

# PERCEPTION VS. REALITY

A few weeks ago, I was talking to a few superintendents about the official postshow numbers released by the organizers of the Golf Industry Show. Before, during and after the show, there was incessant talk about show numbers, specifically the number of attendees, suppliers, booth space and qualified buyers. That last one struck a chord with one superintendent because he didn't believe there were 7,012 qualified buyers at the show. He suggested the host associations were trying to paint a prettier picture than what really happened in New Orleans. (An aside: No matter what picture of Bourbon Street you paint, it's not going to be pretty.)

Whether there were 7,000 qualified buyers or not, too many people get hung up on the GIS-related numbers. The big show's numbers shouldn't be used to define the industry's performance because:

- The GIS, as well as all regional and local trade shows and conferences throughout the country, should be looked at as a whole for a more well-rounded perspective.

- There always will be people who don't go to the show each year for one reason or another. It's unrealistic to think show attendance is going to increase significantly year after year.

- Few qualified buyers actually purchase products at the show.

- Total revenue from all the golf-industry-related business' (manufacturers, distributors, service providers, architects, consultants, builders, etc.) is a more accurate gauge.

- The Internet, where one can access plenty of product information and research, has reduced the need to attend trade shows.

That said, I'm not suggesting the industry isn't in the doldrums right now. It's just that much more than the GIS needs to be considered when gauging the state of the industry.

Another superintendent said the GCSAA has perpetuated the perception the GIS is a significant industry metric, and perception is reality in the marketplace. Well, if perception is reality, the industry is in deep trouble because people should be making decisions based on reality, not perception. There's a difference between the two, and the difference can be considerable depending on the situation.

To start, perception is defined as a result of attaining awareness or understanding, or to become aware of through the senses. Reality is defined as the quality or state of being real, or the totality of real things and events.

There's an important distinction between the two. Here's an example: I might perceive someone in the office as one who doesn't work hard based on what I see of that person. That's my perception. However, reality could be different. That person might be an exceptionally hard worker; but, because I don't work closely enough with that person or see him as often as other coworkers, I don't see the whole picture, or the reality of his job.

Smoke and mirrors can be part of perception.

They're not a part of reality, unless you're not healthy mentally.

What are your perceptions compared to realities? How many of them are one in the same? How many are different, and to what degree? I'm sure you've had perceptions of coworkers, companies, golf courses, etc., that turned out to be incorrect after learning more about that person, business or facility. There's nothing wrong with having perceptions just as long as you understand those perceptions might not be reality based on your

knowledge of the subject, which might be incomplete or lacking. In other words, you don't know the whole story.

Now, think about the perceptions of your coworkers, management, maintenance operation and golf facility. Have you heard perceptions about yourself or others in the organization that aren't accurate? Have you done anything to change that? Did you find out what the perceptions were based on?

If you're operating in a business environment where perception is reality, work to change that as quickly as possible. Because decisions made based on perception are foolish ones sometimes, and decisions made based on reality are intelligent ones all the time, make sure the people in your organization know the difference. It's in reality, not perception, where you'll find the truth, which, in turn, is a solid basis for decision-making. GCI



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