



WHAT MAKES AN IRRIGATION CONSULTANT TICK?

On the perfect project, irrigation consultants are brought in at inception to assess overall project logistics, site characteristics, water resources, system installation and operation budgets. With that data, they engineer a system to best accommodate the architect's design, the club's budget and the superintendent's ability to sustain healthy turf. And they're there for the long haul, too. Irrigation consultants don't just submit irrigation plans and walk from the job – they oversee product and system installation and oftentimes operation. They're at the meetings, in the office and on the job site.

SERIOUS WATER PROFESSIONALS

Irrigation is an important component to every facility, but it tends to take on a different meaning to golf projects from region to region. As water priorities shift, the further west one goes the greater there is an appreciation for irrigation. Naturally, irrigation consultants can provide more impact for industry leaders who respect irrigation as a profession and not merely as an afterthought.

Bringing in an irrigation consultant early to a golf course project has long-term benefits and implications. Alternate water sources can be explored – such as nearby surface water, harvested water and reclaimed water. Consultants also provide water-use analyses reports regarding the availability of potable or reclaimed water, reservoir storage capabilities and water and power demands. Likewise, comparing the capital investments required for alternate sources versus potable water is a valuable service.

Bringing in a consultant early can produce a refined, adequate budget for the project's scope and provide a realistic timeline for securing irrigation design and construction docu-

ments. While irrigation consultants don't expect direct input on a course design, often they can offer cost or time-saving suggestions, or identify impediments in the overall success of a golf course enterprise.

STRENGTH IN INDEPENDENCE

There are decades-old conflicts between irrigation distributors and consultants, although many consultants got their start providing in-house designs for suppliers. Distributors are limited in the brands of products they

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can specify, so in many instances the optimal product for a specific project is not designed into the plans. This results in wasted resources, system wear and tear, and/or system failures.

There tends to be stiff price competition between distributors, which leads to stretched in-house designs to lower costs, which dramatically impacts long-term performance and durability. However, irrigation distributors are realizing that when an irrigation consultant is involved in the project, more product is being specified to ensure system performance and longevity and fewer call-backs result.

Irrigation contractors, the folks responsible for putting the irrigation design in the ground, interact the closest with an irrigation consultant. Irrigation consultants want contrac-

tors with experience in the type of project being installed. A landscape project isn't the same as a sports field project which isn't the same as a golf course project. Consultants understand the value of experience that mirrors the scope and complexity of the job at hand.

Irrigation contractors must make changes in the field at installation, and shuck shortcuts that save time but affect performance. There should be minimal deviation from the construction documents, sticking to the specified materials in the design and construction documents.

Irrigation contractors also need to know how to handle the commercial construction process, including requests for information, change orders, as-builts and other procedures and documents, and their associated costs.

Most consultants want to attend pre-construction meetings and need access to the site during installation. They do a lot of field work, including numerous site visits during construction. Irrigation consultants have an obligation to the client from beginning to end. That's what makes a consultant so valuable to a project.

TICK-TOCK

All parties win when there's an irrigation consultant involved throughout the design and construction processes. Owners and architects have finished projects that look as good in the field as in their minds. Irrigation suppliers get more of their product on the site with fewer problems. Contractors install better systems that they won't have to constantly service or warranty. And superintendents will have healthy turf and plant material with minimal replacements.

And, most importantly, the client will have a durable, efficient irrigation product with few complications. **GCI**