

by Frans Jager

Getting results

Negotiating is part of everyone's life. Only thieves – if they don't get apprehended – get away with getting what they want without negotiating: they just take what they want.

If you are a golf course superintendent, you have a lot of negotiating to do, because you have to interact with a large number of people in different constituencies; and none of these people will always, automatically do what you want to get done. Some might say: everything is a struggle for the superintendent. Maybe that is how it is perceived; certainly the superintendent knows that you don't always get what you want and you certainly do not get what you want without negotiation. No denying that it is a tough job to be golf course superintendent. Almost like being President of the United States: you are being held responsible for anything that happens under your watch and yet, by yourself, you can only do so much and influence the outcome only to a limited extent. You need a lot of cooperation from the weather and from a lot of people, who each have a mind of their own, to arrive at the desired result.

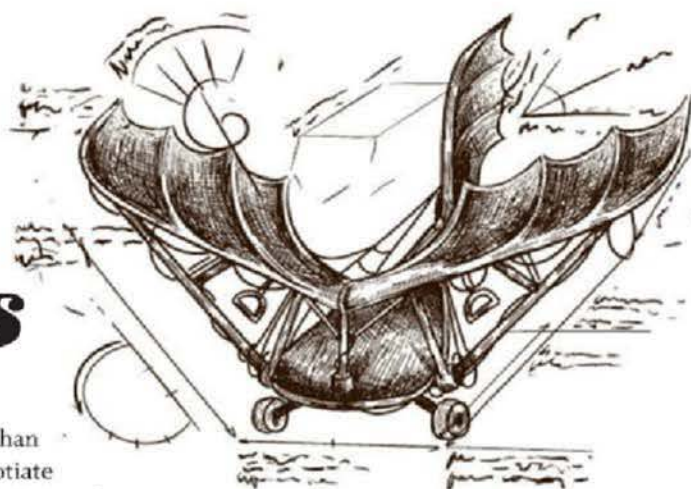
When it comes to negotiation, people automatically think about a buyer/seller relationship. The old fashioned horse trading or deal making. So, the perception is that it is in the procurement process that the superintendent really needs to bring his/her negotiating skills to bear. But is it? The procurement part of the job may, in fact, be one of the simpler ones to negotiate.

Yes, there are situations in which some buying savvy comes in nicely. But not very often. Just like in our personal lives, the buying routine has much more to do with making sure that you get exactly what you want than with getting something at a bottom bargain price. We pride ourselves when we make a "super-good" deal, but if we are honest with ourselves, what did we

really negotiate? More often than not we let the supplier negotiate with himself, knowing full well that if we wait a little longer, the product we want will go on sale. Getting a good deal, even the best deal, is probably more a matter of timing than a matter of negotiation.

The superintendent is in a pretty good buying position. If you are an industry supplier, it is your business to know every superintendent in your market. As superintendent, you are easily identified and

easily located, which means every supplier in the business will come to you and will want to work with you. You can hardly ask for a better competitive scenario. The hardest part of the procurement job of the superintendent is therefore not the negotiation of the best price; it is in separating the chaff from the kernels and determine



BY THE NUMBERS

Interpersonal relations

We queried superintendents about their purchasing philosophies and relationships with suppliers and distributors. Here's how they weighed in:

Number of local/regional suppliers/ reps you purchase products from annually

5

Number of turf-chemical suppliers you purchase from

3

Top 5 criticism of suppliers in your area

1. Only contact me when they need to sell something
2. I feel pressure to do early order
3. Call too often, pester me
4. I feel pressure to buy products I don't need or more than I need
5. (tied) They don't offer agronomic support
5. (tied) They don't understand my needs

Changed who you purchase chemicals/fertilizers from in recent years



Do you have a primary turf-chemical supplier?



