

HOW ARE YOU TRENDING?

GCI blows the lid off social media.

Our experts offer a crash course to get it to work for you.



by John Torsiello

Social media trending and turf

Is adopting a social media strategy right for you and your turf ops? GCI explores the Pros and Cons.



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— David Marach
NorthBrook Country Club

“Twitter is good for those quick little updates but the blog is great to show pictures and videos and expound on them.”

— Tim Johansen,
Palmer Hills Golf Club

A brave new world

Social media compliments a professional approach to golf course maintenance.

These days, if you don't stay at least even with the technology curve you'll find yourself swimming against the tide in no time.

Golf course superintendents across the country are turning to social media for a plethora of reasons, including to get the word out about course conditions, communicate with staff, members and the general public, network with others in the industry and research.

Chuck Connolly, superintendent at Greenville Country Club in Greenville, S.C., uses a variety of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and My Blog, although he rarely uses Facebook because he believes it shares too much personal information.

“I use LinkedIn and maintain an up-to-date profile,” Connolly says. “LinkedIn is more professional and less personal, so I use it more. Twitter is used periodically to update course conditions to membership.”

Connolly blogs bi-weekly to reach out to members. He also finds social media a tool to glean industry information.

Ryan Moore, superintendent at Forest Lake Country Club in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., is hooked on blogging. He runs the maintenance blog at <http://flccgreens.blogspot.com> and uses it as a communication tool for membership, to educate and make them aware of things that are happening on the golf course. He's also recently joined LinkedIn.

“The blog is the best communication tool I have seen,” he says. “I am able to convey the message I would like to communicate, when I want and how I would like it to be presented. I have the ability to deliver my message to the entire membership instead of having to relay the message multiple times and have others change the context as they pass the message on to others. It also serves as an archive for projects and different changes that have

happened to the golf course.”

The blog was instituted last winter to communicate with members instead of traditional posted messages and fliers.

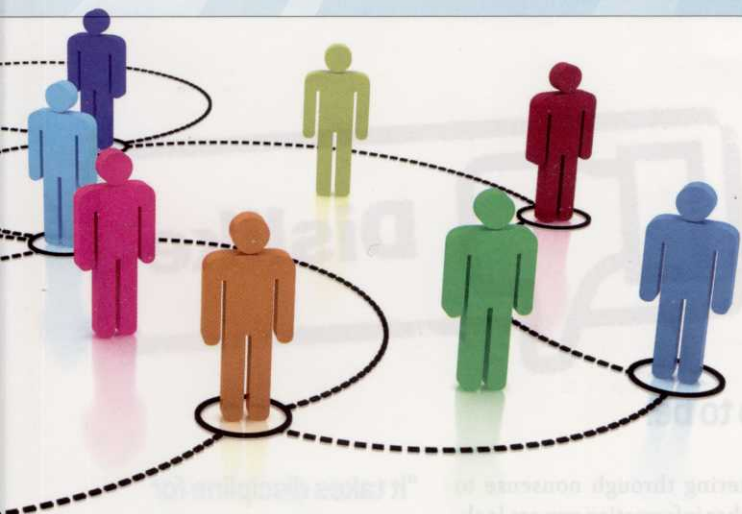
Moore says to keep blogs short and to the point.

“Exercise the message you would like to convey,” Moore says. “I have seen many different ways to communicate through a blog that are effective. But I believe short and to the point, with pictures to support, is the best approach. I find keeping the message positive and avoiding politics helps.”

David Marach, superintendent at NorthBrook Country Club in Luxemburg, Wis., uses Facebook to a large degree. It helps explain with pictures why they are doing what they are doing or what needs to be done in the future.

“It also keeps you in touch with the members through the off-season with what is going on in the Grounds and Greens department — reel grinding, tree maintenance, ice or snow issues,”





4 reasons your members like social media

Many superintendents cite the reasons for adopting social media is to use it as a communications tool for club members or regular players at their course. However, there are some other reasons why your course's players appreciate social media.

1

Allows them to make a connection to be engaged and immersed with the course.

2

Enables them to share opinions about the course.

3

Allows quick and easy comparison of what's happening at other facilities and clubs in the area.

4

Validates course conditions and decisions that may impact play.

— Adapted from 2011 research by advertising agency Leo Burnett Worldwide

Social media and the bottom line

Brian Benedict believes a solid social media strategy can help the bottom line.

"Through social media, I am able to look inside other facilities like ours and see the problems they face and how they solve them, as well as seeing how other guys are cutting back to try and save money," he says.

Benedict, superintendent at Seawane Golf Club in Hewlett Harbor, N.Y., is very active with social media, using a public page on Facebook to post pictures when he and his staff undertake bunker restoration or other capital projects. He also sends bi-weekly emails to the membership through the club website to update members on projects and cultural processes to the golf course. He says the mass email has been welcomed by the members because it makes them feel more involved and able to schedule visits with guests around course work.

"The biggest benefit is the communication factor," Benedict says. "Members feel more involved and actually ask questions and genuinely want to know and understand why we perform the processes that we do. I also think that it gives you more credibility because members actually know that you have a plan."

