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TOP 10 EXCUSES (AND MY ANSWERS) FOR NOT CONTINUING YOUR EDUCATION

It's winter and conference season is in full swing. For me, this is a time where organization and schedules are important. Between Jan. 16 and Feb. 27 I will have traveled to six different conferences and presented over 30 hours of education to those in the turfgrass industry. All of this comes in a year where I have decided to cut back on travel.

As an educator, I often get on my soapbox about the importance of education. And although I am a part of the best turfgrass program in the world (haters gonna hate), I know education doesn't stop when you cross the stage at graduation. In fact, I look at a

degree or certificate as a starting point and a foundation for a successful career. This foundation education alone, however, doesn't really do much in terms of ensuring an individual's upward movement in this industry.

This is where continued interest and participation in conferences and seminars plays a much large role in an individual's success – or failure – in a tough industry.

With the upcoming conferences (Canadian, Golf Industry Show, BIGGA, etc.) and educational opportunities in mind, here are my Top 10 excuses for why you're not continuing your education and my to-the-point responses.

10 I CAN'T AFFORD IT. This is the lamest excuse and the one used most often. If you're not willing to invest in your career then it is likely a golf course isn't going to want to invest in you. Sometimes making a personal financial sacrifice is necessary to build a career.

9 I DON'T HAVE TIME. Another BS statement and one I use all the time when it comes to not going to the gym. The fact of the matter is you make time for things that are important. If your career isn't on that list then perhaps you're on the wrong career path.

7 I ALREADY KNOW ABOUT THAT. Congratulations. You must be the smartest person around. The fact of the matter is new information is discovered about old topics all the time. If you don't keep up with this information, then you may be missing something important.

6 I DON'T SPEAK ENGLISH. This would have been a good excuse in the past, but with the growing golf market in Asia and many other countries, more and more talks are being offered in other languages. This year, GCSAA will present seminars in Korean, Mandarin, and Spanish.

5 I CAN'T GET OFF OF WORK. Another potential legitimate excuse for missing one of the big national shows, but there are plenty of local and regional shows that offer some of the same information. At a minimum you should get the opportunity to go to these and then make a good case with your employer to attend the national shows at least occasionally.

4 I'M PLANNING ON GOING NEXT YEAR. Unless you're delaying until the show comes closer so you can afford it (see my response to No. 10), then you shouldn't really put off education. There are so many learning opportunities that you could go every year and still not take every class offered.

3 THE TALKS ARE BORING. Well, I can't disagree with you in many cases. However, it's still no excuse. Sometimes you have to drink a can of Red Bull and power through it. While not all presenters are entertaining, it doesn't mean the information is not useful.

2 I CAN'T SIT THROUGH ANOTHER TALK ABOUT TURF. Then don't. In fact, I think many of the seminars on topics like business management, human resources, computers, technology

and others are some of the most informative classes available. Remember, agronomics accounts for about 10-15 percent of what a superintendent does on a daily basis. Successful superintendents are successful in these non-turf-related subjects.

1 I'M ALREADY A SUPERINTENDENT.

I'm not sure how many people use this as an excuse, but there are always those few that use the national conference as a personal vacation and avoid education altogether. While I support having fun and socializing at the conference, it is important to know why you're there and that is at least in part to learn new things.

At every conference I attend, I typically pay attention to those in attendance and their "interest" in the materials being presented. While you may think that the demographics

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of those really interested in continued education would be those in the early stages of their career, I usually find those that already have a "successful" career to be the most interested. It is usually these superintendents in the front row taking notes and listening to every word for that one nugget of information that may help them do their job better.

MY OVERALL THOUGHTS. I recognize people have legitimate reasons for why they can't attend large conferences, but those that figure out a way to continue their education will likely be those who find success in this industry. With online education increasing and free seminars being offered throughout the year, there really isn't an excuse for not continuing to learn.

I've already stated many of you will think I'm a jerk and I don't understand the realities of the business. In some instances that may be the case, but I'm a "tough love" kind of educator. I don't have sympathy for those not putting in the time to establish, build and advance their career.

I don't see this industry through rose-colored glasses. I see it as tough and competitive, and those individuals who work hard and set themselves apart ultimately find success. Staying on top of your game through continued education will help you get there and likely help you stay there. **GCI**

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