Percent of turf-chemical supply purchased from this primary supplier **75%**

Source: GCI research

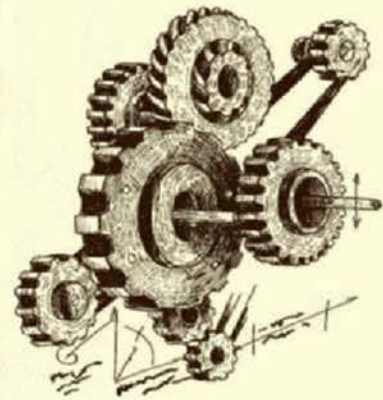
who the suppliers are that have your best interest at heart, that have what it takes to make you and your business successful and are willing to serve you day and night when the chips are down.

The procurement process for the superintendent, like for any other business buyer, has a strategic and a transactional component. The strategic component will consist of determining how many suppliers you want to have involved in your business, who they are and what you expect from them. I have been a buyer long enough and often enough to know that picking the right supply partner addresses most of your challenges. If you pick the right

Rules of engagement

For a superintendent to "negotiate for results" following rules need to be observed:

- Decide what is crucially important (imperative) to you in the procurement process
- Make sure that these imperatives actually serve the business, not you personally
- Let your suppliers know what your imperatives are and invite them to compete on that basis
- Award your business only to suppliers who are able and willing to meet your imperatives
- Hold your suppliers accountable for meeting your imperatives in full, all the time
- Don't deal with any more suppliers than you need to get all of your imperatives met, in every aspect of your operation, all the time
- There is no room in a productive, lasting supply relationship for any dishonesty, half-truths, white lies, or renegeing on a commitment



- The best supply relationship is a two-way street that respects the legitimate interests, including the right to make a profit, of the seller as well as the buyer
- Make sure whatever deal or commitment you make cannot be overruled by a higher authority at either side of the transaction

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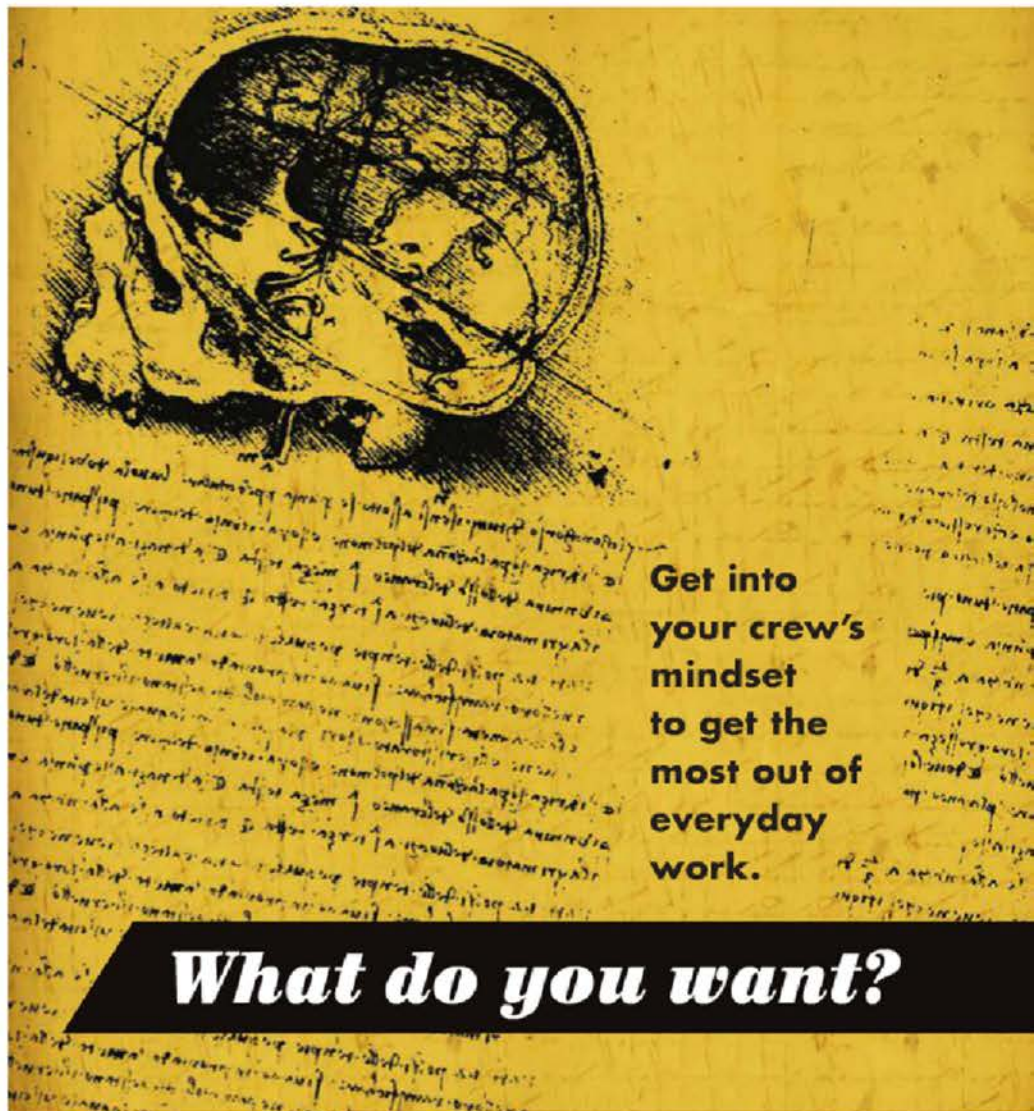
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partner, you don't have to worry about getting a fair price and you can count on the fact that he will be there for you when it counts most. The strategic component of the procurement process will determine the success or failure of the supply side of your business. You would not want to pick a supply partner who is not willing or able to keep you competitive. You would not want to pick a supply partner you can't count on to come through when it matters most even if he puts the lowest price on the table. You would not want to pick a supply partner who will quickly let you know that he has more important customers than you to take care of.

