

Photo: Steven Switeler

once managed had three different construction types and periods of greens on 18 holes. A consultant, no matter what his expertise, is not going to learn the intricacies of that when working part time.

When it comes to protecting the course the superintendent is the club's brains, so I question the management of any club that does not have their brains on site everyday. If the course has a good superintendent, then hiring a consultant part-time can be a mistake. If what a club wants is a high-profile superintendent, then hire one, but hire him or her as your full-time superintendent.

**Q Your advice if a club hires a consultant without consulting the superintendent?**

The first thing is to be professional and don't lose your head. Find out as much about the particular consultant and the hiring conditions as you can. Learn why the consultant has been hired and what management expects him to accomplish. Find out what the consultant's background is and his special expertise. If I learned some negative factual information about the consultant, I'd provide that information to my club. There are plenty of superintendents you can call to get background information about a consultant.

The second thing I'd do is gather ammunition regarding what you have been doing on the course and why. The consultant is going to be asking for this information anyway. You are going to be asked what you have done to the course and why. If it comes down to your opinion vs. the outside expert's opinion, you lose. After all, the club hired him to solve a problem or improve conditions. So you will need to back up what you've been doing on the course and the reasons for it. Hopefully you can cite outside sources that you've consulted for advice and expertise. The opinions and recommendations of third-party sources, including university experts, USGA and even other superintendents, command respect. Your objective is to be able to talk about your program from a technical perspective and not come across as being defensive.

Related to this, if a consultant writes a report that says something the superintendent is doing is wrong, the superintendent should have access to that report and be able to argue his or her side.

The third thing I would do is record everything that happens. For example, document if the consultant makes recommendations that you know are not the best for the course or that part of the country. The problem then is that you have been put in a no-win situation. If you disagree with that consultant you might

risk being terminated for refusing to carry out his directions. And if you do what you believe to be wrong, then you are compromising your principles. So, record everything that is said and done. That way if the greens experience problems the following year, you will have a record of what was done and why.

**Q That assumes you want to still work for the course.**

The issue behind all this is deciding whether you want to continue working for an employer who has treated you unprofessionally and with little respect. At the time you find out that a consultant has been hired you can't predict the outcome in terms of your final standing with ownership – whether they will keep you or not. But assuming you survive, the question is whether your relationship with the club will ever be the same again. If the answer is 'no,' then what are you going to do about it?

If I had a bad feeling about a consultant being brought in over my head, I would update my resume and start contacting close associates to see what the job market looks like – just in case.

**Q What if the superintendent is fired?**

Negotiate the best severance package that you can. Being fired is sometimes similar to being hired in terms of being able to negotiate. When you're hired an employer may have made concessions to get you on board. When you are fired they might want you to go away quietly and be willing to make concessions on severance pay and benefits.

Depending upon the circumstances of your termination and your relationship with the golf course, it might be wise to contact an attorney to help you decide your best option. I would consider talking to an attorney before signing any release papers or termination agreements.

**Q Is there a way to avoid a problem altogether?**

Being proactive about your course is the best action you can take. It's ironic, but the way to avoid being surprised by the hiring of an outside consultant is to use your own consultants. Being proactive does not always require spending money. It can be as simple as seeing something coming up that you've not done, and getting help from another superintendent who has done it. We did exactly that in 2002 when we renovated a course. I called Bill Womak, superintendent at the Dunwoody Country Club, to come in and offer his advice. Since then a neighboring su-

perintendent visited me about a pending renovation at his course. I ran through some of the issues he will face, like the need to have a contingency fund in the budget. In our renovation we had to add a bridge that was not in the plan, and we hit a spring that cost a lot of money to fix. My advice will help him budget better because of the experiences I have had.

I would never discount the value of advice from other superintendents in your immediate area. There is so much expertise available and superintendents always help other superintendents. One young superintendent told me recently that he could tap 50 years of experience just by calling me and one other superintendent that he worked for and trusts.

**Q How can a young superintendent find and tap into outside expertise?**

Connect with those in the industry. When I became a superintendent I made sure all the well-respected superintendents in my area knew who I was. I went out of my way to ask for their advice and they are always willing to help me. Now as I get older, I will call younger guys who worked for me and now are on their own.