"It helps us do our job better because it gives the members ownership," he adds. "When they know what you're doing there is no second-guessing because everyone is on board with the program. And it can help the bottom line getting projects approved by members due to communication and the effect that it has on their understanding the necessity of the desired project."

When used judiciously and with a specific golf course-oriented focus, social media can be a valuable tool superintendents have at their disposal to "interface" with other superintendents, staff and members instantaneously.

he says. "Social media also helps address some of the issues you hear about through the grapevine quickly. I started last year and I am slowly getting other employees of my department involved since we are usually leaving when most golfers are coming out to play."

Marach is hoping to get onto Twitter soon, as it provides "instant information" to members.

"It really helps here in the spring or after a large rain event to explain why we are not able to open or why we are delayed," he adds.

Marach is convinced using social media has a positive effect on a club's bottom line. "You might have followers that have heard of your golf course but never been there," he says. "You can encourage them to golf or dine because they might be a little more curious. You also might have followers that are not golfers and may become interested in golf. Social media just gives your company and your department more exposure to the public."

Tim Johansen, superintendent at Palmer Hills Golf Club in Bettendorf, Iowa, uses several social media sites, such as Facebook, but he is "trending" more toward Twitter. He also relies on a blog to get the word out about what he

and his staff are doing, and course conditions. But the results have been mixed.

"After seeing an upswing in Twitter use over the winter, I am going to start an account specifically for the golf course and tie it into my blog. Twitter is good for those quick little updates but the blog is great to show pictures and videos and expound on them. I started the blog when I took over as superintendent 18 months ago, thinking that I would be adding something to it every day. We have had a lot of changes and projects that have taken place in the last year and another very busy year ahead. But I am not so sure that golfers at the local muni, as a rule, care about what really goes on on a daily basis."

He's hoping to change that through increased use of social media and making customers aware of the information.

"I have had a lot of viewers from all over but getting them to sign on as a (Facebook) friend is not as easy as it sounds. I really wish that members and customers of golf courses everywhere would look at what is being put out there for them to read. I know it would help them understand better why we do the things we do."

Oh, the horror...

Social media might not be all it's all cracked up to be.

By now you've heard the horror stories about improper use of social media.

John Ausen, superintendent at Hyperion Field Club in Johnston, Iowa, warns, "It's amazing what people will put on social media not realizing that anyone can view it. Don't say anything that you don't want your superior to see."

Sound words of advice.

David Smith, superintendent at Abbey Springs Golf Club in Fontana, Wis., says there is a temptation to play to a specific audience, which may water down the message.

"It takes discipline for me to limit my Twitter account to course-related information because I really have lots of opinions about all kinds of current events and matters not related to the golf course," Smith says. "Using this type of communication for those areas of discussions could be perilous for your career. You must remember your audience. When starting a Twitter account, other superintendents quickly find you and become part of your audience.

"There can be a temptation to play to the superintendent audience," Smith adds. "I feel that there is the potential for problems if you start to Tweet for your superintendent audience. Giving the type of details regarding daily (golf course maintenance practices) may expose you to criticism by members."

Ralph Kepple, superintendent at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta, Ga., says with Facebook it is easy to get drawn into more social/friendly uses than for business.

"It takes a lot of focus to keep from doing that," Kepple says. "With LinkedIn, as you build-up contacts, you get more and more requests to connect. Sometimes it becomes almost overwhelming how many requests you may receive, and you start to question if it is worth staying involved in LinkedIn. I know of at least one superintendent who recently closed his profile because of how much time it was taking to accept/reject requests to connect."

He advises superintendent to fully think through what they post on a social media site. "Once it is out there you cannot retract it," he says. "Also be careful that you don't become 'addicted' to the social media outlets. Some people end up spending far too much time on social media that could be better spent on other phases of their job or with their family."

Sean Flynn, superintendent at Great River Golf Club in Milford, Conn., is a proponent of blogging as a way to get information out. But, he says, technology can take you only so far in the industry.

"I started using Facebook about three years ago," Flynn says. "I find it somewhat useful. However, to have it help the business of a golf course superintendent you need to invest time

filtering through nonsense to gather information you are looking for. I have found Facebook to be more personal than business-related. Facebook forces us to be more 'in touch' with people we are usually not in contact with, and conversely out of touch with people we are close to."

To be successful at a blog you need to be constantly updating and informing. "Although communication is the most important role in our success as superintendents, blogs take time," he adds.

Flynn prefers to hold informational sessions with members on the first tee on Saturday mornings. It is much more personal, he adds, and gives members the opportunity to ask questions face to face. "Members would rather talk to us about issues or problems on the golf course directly, not have to read them on a blog," he says.

While useful, social media hasn't made a dramatic pact on the way Flynn does his job.

