

THE BULLHORN

Before last February's GIS show, we decided to organize a "TweetUp" for our techie social media friends. The idea was to bring together supers and others who are using Twitter, Facebook, etc., to meet, greet and give some recognition. Fun idea... but predictably not as simple as it sounded.

You will not be surprised to learn the GC-SAA has strict rules about doing promotions or events on their show floor during their show. After much discussion with their wary but bemused staff, we decided the simplest thing to do was to go the "flash mob" route and do the thing in a way that didn't violate their rules.

Since GCI is...well, GCI...I had a vision of standing on the back of a flatbed truck in the Las Vegas Convention Center parking lot doing a re-enactment of the scene from "Independence Day" where the president grabs a bullhorn, makes a impassioned speech and rallies the people of Earth to defeat the alien invaders. We would Tweet out the time and place and our friends would flock to us and spontaneously sing "Give Peace a Chance." Hell, it might turn into a movement!

Well, the movement turned out to be about three dozen folks who gathered to witness our Super Social Media awards under the chilly, darkening Vegas skies. My hopes of a Woodstock-like crowd massed in front of me – old-school Zippo lighters raised in tribute – were a wee bit optimistic (although I think Justin Ruiz may have turned on his iPhone flashlight app and held it up at one point). In the final analysis, when given the option between shivering through an outdoor flash mob or heading to a casino, most folks will choose the latter. Lesson learned...but we'll be back next year with another TweetUp because it's still a cool idea.

But, it wasn't a complete loss because I did get a bullhorn out of the deal. Yup, our marketing manager (the lovely, talented Irene Sweeney) found me one of those battery-powered megaphones to sate my "Independence Day" fantasy. It now sits in my office gathering dust and waiting for my next boondoggle or an alien invasion, whichever comes first.

Yet, the dusty bullhorn serves a purpose. Its

presence on the shelf next to me is a reminder that GCI has what used to be called a "bully pulpit." By virtue of the fact that we print and mail 25,000 copies of this thing every month and some percentage of y'all accidentally read it, we are not dissimilar to the preachers of old who briefly command the interest of otherwise sleepy Sunday parishioners with fire-and-brimstone tirades. We have both the opportunity and the obligation to lead through our words and, hopefully, create change.

We try to lead on issues. Last month, every word of the entire issue screamed "it's time to get serious about managing water resources." We try to educate. I thought Gary Grigg's June article on the 10 characteristics of great superintendents should be required reading

for every turf student. We pick at the scabs of controversial problems like bacterial wilt. We've talked a lot about jobs and the plight of unemployed superintendents and the many qualified assistants who are "stuck" with no way to move up. We document what's going on in the market with research like our State of the Industry report and the Rating the Industry study that ranked

how supers view suppliers. We also shine a bright light on things that matter, like skin cancer, substance abuse, depression and – on a brighter note – awesome groups like the Wee One Foundation, Rounds4Research and the Wives of Turf.

This is the time when we figure out how to use the bullhorn for next year. We begin planning our 2013 editorial coverage by talking to a lot of you guys. Mike Zawacki and I reach out to supers and others who we know will give us the unvarnished truth about what we do well and what we can do better. During that process last month, Mike was talking story ideas with Tim Moraghan and Tim commented that we are at our best when we're out ahead of the market and dealing with the big topics still bubbling under the surface. Sage advice, thought I.

So what's your story? What's bubbling under the surface of your world that you think we might be crazy enough to cover? What's the next big thing that deserves attention now? Let me know. The bullhorn awaits. **GCI**



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