The problem is that we're all so busy nowadays that there is less and less of that interaction going on. Superintendents need to visit other courses and see what they're doing – how they use fans on their greens, etc. By getting to know other superintendents, when you have a problem you can call them and they will come to offer their best advice.

A structured way to do this is to join an association and go to your chapter meetings. In our GCSAA chapter we have created an email list. This is an excellent way to get advice fast, for example, what companies do good cart path work in your area?

Most superintendents stay in touch with their university instructors, but you also need to make contact with local university people to get local information. We call university people on a monthly basis about issues or to ask questions. You can also work with them to test new things.

Chemical companies are often helpful, too. We've gotten help from the local and national technical people. We've also done some experimental-use-permit work with some companies.

Finally, it's wise to network beyond your area. I became active in GCSAA and that allowed me to interact with people who have similar business situations from other parts of the nation. There are several superintendents at 36-hole facilities around

the country that I enjoy talking to about issues pertinent to larger operations. I met many of these through GCSAA committees and the GCSAA Golf Championship. Despite any differences in geography, all of these superintendents and I deal with similar issues and we benefit from each other's advice.

### Q Do you use consultants on a regular basis?

I have made it a habit to use my USGA Greens Section agronomist every year. I write up a list of questions about grasses and problems, things I'm interested in and ongoing issues, then invite him in to look over my course and talk. USGA offers a consulting service by the half-day or day and the cost is very reasonable. I budget for it every year. The value to me is that Pat O'Brien, my USGA agronomist, travels the entire southeast region and sees a lot of courses. He lets me know what other clubs are doing.

Working with USGA also is a proactive way to document that what you want to do is the correct thing. What I like about USGA is that there are no financial incentives behind their recommendations. They also offer a long-term perspective. It's one thing for a course to grow a grass to spruce up the course for a tournament, but that's different than having grown that grass for several years.

Much of the progress we've made on my courses were prefaced in a USGA report. USGA helps me determine my improvement program, gives me their approval on smart moves, and sometimes has changed my mind on things I was thinking of doing. I respect their opinion.

### Q What positives can a consultant bring?

People accept the advice of experts. When I decided we needed to rebuild greens on the Highland course I knew outside backup would be helpful. I arranged for a USGA agronomist to test the greens. I brought in an architect to get his opinion. They agreed that the greens needed to be fixed. So, when I stood before our members I had the added credibility needed to make my case. Some superintendents may be afraid to bring in outside experts because it might appear to diminish their importance. That's not so. We all use people for advice. When doing something as important as remodeling, it's only wise to seek and get the special expertise needed.

An outside opinion also can be useful regarding controversial issues, such as taking down trees. Superintendents get in trouble

when they mess with course design or trees, but not when they change the fertilizer program. Golfers react most to things they touch and see.

### Q What value can a business consultant bring?

On the business side, consultants can help a course in a number of ways. The superintendent acts as a purchasing agent, and consultant advice can help him decide whether to buy equipment or lease it. An expert can help you decide what's best to do and help you sell it to the club. They can also help you think outside the box. A number of courses are running into issues with benefits. We work to retain people by making the Atlanta Athletic Club a great place to work, but as a result we experience more health insurance claims. So, employee retention can save a golf course money, but cost it money in benefits. A consultant can help us work through this issue.

The only sure thing in golf is that we'll do things differently every year. Consultants can bring you new ideas and solutions to improve profits, improve quality and market better.

### Q What's your advice to superintendents regarding job security?

Be proactive, communicate and take great care of your course. The best possible job security comes from taking great care of your course and from knowing what's going on.

Some superintendents have contracts with their courses to protect them in the long term. I have one and all of our managers at the Atlanta Athletic Club are under contract. I worked for a long time without one. The problem with working on an informal agreement is that it does not protect you five or 10 years down the road when the owner or manager may have died or left the course. A contract puts issues like severance and arbitration down in writing. It would be a good idea to include in your contract that you must be informed before any outside consultant is hired.

There are possible downsides to employment contracts. They turn people off. They also work both ways – they put restrictions on your ability to leave, for example. And ultimately, if the club doesn't want you there anymore, then you don't want to be there either, despite what the contract says. What the contract prevents is giving you little or no notice that you no longer have a job.