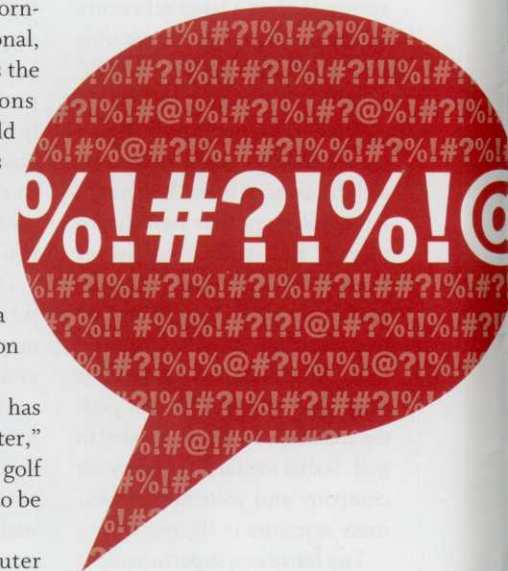
"Social media, as of now, has not helped me do my job better," he says. "We must be on the golf course as much as possible to be successful.

"Sitting behind a computer does not make us better superintendents," Flynn adds. "Continuing education, trade publications, research and networking (to a degree) make us better superintendents." **GCI**



"It takes discipline for me to limit my Twitter account to course-related information because I really have lots of opinions about all kinds of current events and matters not related to the golf course."

— David Smith,
Abbey Springs Golf Club



The Agenda

We ask GCI's 2012 Social Media Award recipients to provide some clarity on whether it's personal, professional or both.

What makes for a successful social media strategy?

Stay connected



Darren Davis

The Kaminski Award for Outstanding Social Media Leadership
Superintendent
Olde Florida Golf Club
Naples, Fla.

Information center



Chris Tritabaugh

Best of the Blogs
Superintendent
Northland Country Club
Duluth, Minn.

“Social networking is not a fad; it’s a way of communicating that’s here to stay. I feel I’m embracing technology that younger generations have grown up with and accepted as a normal and customary way to communicate. It’s the way of the future, and I certainly want to be ahead of that curve.

“One of the things I love about our industry is that even though we compete for members and play, as superintendents, we’re always there to help each other. One thing I feel that has made me more successful in life than I would have been is my network of friends. I’ve worked for 20 years to develop that network and communicate with it in many ways, and social media has allowed me to expand my network not only to the people already in it but people I haven’t met personally yet. I’ve embraced all the social media outlets out there, and each has a different group with different personalities and I enjoy them all.

“I have a bad habit of my living my life through my work, so my social networking is geared more toward my peers: superintendents and turfgrass professionals. But I do show a little of my personal side through social networking, too. Some of our members have embraced social media, in particular “liking” my old Florida Facebook page, so they see my postings and it’s a great to communicate with them, too.

“In many industries, being successful is often a function of who you know and how connected you are. I pride myself on that. Having met so many people by getting out there at chapter meetings or being online certainly is good. It’s a good thing when people are talking about you, and it never hurts to be seen and visible.”

“The main goal of my blog is to provide a source of information for the members, and so I write it with them in mind. But at the same time, I think it has the secondary purpose of making myself more visible within the industry. That wasn’t my original intent, but I would be lying if I said it wasn’t a huge advantage. But the primary purpose is to keep our membership up to date and educate them on what we’re doing.

“We’ve done some different things in my five years at the golf course, and, as a result of the blog, they were more well-received and well-understood by our membership and therefore able to be implemented. For example, we really made a push to increase bentgrass populations two years ago, and I think we got a little too aggressive. As a result, we had some dead grass on the greens. I was very forward in telling the members what was happening via my blog and posting pictures. I told them we were trying to figure out the best way to do this because we knew we could provide them with a better product at a better price, but we might make some mistakes along the way. As a whole, members got it, and the blog helped them.

“I write my blog as if every single member is reading it every day. The reason is because I feel that we don’t have to have everybody reading it, but if a certain percentage are, it will help keep the rest of the membership updated and informed. If one out of the four people in a foursome is an avid or regular reader of my blog, then I feel it’s doing its job.

Even though my blog was intended for members, the majority of the audience reading it are my peers. So I do try to include stuff for them, but I try not to write over the heads of those who aren’t turf people.

“I’m kind of on the edge of that generation of people who sort of use their computer but it’s not their life. I immediately saw the benefit the blog could have and didn’t fear it whatsoever. More and more, I see people realizing the benefits and advantages it could have.”

TURF FARMS

Educational tool



Steve Cook, CGCS, MG
Best of the Blogs
Oakland Hills Country Club
Bloomfield Hills, Mich.

Entrepreneurship



Bill Brown, CGCS
Best of the Blogs
Hartefield National Golf Club
Avondale, Pa.

I started my blog specifically to reach more members, but since then it has morphed into more than that. It has become an education for me, too, because when I post something about agronomy, it actually causes me to pull out the books and investigate to make sure I get it right. So it takes me back to Agronomy 101 and reminds me of the basics.

“Most of what I post, however, is for the members: what’s happening on the golf course, whether it’s hot-button issues or that we’re aerifying or whatever. My goal was to reach 50 to 100 members, and right now I probably have 50, with 25 who are pretty religious about reading my blog on a regular basis. But the good news is that two of those 25 are board members, and one is a greens committee member, so when another member asks them something, they’ll say go look at the blog. Or they’ll be armed with the information to answer their questions.