For the superintendent, the key to successful procurement is in articulating in detail what it is that you expect from your supplier and then sticking to your guns, holding your supplier accountable for one hundred percent fulfillment. I call it "negotiating for results." Negotiating the price may very well be the easiest and least important part of this process. Nowadays, with the internet and the consumer blogs, there is so much price transparency that you have to be lazy or dumb not to have a pretty good feel for where your cost will be shaking out. And it is questionable how well served you are going to be when setting out to find where the bottom is. You may be wasting a lot of time and alienate the supplier who stands ready to service your true needs. "Negotiating for results" cannot be measured by a single price point; only by achieving a competitive price over the long haul with a supplier who meets all of your expectations, all the time.

The transactional component just deals with the detail, including price, payment terms, discounts, rebates, delivery conditions etc. The stuff that shows up on the P/O and the invoice. The transactional component should be routine, emanating from the agreement or understanding the superintendent has reached with his/her supplier and can typically be delegated to an administrative assistant. **GCI**

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**Get into
your crew's
mindset
to get the
most out of
everyday
work.**

What do you want?

By Kyle Brown

When you're trying to influence an individual or a group to do something that is in both of your best interests, certainly there is negotiating at work.

But there's a certain amount of finesse to get people excited about doing their job well, says Amy Wallis, professor of practice in organizational behavior at the School of Business at Wake Forest University.

"As a supervisor, you can say to someone, 'You have to do this because I said so,' and they'll do it because you have a power dynamic," Wallis says. "But if you want to motivate them to do it well, you've got to think about 'How can I make this a win-win? How can I make this something that the person will be motivated to do well and see the value in?' And that becomes a negotiation. But even further, when you are talking with your employees about things that need to be done, how to get them done as efficiently as possible and how that will benefit them and the organization, you're negotiating with them to figure out how they're going to create the best possible outcome."

WHAT CAN USING NEGOTIATIONS DO TO MOTIVATE YOUR CREW? It can bring peo-