### Q What is your advice to golf course management regarding consultants?

Simply this: Do the research and background checks to determine what the consultant's motives are and their recent track record. If a consultant stands to make thousands of dollars per year from the advice offered, then that should serve as a warning flag. I have heard of consultants that profit directly from the fertilizer or other products they recommend to get the job done. The club may not know that, especially if they are looking for a silver bullet solution.

It's also important to check out the consultant's track record – not what they have done in their careers, but what they've done as consultants, especially most recently. As the saying goes, 'Nothing is impossible for someone who does not have to do it.' It's easy for a consultant to fly in and say this and this needs to be done. The question is can they do it? The question also is, why can't the club's own superintendent do it? Does he have the resources? Does he have the expertise? If not, can he get it through his own network of consultants?

I'd also check the record of any outside consultant in your area of the country and on your type of grass. Being an expert in the southwest doesn't make you one in the northeast or midwest.

### Q Advice for owners and managers about their relationships with their superintendents?

Camaraderie, professionalism and ethics have long been the norm in golf and these ideals have helped make the game what it is. The rise of golf for profit has put pressure on those ideals. Today, it's often about money and we know what the money does to people. Despite this, the ethical aspect of golf remains as important as ever. The relationship between the superintendent and his course owner or manager has to be based on trust. The superintendent is entrusted with the course's most valuable asset and can only do the job correctly when his or her judgment and knowledge is trusted by those he works for. Going around the superintendent crosses a line and damages or destroys the trust relationship. It would be no different than if the owner hired a management consultant without talking to his or her general manager first, or a retail consultant without talking to the golf professional first. GCN

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## Your next job

**GETTING THE MOST OUT OF LIFE AND WORK BEGINS WITH A COMMITMENT TO GROWTH AND CAREER PLANNING**

by ROGER STANLEY

**G**olf course superintendents enjoy challenging work, potential for excellent pay, and opportunities to live and work in locations that most people can only visit as part of a dream vacation. For all these reasons, most superintendents enjoy their careers enough to recommend it to their children. In a December 2003 *Golf Course News* survey of more than 4,000 superintendents, 61 percent of the respondents said they would recommend that a son or daughter become a superintendent (see chart on page 37).

However, realizing the benefits of a career as a superintendent is not easy or automatic. Climbing the career ladder requires a planned series of job changes to grow one's skills and take on greater responsibilities. According to the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), about 20 percent of superintendents change jobs each year, and on average work about seven years in a position. Advancement requires personal growth, hard work, learning a range of new skills, developing the ability to wear numerous management hats simultaneously and more.

Advancement also requires continuing career management, a skill most aspiring and established golf course superintendents should pay greater attention to, says Jim McLoughlin, former executive director of GCSAA and founder of TMG Golf, a Carlsbad, Calif.-based consulting firm specializing in course development.

"The golf course industry is 10 to 15 years behind most other professional fields in terms of career management," McLoughlin says. "The problem is that the subject of career planning does not appear on the radar screen of most superintendents."

To teach superintendents about the skill, McLoughlin presented "Strategic Career Planning for Superintendents and Assistants," a seminar sponsored by Jacobsen at the February GCSAA conference in San Diego. His central



advice to a packed room was to take charge of their own destinies.

"Seventy-five percent of all people react to life by following the easiest path," McLoughlin says, "while only 25 percent take the initiative with their careers and lives. Winners have a plan that dictates where they want to be five years from now, 10 years from now and later in life. Superintendents who fail to realize their career potential become job vulnerable later in their careers."

McLoughlin says winners at the game of career management are those that continue schooling, work with their USGA Green Section, learn to use new technologies, make good use of down time and balance their lives. As managers, they hire well and delegate effectively. They are organized, good at communicating, dress well and play golf comfortably. They recognize when it is time to change jobs and are prepared to do so.

Career losers reflect the reverse of the above.

"My observation is that superintendents who react to life are those that stay too long at a job early in their careers and don't delegate enough. Later in their careers they still stay too long at a job and try to delegate too much. They often try to take a CEO approach to the job by taking too much free time with declining visibility at their club or course. They also tend to be disorganized and sloppy—a concern because the people they report to tend to be very organized and orderly."

Another discipline for success is being able to balance work and family, McLoughlin says. The goal should be a 40-hour workweek, and while not always possible, no superintendent should want to appear to be a workaholic.

