

SANDBAGGING OLD FART

A few weeks ago, I was going through the paperwork to register for the GIS and, on the spur of the moment, decided to sign up for the GCSAA Golf Championship for the first time in umpteen years. In the midst of another gray Cleveland winter, the idea of a few days of bad golf with good friends in Palm Springs prior to the Bataan death march of GIS sounded like a plan.

Anyway, I'm filling out forms and checking off boxes for the tournament and I almost skipped right over the following paragraph:

To be eligible to compete in a senior flight, you must be 50 by Feb. 24, 2012.

Senior flight? Ha! Not for me! I'm no sandbagging old fart.

Then I froze dead and a chill ran across my spine as it dawned on me: Had I been born just 31 days sooner, I would be checking that box to play in the sandbagging old fart flight. Yikes!

Yes folks, I'm staring down the barrel of 50. In a month or so, I'll be celebrating a half-century of...er, um...life. I really don't feel old, despite five decades of bad decisions, rare steaks, a billion gallons of coffee, a gazillion Marlboro

Lights, marriage, parenthood, hearing loss, alcoholism, divorce, six "careers" and a general aversion to exercise, preventative medical care and sleep. Against all odds, I still feel like a college kid. Hell, I still dress like a college kid.

I try to keep it fresh. I'm hip to the social media stuff and can make my Droid sing and dance. I have mad texting skilz. I wear Chuck Taylor kicks to work regularly. I am not unfamiliar with the musical stylings of Chip Tha Ripper and The Black Keys. And I have been known to watch an entire episode of "Jersey Shore" without puking. In short, no black socks with sandals or early-bird specials for me... yet.

On the other hand, I still read newspapers and books printed on the processed corpses of dead trees. I believe talking with other human beings is vastly superior to e-mail or texts. I adore old black-and-white movies. I need cheater glasses to read the tiny crap that constantly demands my attention on my too-fancy phone. The amount of gray in the holiday beard I grew was shocking. And I bite

my tongue to keep from constantly barking at my sons to get haircuts and pull their damned pants up over their boxers.

Thus, my dilemma: Do I continue to pretend I'm young or embrace my middle-agedness? Or does the whole issue simply slip my mind because I'm increasingly... (damn, what's the word?)... forgetful?

My personal generational struggle is a microcosm of our cover story focus this month. At the heart of the matter is the question of how Baby Boomer bosses deal with Generation Y workers – and vice versa. It's a very real issue in workplaces like golf facilities that have been slow to embrace the flexibility, flat management structures and quick paths to advancement that young workers expect these days.



Pat Jones
Editorial director and publisher

Our research makes it clear that bosses and employees are often on very different pages in terms of how they communicate and that, inevitably, will drive change. One real-life example: I asked a superintendent pal recently if he used texting to manage his assistants, make assignments and such. He told me that he'd always prohibited cell phones on his staff up until recently but had finally given in to the fact that it was the only way he could be sure they would get the information.

Younger supers and assistants need to take a close look at this study too. It's a chance to understand why your Neanderthal, do-it-because-I-say-so, low-tech boss thinks the way he does. Some "enlightened" bosses will move towards a management style that embraces the Gen Yers, but most won't. If you want to survive in this economic climate, resistance to the old school mentality might not be the healthiest course of action. Remember what P.J. O'Rourke said: "Age and guile will beat youth, innocence and a bad haircut any day."

I hope this latest research from GCI stimulates you to think about how you fit into the generational equation and what you can do to roll with the punches of aging. I also hope I can shave a few strokes off my handicap by the time the 2013 GCSAA golf event rolls around. That old fart sandbagger division trophy would look awesome on my desk. **GCI**

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GIE Media, Inc.
4020 Kinross Lakes Pkwy, 2nd floor
Richfield, OH 44286
Phone: 800-456-0707
Fax: 330-659-0823

EDITORIAL

Pat Jones
Publisher/Editorial director
pjones@gie.net

Mike Zawacki
Editor
mzawacki@gie.net

Bruce Williams
Contributing editor

Kyle Brown
Associate editor
kbrown@gie.net

Jim Black
Contributing editor

SALES

Russell Warner
National account manager
330-523-5385

Ted Schuld
Account manager
216-236-5937

Bonnie Velikonya
Classified sales
330-523-5322

Martha Corfman
Manager, books
330-523-5366

Maria Miller
Conferences manager
330-523-5373

Jodi Shipley
Marketing coordinator
330-523-5368

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