“Overall, it has been a big positive for me. I don’t want to be 60 years old and have the members say this guy isn’t up to speed. I don’t want to be one of those people who is 52 and acts like they’re 70. This dawned on me several years ago when I was trying to get a hold of my greens committee chairman, who is 10 years younger than me, by phone. He wouldn’t return my calls or e-mails, but he started texting me. I thought, well, if my greens committee chairman prefers to communicate by text, then I should be doing it, too. When I started my job at Oak Hill, I probably went through 10 phone messages a day. Now, if I get 10 a week, that would be a lot. About 90 percent of my communication with members happens at either the first tee, the pro shop or the men’s grill, and that will always be the case. But my blog is just an add-on for those younger members who want that style of communication.

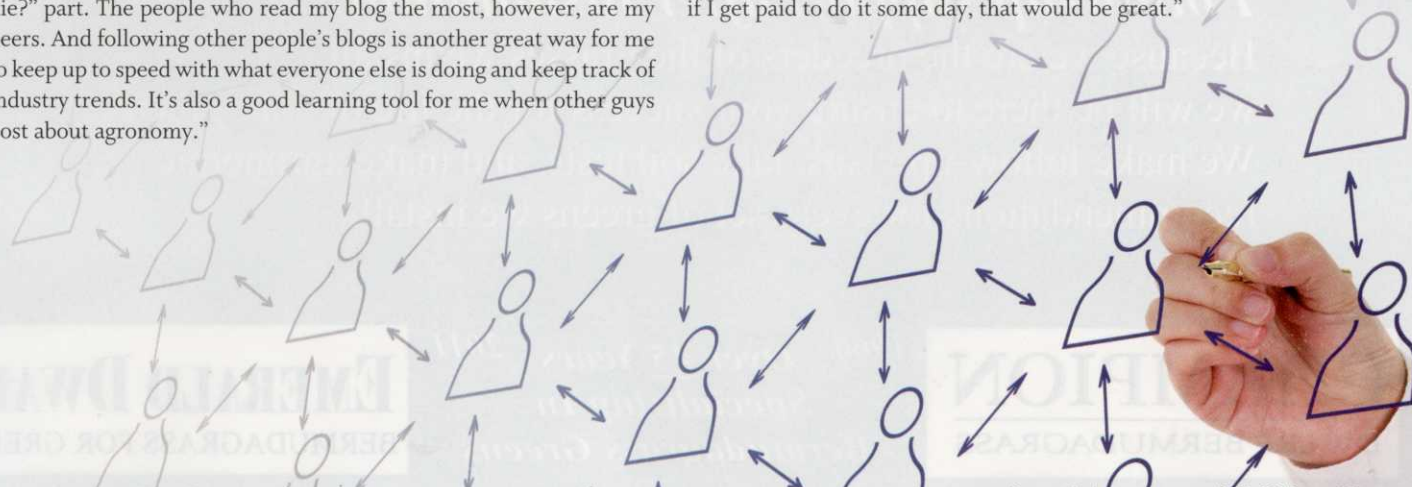
“The members really like my blog. Every once in awhile, someone will say, “I saw it on your blog!” But they really like the “Where’s Sadie?” part. The people who read my blog the most, however, are my peers. And following other people’s blogs is another great way for me to keep up to speed with what everyone else is doing and keep track of industry trends. It’s also a good learning tool for me when other guys post about agronomy.”

My goal with social media and technology is definitely a professional one. I started my own business, iTurf Apps, realizing there was a void in the industry and the interest in technology was overwhelming. I’ve always said if I could marry my love of turf with technology, I would have the perfect job. And I’m hoping it goes in that direction.

“I started my blog in 2009, recognizing that the industry needed a go-to technology person. So I wrote about how to best utilize technology in the industry, and so far a lot of the content has been about iPhones and iPads and using those apps and technologies on the golf course. People’s excitement really started picking up in 2011 right after GIS. I got slammed with people asking how do I set up my iPhone, so I started writing more about that in my blog. After GIS this year, it was even more overwhelming. I was up every night till 11:30 p.m. answering emails, Tweets and phone calls. The blog and technology consulting has almost become a second job at this point. I’ve become a conduit to help people build blogs and websites and integrate mobile technology into their businesses.

“The neatest part was that a superintendent from Oregon called me recently to ask how he could stream his son’s baseball games to his parents live. I set him up on how to do that, and I thought that was really awesome.

“iTurf apps has gone professional now, and I was recently picked to redo one of the GCSAA affiliate chapter’s websites, which will relaunch shortly. I have a whole list of services we’re going to start offering, and the best part of iTurf Apps is it doesn’t cost a lot. Technology doesn’t need to cost a fortune anymore. And now I’m branching into doing demos of Rainbird’s MI controller and ISS soil monitoring system. My ultimate goal is to make iTurf Apps the destination for people who want to know about Toro, Rainbird, Jacobsen or fertilizer technologies. And if I get paid to do it some day, that would be great.”





Just because it's fun

Greg Shaffer

Innovative Use of Twitter
Superintendent
Elcona Country Club
Briston, Ind.

