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BUILDING A REBUILDING CASE

Great master plans with no “buy in” from your members or city council have the same value as no plan at all. Here are a few ideas we presented to circumvent this.

INITIATE FROM THE TOP. When a new superintendent/GM/Pro tells me “I’m new here, and I am pushing some big changes,” the end result is usually a master plan that goes nowhere. If the president or greens chair (or mayor/park director) isn’t interested enough to call me, he/she probably isn’t interested in a rebuilding program.

Most failures to sell a renovation program stem from either selling the wrong people, or selling the wrong project. A committee selling total renovation to their clubs that don’t want it, or can’t afford it, rarely works. Architects attempting to spend club millions for what appears to be a career-making project never does.

The club – not their staff or architect – must decide it needs a total image makeover to reposition it in the market, restore lost luster or recapture course rankings. You and your architect must present information on problems and options for correction, but the final direction must come from the decision makers.

PICK A “FLAG BEARER.” Every project needs a connected, respected and energetic “flag bearer” to lead the troops into battle. Without good leadership, the project will likely fail.

YES, IT’S SELLING. Most folks hate the concept of “Selling your master plan,” and I prefer to call it “building a case for renovation,” but make no mistake – it’s selling. Even with top brass behind the project, the task of convincing members to move forward requires real sales, diplomacy and marketing skills. There are numerous

good books on the subject, so, go read a book to brush up on all those old clichés. “Sell benefits, not features,” “Sell the sizzle, not the steak,” “Hit their ‘hot buttons,’” all apply here.

Some tips, as they apply to renovations:

OVERCOME FEAR. The biggest cause of inaction is fear – of change and of wasting money. Fear is greater if there

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were some previous renovation flops. Perhaps the best method to allay fear is to acknowledge it, and clearly demonstrate you have picked solid projects and people to implement them.

TALK THEIR LANGUAGE. We tend to talk in our own lingo, which doesn’t impress others. Superintendents wax eloquently about the features of a state-of-the-art irrigation system, but it’s more convincing to show (in simple case studies or examples) how golfers benefit. They are more likely to be interested in the benefits of water conservation to either water more roughs and give them better conditions; or lower their water bills, and hopefully, dues.

Similarly, they don’t care about the sand particle size of your proposed USGA greens, but they are interested in smoother greens, making more putts or impressing their guests.

PICK THE RIGHT ISSUES. Selling/Case building isn’t catchy slogans or slick

presentations. It’s doing your homework ahead of time to find out what changes are necessary (in fact and opinion) and providing those improvements to your golfers.

At most courses, there are greens, holes, areas or conditions that everyone agrees need improvement. Those have to be part of the plan, of course. Then, it may be possible to demonstrate the added value of other work, especially if it saves time, money or hassle to do now.

REHEARSE THAT PRESENTATION! While it is best to be confident of the vote before the big meeting, that doesn’t always happen. For the best chance of success, plan on doing a great presentation. Like sales, there are many books devoted to making great presentations that are a good investment.

I have found that simplicity works over complexity. I prefer graphic boards and plans to a PowerPoint presentation in a darkened room. It’s better to talk with them than at them. In addition, I find presentations that focus on the most important one to three points are more convincing than ones that promise dozens of project benefits, which tend to run together.

CROSS THE “I’S,” DOT THOSE “T’S.” If you have ever hired someone, you know that you quickly dismiss candidates with obvious flaws. The same is true when considering renovation projects. I have seen good presentations derailed by simple questions that the committee doesn’t seem to have considered and can’t answer. This usually instills fear (see above) leading to rejection. **GCI**

Want to learn more? Check out the “Selling Your Master Plan” webinar. Enter bit.ly/Vwka5x into your browser.