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TIME TO GROW

Set a goal to not be at the same place you are now at this time next year.

I know it's rather predictable for the first column of the year to be filled with resolutions. However, also every year I speak at dozens of section meetings and trade shows, talk one-on-one with hundreds, maybe thousands, of superintendents at various stages in their careers, and I'm asked the same thing: Can you help me get a better job?

I can help you; but more importantly, you have to help yourself. And that means growing – improve your skills, master your craft, learn more, work harder, and use your brain, not just your hands.

Two stories. First, when he was 85, a world-class cellist finished a practice session, turned to his companion, and said, "I think I'm getting better." Whether you are 9 or 90, learning never stops. Growth doesn't happen: You have to make it happen.

Second, two lumberjacks were chopping down trees. One said, "I'm falling behind. I need to sharpen my axe." The other lumberjack with a dull axe just kept chopping. The lumberjack who sharpened his axe came back and cut down twice as many trees.

What are you doing to sharpen your axe? Will you read books, attend seminars, invest in mentors or continuing education? Will you tap the Web and all the tools available there to make yourself more valuable?

When I conduct searches and place superintendents in jobs, my clients are looking for candidates who are most prepared, not ones they have to teach. That's why you have to take the first step – no more excuses! – and start developing and practicing the necessary skills. It's also why you

must understand the job is much more than just turfgrass.

So let's make a pact: Since I don't want to be writing this same column next year, I want you to make it your goal not to be at the same place you

his or her personal skills. It's very often the skills you think the least about – public speaking and the social graces – that get in the way of getting where you want to be.

“What are you doing to sharpen your axe? What are you going to do this year to grow, to improve your mind and your career?”

are now at this time next year – mentally, physically, literally. I'd be happy to come up with another column idea if I know you listened to this one.

So get growing! And...

IF YOU WANT YOUR BOSS'S JOB, LEARN HOW TO DO IT

Don't worry about who's in front of you. Instead, study so you know what they do and how you can do it better.

DON'T GET TOO COMFORTABLE. STRETCH YOURSELF

Science says we only use about 11 percent of our total brain capacity. That means there's lots of room to learn Spanish, take an accounting course, or start a personal fitness program (I said it isn't just about grass).

DID YOU TAKE A WEEK OFF AND NOBODY MISSED YOU?

You've got the problem, they don't!

TO BE SKILLED, DEVELOP YOUR SKILLS

Good players don't get better by only working on what they're already good at. Even Tiger Woods works on his short game. What are you doing to improve your shortcomings? Almost everyone I meet in our business (50+ GCS's) could benefit by working on

PREPARE A PERSONAL GROWTH PLAN

Don't just say you're going to improve. Create a plan. For example, if you have a half-hour commute to and from work, use that time listening to books or the news, perhaps learning a foreign language. Think about every hour in every day and make the most out of every one.

FIND A MENTOR

Look around. Is someone helping you plot your path? Someone who has already reached where you want to go? Someone willing to let you learn from their mistakes? Find people who will inspire you to rise higher and help you do so. And don't be afraid to hang out with people who are smarter than you.

A GREAT CAREER BEGINS WITH GOOD EDUCATION

Our industry offers terrific educational opportunities. If you're not taking advantage of them, you're simply not getting smarter: You're getting dumber because everyone else is passing you.

TRAVEL, ASK QUESTIONS, MEET PEOPLE

Be curious. Doors only open when you push them. **GCI**