“I started off using Twitter about a year and a half ago to interact with fellow superintendents and build a network where we could have quick-hit question and answer sessions on turf diseases, topdressing strategies and other topics. Then, throughout the course of the summer when everyone was struggling with the heat and humidity and everyone’s moods were down, it kind of took a little bit of a turn. I thought, hey, maybe we can not only use social media to build relationships but have a little fun by throwing some humor in there and putting some smiles on people’s faces. It evolved into a thing of its own with this group, and it seems to be getting larger and larger. Not only do we banter back and forth about what’s going on around the golf courses, but we beat the snot out of each other, too, just because it’s fun.

“In the winter, when nobody really has a lot going on, it’s geared more to the personal side. But then come spring it’s boom, like a light switch, everyone is asking, hey, is your course open? What applications are you putting out? What are you seeing? But still we manage to have fun with it. I’ve met a number of these guys I’ve built relationships with at GIS or at a seminar somewhere, and it feels like you already know them.

“Twitter has been an incredible tool to get to know people, 140 characters at a time and then also when you meet them face-to-face. A separate account I just opened up is geared strictly to members. It makes it that much easier to tell them, hey, we have a frost delay today so the first tee time will be 9 a.m., or we’re aerifying some tees or fertilizing roughs today. It serves as a daily update on stuff that’s happening that’s atypical from a normal day.”



The snowball effect

David Phipps

Innovative Use of Twitter
Superintendent
Stone Creek Golf Club
Oregon City, Ore.

“I started Tweeting as a way to promote my blog. I use Twitterfeed as a link to my blog post, so when I make a post it automatically goes out to the Twitter world. It’s a great way for people to see what I’m writing in my blog on a daily basis. I started writing my blog as a weekly report to my stakeholders. Originally, I was writing a Word document and sending it to them every week. Then, in 2009, I saw someone writing a blog and thought that would be a great way to do this weekly report. Now, every time I post it goes directly to their inboxes. If I didn’t do this, they wouldn’t know what I do on a daily basis. Then more and more people began reading my blog, and not just people from my golf course but from all over the country. I’m seeing that they’re really interested in what I’m writing, and they also enjoy seeing what kind of photos I’m putting on there weekly. It’s just a great way to share what I do.

“My pageviews and hits have greatly increased because of Twitter. My blog post also goes to Facebook now. I joined Facebook in 2007 as a way to find a friend of mine in Finland who had lived with me as an exchange student during my junior year in high school. Then I started getting friend requests from old high-school buddies and things snowballed. Now, it’s 50-50 work-related and friend-related. Social networking is not a full-time job, but once in awhile I’ll want to say something and I’ll put it out there if I think people can benefit from it.

“Social networking has also been a great way for me to network with my peers. This is a whole new arena that has come up in the last five years that we never had before, and now guys are talking about what they’re doing and sharing ideas. I’ve gotten to know guys that I might not have otherwise, and now I recognize them when I see them at shows. It’s kind of cool.”



360-degree strategy

Justin Ruiz, CGCS, MG

Excellence in Video
Indian Summer Golf & Country Club
Olympia, Wash.

“My biggest objective in using social media is to communicate with members. I feel like even on my blog, photos and video can say so much more than just a written explanation of what’s going on with the golf course. You can tell them that you’re doing a project on the No. 5 hole, but show them a photo and they understand it better. If you show them a video of the project actually happening or the piece of machinery actually doing the work, it explains it in more detail so people can understand what it looks like when we’re aerifying greens. When they actually see that machine going across the green and punching holes, it kind of gives them a third dimension.

“It seems like the videos and photos get commented on more than what I write. They catch members’ attention more. The way people are these days, it seems like they want instant information on the go rather than sitting down to read something. They can look at a photo and quickly get the gist of what’s going on out there.

“I also have the professional goal of networking. It seems like making relationships with other superintendents through blogging, Twitter and Google+ are valuable when dealing with certain issues on the golf course. You send out a Tweet on an issue and, nine times out of 10, someone Tweets back and says, hey, this is what I did to solve that issue. Plus, just seeing how other people do things by reading the blogs can really give you some great ideas. On one blog, I read how they put a wetting agent pellet inside a sprinkler head in an area that was dry, and it was just a unique idea I had never thought of. Hopefully, the things I have on my blog or my Tweets will also give someone a little nugget of information they can use.”



By Helen M. Stone



GREEN

Pigment Ad

SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION...

THE REAL DEAL

You roll over in the wee hours of the morning and clear the sleep from your mind. Your greens aerification project, the latest complaint from your club manager and your 10-year-old's note from the teacher pop into your head all at once. Then you roll over and check your smart phone at your bedside for Tweets.

Are you a social media addict? Hard to say. First of all, you need to define the term. According to David J. Linden in "The Compass of Pleasure: How Our Brains Make Fatty Foods, Orgasm, Exercise, Marijuana, Generosity, Vodka, Learning And Gambling Feel So Good," addiction can be defined as "persistent, compulsive use in the face of increasingly negative life consequences."

Linden also cautions that addiction can become a consequence when "liking" becomes "wanting." The more an addict wants something, the less he or she actually likes it, with more and more of the addictive substance required to recapture pleasure that is never quite attained. Our brains can actually become "rewired" so that our pleasure circuit responses are permanently changed.