"If you want to impress your employer then do the job within routine hours," he says. "You can do that by managing yourself and learning to delegate. Lower your stress by planning effectively and exercising."

"And try not to bring your work home. Building a firewall between work and home allows you to spend time with your spouse and your children. Being a good superintendent should never mean spending adequate time with your family only during the off-season, a habit that too frequently leads to divorce. The key is to learn to manage yourself first, then your job, and finally your family. If you fail at one, you fail at all three."

### Seeing the opportunities

The place to begin with career management is to identify all available sources of jobs throughout the industry. Unfortunately, the player and golf course construction boom of the 1990s when more than 500 courses were opening per year has ended. Today, about 200 new courses open per year. McLoughlin says

while this limits opportunities, it does not end them.

The golf course superintendent job market is dominated by municipal, daily fee and private courses. There are about 16,000 courses in the nation. Of these more than 4,300 are private courses and more than 11,500 are public. Sixty percent of the courses are 9-hole courses, which provide excellent opportunities for superintendents just starting their careers, as well as for superintendents near the end of their careers.

But there are other opportunities to consider, McLoughlin says. One is in construction. Golf course construction is an opportunity too often overlooked by aspiring and established superintendents. "Generally the best way to get into this market is to stay in touch with the architect community," McLoughlin says. "Some shy away because of the temporary nature of this business, but on many occasions the construction superintendent has an opportunity to stay on the job after helping to build the course."

Working for a golf course management company is another opportunity. Contract companies manage about 20 percent of the courses across the country. "For the superintendent just starting out the advantage of working for a management company is that you get to be supervised by professionals, not lay persons."

Another opportunity to consider is working at a golf practice facility. This is a fast growing segment in golf and can be an excellent entry-level job into the world of the golf course superintendent. It can also be a good exit opportunity for veteran superintendents who want to back off on work or to get into an ownership situation.

Other opportunities for established golf course superintendents include 36-hole-plus operations, destination resorts, overseas jobs and consulting.

"Once you know what is possible, the next step in career planning is to identify what you want out of your career and your life," McLoughlin says. "If you desire to own a home with a pool, take major annual family vacations, retire to Arizona and have your children attend Harvard, you need to plan your family's life accordingly, or you will never realize these goals. The same is true with your career."

"My work with golf course superintendents shows that most don't really think long term about what they want out of their careers and

### Golf Course News polls superintendents\*

Are you improving your business management skills and training in order to qualify for a promotion?



Are you improving your technical and agronomic skills and training to qualify for a promotion?



\*Independent online study of 4,000 GCN readers in December 2003 with a 13.7% response.

how to get there. For example, one in five golf professionals envisions owning their own course someday, but only one in 200 superintendents thinks about this. Why? Superintendents are actually in a better position to own and run a golf facility in many ways than are golf professionals."

### Getting the job you want

Serious career planning involves three steps: First, knowing how to get a job. Second, knowing how to hold a job. Third, knowing how and when to move on to the next job.

"Getting the job you want can be a matter of luck," McLoughlin says. "Luck does play a role, but at most it is 25 percent of the equation. The other 75 percent are things that you control—your preparation, skill and timing."

Early in a superintendent's career, McLoughlin recommends working as an assistant superintendent at two to three places for two to three years at each job. Try to work in both the north and south to gain experience with cool and warm season grasses to keep both job markets open.

Next, McLoughlin advises serving as the superintendent at two to three advancing jobs.

"When should you think about leaving an assistant job? I think the ideal time is when you have learned everything you can from that superintendent. But don't make lateral moves if you can avoid them, and try to not get trapped into a position because of a big salary or benefits. The goal of early career planning is to envision where you want to be in the short and longer term phases of your career and then work to get there," he says.

As one possible example of a career job sequence, McLoughlin suggests working

as an assistant at several good public golf courses and then working your way up to become superintendent at a good public course. Next, maybe take a challenging job as an assistant superintendent at a good private club and then work your way up to becoming superintendent at better private club. After this, become the superintendent at better private

club. Finally, become the superintendent or property manager at a multi-course facility or a resort.

A special objective in such a career path is to work toward "pedigree" jobs at the country's premier golf clubs and courses.

