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UP FOR THE CHALLENGE?

As I left the maintenance facility to go home one day, my dog and a member's dog that I was watching for two weeks ran toward a nearby road. The dogs never looked back when I called their names because they were in pursuit of a squirrel. I wasn't as worried about them getting into harm's way as I was disgruntled because they ignored me. As I approached the dogs, I noticed a concerned man who loaded the dogs into his van. I was unable to get his attention before he drove off with them. I quickly caught up with him a few blocks away. Ironically, he was an employee of the member and already had paged him to inform him of his "lost dog." After a quick phone call back to the now-stressed member, I reassured him his dog and mine were fine and in good hands. I felt foolish, but there wasn't much I could do. I could have tied up the dogs, but they had never run off before, so that didn't seem necessary.

I tell this story because it's a close analogy of the different challenges assistant superintendents face throughout their early years in the profession. The challenge isn't well-trained dogs not listening to commands, but career challenges you've trained yourself well for yet your hands are tied still.

A unique challenge many assistants face is the abundant career advice they receive. Knowing exactly how to filter and customize this advice to fit your situation while providing the best potential outcome can be difficult. Being able to implement all the career advice you ever received undoubtedly would put you at the top of any search committee's list of candidates. However, cost and time constraints often eliminate important issues. Realistically, the more feasible advice will be put into action by many, but it's the advice requiring more money, time and effort that will set others apart.

For example, it's been recommended for many years to create a

personal/professional Web site to enhance your accomplishments. This would allow a search committee to understand your achievements and dedication to work in greater detail. It's an expansion of a resume and a great opportunity to cover areas not discussed in an interview.

Of course nothing is free. If you balk at the price of creating a Web site, as many do, chances are you need to shop more. If price still is a concern after significant shopping, refrain from buying a new television, for example. We all love toys, but chances are the Web site will pay for itself before the television does, or convince yourself the advice requiring more effort and less money is worth accomplishing when ample funds aren't available. This might include networking at local association meetings, writing a thank you note or volunteering. Once you're comfortable with that, advice requiring some money might be the next step. Keep in mind this is



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a small investment with high potential for long-term gains.

In addition to being overwhelmed by career advice, all assistants with any career goals seem to face one more big challenge. Patience is the challenge of being late in your career as an assistant and having to wait for the job (a) you've always wanted and/or (b) the job you've prepared yourself for for years. In your mind, the stage is set. You have an idea of what style and caliber golf course at which you want to begin your career as a superintendent. You've used all the career advice previously mentioned to the best of your ability and have recaptured your many accomplishments on your resume. These might include items such as the courses at which you've been employed, being an active part of your local association, preparing a course for a tournament, continuing education and, most of all, maintaining the desire and drive to be a great superintendent.

However, one thing lacks – the market for superintendent positions is at its tightest when you're looking for a change.

You quickly realize the drag of the job market after a month or two, or even a year of having local and national Web sites burned onto your computer screen while searching for jobs. Perhaps the first few interviews are for practice. Those interviews will only make you better. We've all heard the words of wisdom "great things come to those who wait," but perhaps this is only a phrase of comfort as we do our best to maintain our patience.

Implementing others' advice and being patient with your career are only two challenges among a number of others assistants face throughout their careers. Although challenges might range from experience levels to family matters, the two challenges previously mentioned are common ones every assistant experiences. Taking on any number of challenges that cross your path will only make you a better person. You never know, it might be just what the search committee is looking for. Good luck! **GC**