Every time we receive an email, Tweet or the Facebook notification ding, we get a little jolt of dopamine, the chemical in our brain that stimulates the pleasure circuit. So we keep checking our phones, tablets and computers in hopes of getting that jolt.

"I've seen others so addicted that it's painful to watch," says Dustin Riley, superintendent at Oconomowoc Golf Club, Oconomowoc, Wisc. "I had the opportunity to witness a colleague uncontrollably check his cell phone (with a dead battery) every three or four minutes over the span of two hours, all the while forgetting each time his phone was dead. He was afraid to miss something." What he was probably missing was that dopamine jolt.

When used properly, social media can be a valuable communication tool. "I use Gmail, Yahoo Mail, text messaging and LinkedIn," notes Bill Prest, head golf course superintendent at Sweetbriar Golf Club in Avon Lake, Ohio. "Times are changing and social media is part of life now, like it or not. I believe that if you want to stay current in the world you'd better embrace it, or you will fall out of touch."

Keeping in touch is exactly what drives Brian Burke, superintendent at Sycamore Creek Country Club in Springboro, Ohio. This is Burke's first year on Twitter, which is the only social media he uses. "I



FAD OR FAD?

While the current edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders might not have an entry for Facebook Addiction Disorder (FAD), few would argue that social media can become a problematic time sucker for some people. But can you get addicted?

Some estimates say that nearly half of Facebook's membership (roughly 350 million people) log on at least once a day. Think you might have a social media problem? All Facebook (www.allfacebook.com), an unofficial Facebook resource, offers up this tongue-in-cheek quiz. Answer "Yes" to one of the following and your status updates are symptomatic of FAD, and not just a fad.

- Instead of jonesing for coffee first in the morning, do you instead start your day with your laptop – or your smartphone – in order to log on to Facebook?
- Do you find yourself fantasizing about composing that next great Facebook status update every time you and your partner are in the throes of romance?
- Has your child's preschool teacher issued you a final warning because of far too many late pickups which is attributed to your inability to tear away from a Facebook page?
- Do your Facebook friends have to know every time you go to the bathroom and what you've produced?
- Is your only mode of communication with your partner or kids via Facebook?
- Have you enrolled in a costly photography course so that your Facebook pics become the talk of your circle?
- Have you resorted to paying off strangers to become your Facebook friend so that your number defies all logic?
- Do you retain the services of a private investigator whenever you fail to find a long lost friend on Facebook?
- Whenever you fight with your significant other do you feel compelled to change your Facebook relationship status?
- Did you quit your job because your employer put a halt on all Internet activities within the company?
- Has your Facebook addiction resulted in your resembling one of the "Twilight" vampires because you haven't seen the light of day since the year of the flood?
- Have you become a mute since you no longer have to use speech to communicate on Facebook?
- Have you had your eyelids Crazy Glued to remain wide open, so that sleep never sets in to interrupt your Facebook time? Or better yet, do you keep smelling salts next to you at all times as you peck away on your computer?

have about 50 people following me, mostly club members. I follow about 100 people myself; almost all are industry-related."

Burke appreciates the brevity required by Twitter. "I tend to get wordy, and with only 140 characters I can give folks the information they need and move on."

On the other hand, David Phipps, superintendent at Stone Creek Golf Club in Oregon City, Ore. confesses, "I'm afraid I use a little bit of everything. I like to use them in concert with one another, depending on what target audience I am trying to reach." Starting on Facebook looking for an old friend in Finland (who he never found), "friends were coming out from everywhere."

Phipps began writing a blog in 2009 (<http://stonecreeksuper.blogspot.com>), which offers club news, golf course environmental information, gorgeous photography and even a bit of humor. The blog now gets more than 3,000 pageviews each week and has been a promotional tool. "We have had people make it a point to stop by Stone Creek from the airport on the way through town to play Bandon Dunes on the

southern coast just because they have followed the blog." He promotes the blog with Twitterfeed.

Phipps admits that social media is easy to get caught up in.

"I've found it's best to turn off all the notifications on my Droid," he says. "It is so tempting to look, but there is always time to check back later. Nothing bothers me more than seeing people sitting around a table with their noses in their phones."

Employees are not immune to the temptations of social media, and it is useful to have a policy regarding its use. "A colleague of mine got into a bind with an employee posting on Facebook," says Mark Semm, director of agronomy at The Clubs of Cordillera Ranch in Boerne, Texas. "Even though the employee made some really negative posts, it was a corporate golf course and they couldn't let him go because it wasn't in the policies and procedures." The employee handbook at Cordillera Ranch now has a supplement outlining the use of social media by employees.

Semm himself is sold on the value of technology. "I mainly use Facebook and Twitter to commu-

"I've seen others so addicted that it's painful to watch."

— Dustin Riley,
Oconomowoc
Golf Club



PATH TO ADDICTION

A recent study of 1,000 Americans conducted by Retrevo, a consumer electronics site, may point that we're more obsessed with social media than we think. Here are some of the study's findings. Where do you fall?

Do you check/update Facebook or Twitter first thing in the morning?



42% YES



58% NO

Do you check/update Facebook or Twitter after you go to bed?