"The candidate with a better pedigree resume has a better chance of winning a job,"

McLoughlin says. "Your pedigree dictates if you will get interviewed because if you have worked at better clubs it will be assumed that you have had better training and met more challenging standards. All this assumed experience reduces the risk of hiring you. Rightly or wrongly, the chairperson of a search committee is afraid to make a mistake. He or she doesn't want a risky hire. So a pedigree track record gives you the advantage, especially for the better jobs."

McLoughlin advises young superintendents to come up with their own definition of what a successful superintendent is and then decide how to become one. One of the considerations is deciding if salary is more important than pedigree.

"In terms of career opportunities golf is a very flat market," McLoughlin says. "It is relatively easy to find and take a lateral job. But if you want to become the superintendent at a premier course, then opportunities are limited. If success means to one day manage a premier golf course, if that is a major part of your definition of success, then my advice is to think more about establishing your pedigree early on than your salary."

## Top 12 skills to get a super job

by STEVE SMITH

**F**or an increasing number of golf courses, hiring a superintendent is no longer a matter of comparing candidates against a wish list. Premier courses recognize that star performers are a must, says Randall Martin, president of Sibbald & Associates, an executive search firm specializing in golf and resorts.

"Today, more than ever, clubs recognize the importance of the golf course superintendent," Martin says. "There is more competition between clubs than there has been in the past, and courses recognize that they need to have a good golf course to attract new members."

Speaking at the GCSAA Show last February, Martin says there are 12 qualities employers look for in superintendent candidates that can do it all:

**1. Agronomy skills.** "Clubs are looking for an individual with good agronomic skills. This means at least a two-year degree in turfgrass management or a related field, a CGCS who has kept up with the certification requirements and agronomic advancements and someone that has produced a good product."

**2. Strong leadership abilities.** "Do whatever you can to improve your leadership and management skills by taking the necessary courses or working under someone who has an excellent reputation for leadership and management."

**3. Good writing and communication skills.** "If you can't clearly communicate and sell your plans for the golf course to the general manager, the green committee and the membership at large, you are going to have problems. You also need to be able to communicate regularly to the membership, in writing, so that they know what's going on."

**4. Strong character and decisiveness.** "Most clubs are looking for a superintendent for guidance in setting up a long-range plan for the golf course. So, they want someone with the strength of character to stand up and say what the course should be doing and what the priorities should be. Obviously you have to be tactful, but the clubs are looking for a strong individual, not a Mr. Milk Toast."

**5. Team player.** "Clubs are looking for someone with a reputation of working well with a golf professional and other staff."

**6. Approachability.** "Clubs want someone who is visible on the golf course when the members are around, someone who the members feel comfortable with and someone they can express their feelings to. If a member has a legitimate concern and the superintendent can handle it in a timely manner, that member will become one of the superintendent's most ardent supporters."

**7. Sound financial and administrative skills.** "You have to be able to put together a detailed budget and handle the administrative details. In other words, the ability to do paperwork is important."

**8. Experience with improvements.** "At some point, most clubs will renovate some part of their course, so experience in doing in-house projects, as well as hiring outside contractors and supervising them, is important."

**9. Related experience.** "When a search committee reviews a resume, they are looking for similarities between the candidate's experience and their facility - similar weather zone, same type of grass, a private or public course, managing a Hispanic work force, or similar factors."

**10. Association involvement.** "Be active in your local and national associations and hold an office if possible. Clubs look favorably on superintendents who have been recognized by their peers."

**11. Play the game.** Playing the game was not important just a few years ago, but that has changed. Clubs want a superintendent who plays the game and sees the course from a player's perspective. It's not necessary to have a single-digit handicap, but it is important to play the game."

**12. Know what you want.** "I've had candidates tell me they really weren't interested after they were selected for an interview by the search committee. That doesn't go over well with the committee or with me. Do your research about the club to determine that you really are interested in the opportunity before you apply. People in the golf business tend to have long memories."

*Randy Martin is president of the golf course superintendent division of Sibbald Associates, a St. Louis-based executive search firm specializing in resorts and golf clubs. Martin can be reached at [rmartin@sibbaldassociates.com](mailto:rmartin@sibbaldassociates.com).*



## Necessary skill set

Many superintendents mistakenly think that being good at taking care of a golf course is the primary qualification for a better job. McLoughlin suggests however, that unless the superintendent is able to document past performance professionally via text, graphics, visuals and a Web site - past performance will mean little.

