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## PURPLE COW, REDUX

It was many moons ago that Dan Carrothers taught me about the purple cow and introduced me to a dude named Seth Godin.

Carrothers is a veteran chemical industry executive who recently returned to the happy world of golf and lawn products in BASF's professional group after being away from the green industry for a while. He's a helluva salesman and, more than a decade ago, he sold me on the idea that the best enterprises have a "purple cow" – something truly unique that sets them apart.

I wrote a column back then about Dan's enthusiasm for creating purple cows in his business life. Dan pretended to like the column so much that he actually had me autograph a copy for his sales team. Some would call this sucking up to the media. I think Dan has excellent taste.

Anyway, I was talking with him at GIS about his new role with BASF and the concept of the purple cow came up again quickly. What can be done in today's crazy environment to create that?

I'd like to say we figured it out over breakfast (we didn't) but it did rekindle my interest in Seth Godin, the marketing guru who brought the purple cow concept to life and who mainly focuses on the larger concept of telling a good story about your business.

As Godin wrote in *Forbes* a decade ago, "The essence of the Purple Cow – the reason it would shine among a crowd of perfectly competent, even undeniably excellent cows – is that it would be remarkable. Something remarkable is worth talking about, worth paying attention to. Boring stuff quickly becomes invisible."

Telling your story is not about spinning or exaggerating. It's not a sales pitch or a proposal, either. Finally, it's not a big ad campaign or a fancy presentation.

Instead, it's describing what's remarkable about your product and how it solves a problem, addresses a need or fills a void in the customer's world.

So what remarkable story can your golf facility tell? Is it compelling? Is it honest? Is it different? Is there a purple cow lurking somewhere along the way?

Do you have a specific niche? Can you make a statement like this?

- We are an affordable course with surprisingly good greens.
- Our membership likes to have fun and doesn't take itself too seriously.
- This is the club to join to connect to serious local power players.

- Friendly people and great customer service for just \$49.50 a round.
- We're all about golf and nothing but golf.
- This course is genuinely welcoming and comfortable for female players of any skill level.
- Play in less than four hours...guaranteed.
- We have smokin' hot clubhouse staff and bev cart attendants.

The last one is hopelessly sexist but, hell, so is Hooters. They sell a zillion bucks worth of something you can get anywhere – draft beer and mediocre chicken wings – by hiring pretty girls and advertising it. It's not rocket science kids – but it is remarkable.

(Note: If you want to see this cart babe strategy executed at a very high level, Google "Walters Golf Par Mates." You will be in awe.)

### Something remarkable is worth talking about, worth paying attention to.

You may be sitting there thinking, "Great Pat, I'll pass this to our marketing and sales person." Go right ahead, but make sure you do it with a recommendation of getting serious about identifying your course's purple cow and making sure everyone who works for you (and your members or customers) can recite your story.

I'm shocked at how many times I'll ask a super or a GM, "What sets this facility apart?" and they say, "Oh, there's a lot of history here at our club" or "We're exclusive" or "It's just a great old place."

Ugh. That's like me answering the same question from a potential advertiser with, "We print useful articles." Absolutely no distinction and nothing to make them WANT to buy ads with us.

Try your hand at telling your story. Do a little informal brainstorming with some of your management team and try to identify key words and ideas that specifically capture why people like you. You could get all fancy and do research with members or daily players but you'd be surprised what you learn just by asking a few "fans" around your place. The point is to identify the remarkable in your operation and leverage it in everything you do.

Why? Because there are 15,500 cows around America mooing for attention and dollars. If you ain't purple, why should they notice you? **GCI**