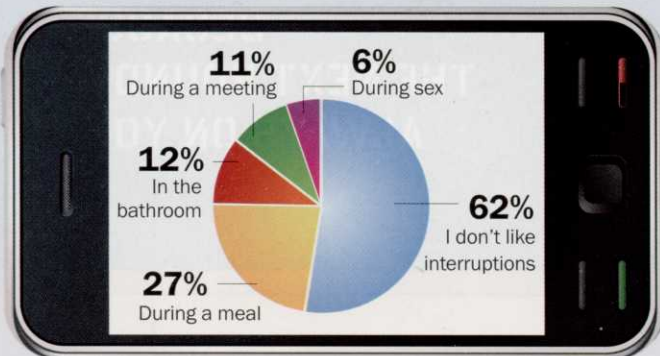


48% YES



52% NO

Can you be interrupted for an electronic message at any time?



Note: Respondents were older than 25.

nicate with our membership. It's great that they are integrated so well with my iPhone, so it's fast and easy to get the word out about course conditions, tournament preparation and other information the members need," he explains.

Semm succumbs to the temptations of social media occasionally. "There are times I could be doing something more productive, but before you know it you're sitting on the couch clicking links on Facebook and two hours are gone." He limits his "recreational" use to his home; never on the job.

Interfering with work is one way that social media addiction can manifest itself. If you or your employees are less productive, either because you are engaged on your smart phone at work or you are tired because you were up until 1 a.m. Tweeting, it might be time to re-evaluate your use.

If others comment on your constant use, and you find yourself resentful of these comments, that's another sign. Likewise if you can't resist checking on updates when you are having a face-to-face conversation with a friend or colleague.

Feeling guilty about how much time is spent Facebooking, trying to cut back on Tweet time, or trying to set limits (i.e. forcing yourself to only check in during breaks and being unable to resist) are all warning signs.

Unlike physically addictive drugs such as alcohol, tobacco or methamphetamines, social media addiction can usually be managed as long as you are aware of it. David J. Linden notes that almost all video game addicts recover without intervention.

Setting limits and sticking to them, paring down the number of networks you belong to, scheduling specific times to network and simply turning off the smart phone for a few hours each day are all recommended ways to "beat the addiction."

Social media can be a great communication avenue when used properly. But like all good things, moderation is the key to a balanced, productive online life. **GCI**

Helen M. Stone is a freelance writer and owner of Las Vegas-based Stone Peak Services, and a frequent GCI contributor.

"There are times I could be doing something more productive, but before you know it you're sitting on the couch clicking links on Facebook and two hours are gone."

— Mark Semm, The Clubs of Cordillera Ranch





twitter
The best way to

TWITTER 101

By Kyle Brown

New to the world of social media? Our guide shows superintendents how to get the most out of their feeds.

Whether you're constantly updating your feed or completely unplugged, social media like Twitter has definitely found its place on the golf course. Superintendents use it for weather and play updates for club members, as well as a connection to other turf professionals. But for all its benefits, Twitter can seem overwhelming for a beginner.

Here's how to get started using Twitter:

First, keep your team in consideration when signing up for an account. Choose a username

and password that could also be used by assistants or other crew members. Keep the username brief and easy to say when telling course members about it.

During the process of signing up, you can allow Twitter to take a peek into your online e-mail address book (such as Gmail) to send e-mail letting your contacts know you've started an account. If your account is intended to reach just other superintendents or members, you may want to skip that step.

Once the account is created, it's time to start adding content

to your feed – which is made up of the Tweets posted by people you follow, with the newest Tweets at the top. Search for people you know using the Search bar – we suggest starting with @GCIMagazine – but be sure to check the profile or a few Tweets to make certain you've found the right profile. The "@" symbol in front of a name indicates a username, which can be very different from a person's actual name. Another easy source of people to follow comes from looking through the feed of someone you already follow. If you share

interests, chances are good that person will know others you'll find interesting.

But for many superintendents, the real usefulness of the Twitter feed is in reaching colleagues and players with course updates. Once an account is created, it's time to get the word out and start gathering followers in your membership. Even with just a few in tow, make it a point to start regular updates – maybe just one each day, to get in the habit and establish a routine of posting information like weather or course conditions. The 140-character

limit on Tweets is ideal for an immediate, short update that needs to reach your entire membership quickly.

Composing a Tweet is easy enough. The simplest form is just a straightforward phrase or so, used as a quick note. There's no required length to a Tweet, and nothing is less or more important than anything else.

But here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Want to get someone's at-

tention? Use their @username in your Tweet. Twitter collects these as "mentions" under the "Connect" tab, where users can see who's talking to them. When a @username begins the Tweet, it will only show up in feed of the person mentioned, and users who follow both accounts.

- You can attach photos, locations and links in your Tweets. Having trouble with some turf and want to ask colleagues about it? Take a photo with your smart-

phone. If you Tweet from your phone, you can upload it as well.

- When you've got several Tweets about the same topic, or are part of an event, hashtags – any phrase with “#” in front of it – are especially useful. Whether a single word in the message, or a separate phrase at the end of a Tweet, a clicked hashtag will collect all the Tweets from about the past two weeks that use it. Many Twitter users also use hashtags to make quick afterthought jokes,

since one of the main uses of Twitter is humor.