"I strongly advise superintendents to get USGA Green Section and peer evaluations of their work. From a career management perspective, being evaluated by your peers is the only professional supervision available in the industry today, unless a superintendent works for a management company. However, few superintendents take advantage of this opportunity. Unsupervised superintendents tend to repeat mistakes and fail to grow professionally."

Another mistake McLoughlin sees superintendents make is getting trapped into thinking that their employers should pay for all their training and education. That does not always happen, so superintendents should establish a personal budget to travel to seminars and trade shows and to purchase computers, cameras and other resources.

"Your career is your responsibility and that means spending some of your own money," McLoughlin says. "For example, I suggest you visit Augusta during tournament week - it's the greatest living golf course laboratory you can possibly imagine, especially early in the

week when they are fine-tuning the course for the tournament. There is no harm in asking your employer to pay for some of this, but if they won't then you need to be prepared to do so yourself. Remember, all this is tax deductible.

"I would also suggest that superintendents commit to obtaining CGCS certification. What are you going to answer if one day you are standing in front of a search committee for a job you want badly, and they ask you if you are working to become certified? If you are in the process that will probably suffice. If you are not in the process, what answer can you possibly give them that shows any commitment to the industry or your career?"

Because the successful superintendent must manage a multitude of responsibilities, other career skills to master early in a career include being able to communicate effectively in writing, being a good mechanic in the age of ultra hydraulics, keeping accurate records, knowing how to manage budgets and staff, and being technology literate.

"In this day you need to be able to use a computer, software and work on the Internet. The Internet is a great way to network with other superintendents," McLoughlin says.

"I'd also learn how to use a digital camera and develop your own Web sites. You can dedicate one Web site to your current job - with your employer's permission - that you update weekly with course activity, staff profiles, maintenance schedules, special projects and more - and a second, personal Web site that targets your next job. The goal of this second Web site is to complement your resume. In an interview only 20 percent of your time should be devoted to your past jobs, with 80 percent focusing on a plan of action for the job you are applying for. Most superintendents reverse these percentages in an interview to their own detriment."

McLoughlin says a final suggestion on skills development is to commit to playing golf comfortably and regularly. A recent survey showed that 31 percent of all golf course superintendents do not play golf at all, one-fourth pay once a month and about half pay once per week.

"What does playing or not tell you about a superintendent's commitment? Playing the game is not a luxury. Playing shows respect for the game and is a great way to learn the play and Rules nuances of your course. I suggest playing a minimum of 20 visible rounds per year. Having a low score is not necessary, but take lessons and work to earn a handicap. Also know the Rules well! Take the USGA and PGA Rules tests. Better still, qualify and serve on the Rules Committee at your club or course. All this will earn you

peer recognition within the family of golf, which translates into greater job security."

### Options for senior superintendents

It is never too late to begin career planning, McLoughlin says. Even the more veteran superintendents have options they can exercise to put themselves in a stronger situation.

"Again, the place to start is with what you envision for yourself," he advises. "For some established superintendents that will mean continuing to work at their present jobs on their own terms. For others it will mean moving on and up."

For those who want to continue working career planning can involve negotiating a better contract, expanded responsibility, the opportunity to earn outside consulting income, and possibly taking a sabbatical leave.

"The best way for a veteran superintendent to keep the future job opportunity door open is to have an established track record for managing his or her present golf course operation impeccably and below the standard budget norm for the region. With this card available, superintendents will always be able to call their shots because they will always be able to pay their own way."

For those who want a better challenge or more rewarding work than a present job offers, the opportunities include becoming a superintendent at a better golf course operation, establishing credentials to become a general manager, or going the entrepreneurial route via a consulting company, or acquiring equity in a golf facility operation.

"There are opportunities to buy a club or buy into a club," McLoughlin says. "Owning a practice range is also a noteworthy experience that I'd recommend. It's a legitimate opportunity that requires one-sixth of the land and development cost of a regulation 18-hole golf course - while at the same time potentially delivering similar bottom line revenues."

"Whatever route you take, whether as someone who is just entering the business or as a veteran superintendent working on exiting on your own terms, your dreams are

### Golf Course News polls superintendents\*

If you were offered a new job would you consider taking it?



72% Yes, as a superintendent with a higher salary and more responsibility

\*Independent online study of 4,000 GCN readers in December 2003 with a 13.7% response.

