Kan., since the late 1970s. Talk to executives who have faced the challenge and responsibility of relocating any organization's headquarters, as I have, and you will be told that this is one of the more harrowing tasks within the world of business management.

GCSAA is once more considering relocating, and having learned from the past, the present association leadership is patiently putting a workable plan in place for membership consideration.

The keys are the plan and communication. Relocation initiatives do not fail because of weak planning. Rather, they fail to adequately communicate solid planning throughout the organization.

This has been the case in past GCSAA relocation efforts. With today's Internet technology we can expect that no relocation vote will be taken unless and until the membership has been fully informed.

GCSAA has planned well in the past when looking to relocate its headquarters. For example, it has identified the following 10 criteria to evaluate candidate cities/regions against:

1. Serving as a major tourist attraction to help to draw GCSAA members and golf community families year-round.
2. Being located at a natural intercept point within a busy city-to-city corridor.
3. Serving as a major hub airport.
4. Qualifying to host the GCSAA trade show on a regular basis.
5. Able to attract and hold the highest caliber of career-minded employees.
6. Offering a reasonable cost of living for the association and its staff.
7. Having a comfortable year-round climate for golfing and other recreation.
8. Serving as a vacation "winter haven" or a retirement community opportunity for members.
9. Allowing GCSAA to affiliate with an established educational institution.
10. Allowing GCSAA to affiliate with a respected 18-hole regulation golf course.

When the above criteria have been applied to the leading candidate cities across the country, both in the early 1980s, and again recently, the following consistent matrix results were produced: Orlando had a 95% criteria compliance; San Diego 81%; San Francisco 65%; Los Angeles 62%; Washington, D.C. 59%; Dallas 59%; Jack-

sonville 59%; Denver 51%; Chicago 51%; Phoenix 49%; and Lawrence 30%.

Orlando is the most effective target city for relocation. Conversely, remaining in Lawrence would be a serious mistake because this location has substantively stymied the growth of GCSAA and the profession for more than 30 years.

The present GCSAA leadership is aware of these earlier findings as it continues to look into the relocation issue today. Will this leadership once again confirm Orlando as the primary target city? Only time will tell. Where ever this decision takes GCSAA, it can fairly be assumed that the board of directors will be on top of it.

What does relocation matter to the average GCSAA member or potential member?

A look at the advantages of Orlando shows the city's potential to act as a powerful magnet capable of attracting high volumes of members and golf industry officials to GCSAA headquarters on an annual basis. For example, the tri-annual appearance of the GCSAA trade show in Orlando would be expected to bring up to 30 percent of the association membership to the city. The presence of Disney World also would attract many hundreds of GCSAA member families to the city annually. Finally, the city's prime location within the busy Boston-to-Miami corridor would allow thousands of East Coast private club and public golf course officials to comfortably stop by Orlando during business or family vacation trips. Many others from across the country will fly directly to Orlando for the sole purpose of participating in GCSAA headquarters programming.

There is a further advantage. The collective potential impact of this volume of GCSAA members and golf industry people converging on Orlando each year creates a significant educational opportunity that the golf industry has not seen before and may never realize otherwise.

The inherent problem with past and present GCSAA educational programming is that it is one-dimensional; i.e., solid within the agronomic and turf management fields, but virtually vacant relative to member career planning; establishing professional communications and management standards for chapters; and briefing green committee members and public golf course officials regarding the operational world of the golf course superintendent.

GCSAA relocating to Orlando would

address this problem by serving as a springboard to launch much needed multi-day certification and workshop level programming at the association's headquarters, leading to Internet and formal college curricula. A relocated GCSAA Learning Center would foster greater member and industry-wide participation in educational programming that would include:

- A workshop for private club green committee members (with a parallel workshop for public golf course officials) that would include presentations on job descriptions for a green committee chairman and for the golf course superintendent; maintenance program budgeting; equipment rotation/scheduling; legal and safety issues; golf course renovation planning; and an introductory agronomic course to educate lay committee members so that they would be better able to support the work of the golf course superintendent.

- A workshop to upgrade the management and public relations capabilities of the more than 100 chapters across the country. This is needed because GCSAA chapters will always be the frontline interface between the game's many players, officials and institutions that will continue to predominantly define the image of the golf course superintendent profession.

This program would focus on a job description for and the methodology for engaging and funding a chapter executive director, and counseling newsletter editors to ensure that more vital, diversified and entertaining publications will be produced and circulated within their respective local golf communities.

- A workshop to expand upon the career planning seminars recently presented at the San Diego conference.

Relocating GCSAA headquarters to Orlando would afford it a unique opportunity to both serve its members more effectively and to develop an industry-impacting educational program that would generate immense pride within the profession. An Orlando headquarters would allow GCSAA to strengthen its leadership position within the industry and create the educational capital of golf. The day would soon come where no self-respecting green committee chairman would accept his/her assignment without first having participated in a GCSAA workshop on the subject.

Orlando is a GCSAA party waiting to happen. GCN



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