- It's easy to ReTweet (or RT) someone else's information if you think your followers will find it useful, but don't get into the habit too much. A stream of ReTweets clutters others' feeds. But adding your own comment to a Tweet is just as easy – try a Reply to their Tweet instead, beginning with your note and then copying most of their original Tweet with “RT @username”.

HOW DOES A TWITTER FEED WORK?

This is where you can find your feed: the stream of Tweets from all the people you follow.

The Connect tab shows you how others are interacting with you. This is where you find when people mention or follow you.

The Discover tab lists popular stories and activity on trends.

This column is your feed, a continuously-updating collection of new Tweets from the people you follow.

Clicking a Tweet, like this one by our pal Chris Tritabaugh, will bring up options to reply to it, ReTweet it in your own feed or mark it as a favorite. You can also view the entire conversation, if a Tweet has connected messages.

Clicking here will let you see who all you're following, and who's following your feed.

Use this box to compose your Tweets, and the buttons underneath to include a photo or location – both useful tools on the course!

Twitter guesses who else you might like to follow based on who you already follow.

It's a good idea to take a look at these occasionally.

Trends are picked out by repeated mentions of hashtags, and can be listed locally or promoted by companies. Clicking one will bring up the highest-rated Tweets in that topic.

A hashtag - when a # is placed directly before a word or phrase - is used to collect Tweets on a topic, like notes on a central event or idea. It can also be used for an afterthought joke to a Tweet.

Using a @username anywhere other than the beginning of a Tweet is a "mention", and shows up in all of your followers' feeds. Your mentions are collected in the Connect tab at the top.

Starting a tweet with an @username the way Randy does here is an "@reply", which only shows up in your feed, the person who's mentioned, and users who follow both of you.

When someone you know wants to share a Tweet they've come across in their own feeds, they "Retweet" it. You can show or hide Retweets by people you follow.



• Web links get shortened when posted to Twitter, and most people won't click on a link without knowing where it leads. When posting a link or photo, be sure to add a description of your own, even if it's just a few words.

THE KITCHEN SINK

Of course, there's more to social media than just Twitter. Here are a few of the other networks your crew or members might use, and how useful we think they are for superintendents:

facebook



Facebook: Chances are good you already use Facebook, but have you thought about using it for course updates and helpful links to educational pages for your colleagues? Updating a status can include those, photos and videos, all of which can be easily uploaded from a smartphone. Facebook has been working hard to catch up to G+ in quick selection of who sees what content.

LinkedIn



LinkedIn: Keeping things professional is what LinkedIn is all about. It's a solid communication tool for keeping channels open for career movement and advancement, since connections will be on a professional level.

Google+: What Google+ brings to the table is an unmatched ability to select who sees what you're posting by gathering your followers into Circles. If you're posting a weather update, it would be a perfect fit for your "Members" Circle; posting some turf photos to try and diagnose dollar spot? That's more apt for your Colleagues and Turf Researchers Circles. Google+ also gives you the ability to do instantaneous group chats with friends through Google+ Hangouts.



Pinterest



Pinterest: The newest kid in class, Pinterest has gotten a following by creating a purely visual way to collect interesting content on the Web. So it's not the right place to post your daily weather updates – but it's perfect for the before and after photos of the renovation, or shots of happy golfers at your most recent event.

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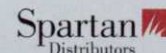


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FACEBOOK, UPDATED!

As of March 30, the business pages on the most popular social networking site on the planet took on a major change. Facebook forced implementation of the "Timeline" profile format for all business pages – and that includes those for golf courses.

The change might seem drastic, but it actually presents some great opportunities for golf courses to connect in completely new ways with players and colleagues. Here are some tips for handling the switch like a pro.

BE VISUAL. Taking a cue from other social media sites like Pinterest, Facebook is starting to skew for a more visual layout. The Timeline format organizes content not by its type but by its importance and timeliness. Want to share photos of the course? Upload a shot from your phone and watch it get top placement in your feed rather than being tucked away in an album. Keep that in mind when logging photos for a proposed upgrade project that needs to be sold to your members.

The new "cover image" gives you another opportunity to use a beauty shot from your course to really show off the turf you work so hard to manage. Make the first thing the visitor sees just as memorable as the course itself.

BE IN CONTROL. The new "Admin panel" not only collects all your notifications and alerts to one place, but gives you enhanced control of your entire page. Take a look at who's recently liked elements on your page, and check out the statistics of what's got people talking about them. Use your Activity Log to manage each interaction on your page.

Use the bar beneath your cover image to show off important photos, links or apps your members might find useful. Individual posts can be managed to span the width of the Timeline for more prominence, or can even be permanently "pinned" to the top for more visibility.

BE A PERSON. Facebook is allowing customers to offer reviews of companies on their own pages, which can be shared with others. It may be impossible for businesses to remove unfavorable customer reviews, but in trade,

businesses are finally able to interact with users via private messages. Located in the Admin panel, new private messages will give you the chance to make things right with a dissatisfied member or discuss a problem on the course without airing the whole conversation on the course's Wall. **GCI**



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