Would you advise a son or daughter to pursue a career as a golf course superintendent?



only possible through career planning," GCN

Jim McLoughlin founded TMG Golf, a golf course development and consulting firm, and a former executive director of GCSAA. He can be reached at [golfguide@adelphia.net](mailto:golfguide@adelphia.net).

## SAVE 2/3 of GRASS SEED WAIT DAYS?

Example - Maryland State Highway Dept.: one week vs. three

- OR - as U.S. civil service head groundsman said: - "We've never seen grass up so fast! Now 3 or 4 days from sowed seed routinely!"
- Used by U.S. Air Force to control dust on dirt flying fields, World War II.
- Tested, bought, taught, used for turf, plants, trees, by a great number of state university campuses, over 60 years.
- Cut golf greens closer, "like glass"- still healthy.

HOT or COLD - DRY or WET - Another "making impossibles easy" When 115° to 122° daily in Palm Springs, Calif.



Typical California green kept green and smooth by Monday a.m. SUPERthrive™ spraying.

"SUPERthrive™ kept all our greens uniformly thick and wear-tolerant, with no problems, while all other courses in the area lost 6 to 14 greens. SUPERthrive™ WORKED WONDERS

ON 400 TREES WE PLANTED. SUPERthrive™ is a blessing. SUPERthrive™ kept the greens alive and together through the dry summer days. It also keeps roots penetrating in COLD weather."

### FURTHER UNIQUE FACTS -

Biggest ever moved - enabled by SUPERthrive™ Live Oak Tree

- Guinness Book of Records, "Biggest ever moved." Standardly, with SUPERthrive™. Contractors and parks ACCEPT NO LOSS of trees. Worldwide (though no salesmen.)
- 100% of 2000 SUPERthrive™ dealers asked at trade shows said they are "aware that SUPERthrive™ revives shrubs and trees with as little as green under their bark."
- Said U.S.D.A. head grower - "Far more growth above and below ground than when fertilizers used alone."
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USE READER SERVICE #16

# Sutton Bay

DESIGN-BUILD CUTS TIME AND COSTS IN DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF SOUTH DAKOTA RESORT AND CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF COURSE

by  
MARK  
LESLIE

The advantages of design-build construction include cost savings, fewer change orders and simplicity of management. To build the Sutton Bay Golf Club in Agar, S.D., the decision to use design-build came down to saving time.

"By the time we got all the pieces put together and looked at the schedule, we felt design-build was the only way to get the job done," says Bill Kubly, chief executive officer of golf course builder Landscapes Unlimited, Lincoln, Neb., and a part owner of Sutton Bay. What made this design-build project unusual was that it began with only a total budget in mind – \$18 million.

"While influenced by Kubly's involvement in the project, and Landscape Unlimited's experience with the construction process, the decision to use design-build was based on time. Design-build

probably saved us a year," says Mark Amundson, general manager of Sutton Bay.

"If we had to figure out all the particulars beforehand, we would have had to wait another year to begin construction," Kubly agrees. "And that year represents a lot of money and lost opportunity."

Shaving 60 to 90 days off the construction period represents a savings of \$1.1 million in carrying costs at 6 percent interest. Extending construction another two or three months also would have added to the grow-in costs.

"Our opening date was ... as fast as you can do it in South Dakota," adds superintendent Bryan Tipton. "Design-build is definitely a quicker process."

## Resort opportunity

Sutton Bay originated when Matt Sutton envisioned turning his 4,300-acre horse, cattle and buffalo ranch into a premier golf, fishing and hunting resort. Amundson surveyed the extraordinary property, then called Graham Marsh, a PGA Tour player and a business partner. Marsh in turn contacted Kubly about the proposed resort, and Kubly and a handful of other members of Sand Hills Golf Club in Mullen, Neb. agreed to invest in Sutton Bay.

"The property offered a panorama of massive dunes abutting Lake Oahe, a 200-mile-long reservoir formed by a dam on the Missouri River," Kubly says. "It was an extraordinary opportunity, but we knew the

team had to be on the same page. The goal of using a turnkey design-build approach was to speed up the process. Missing a season meant losing opportunity."

In this case, a golden opportunity. With several investors from Sand Hills, the Sutton Bay Club put \$18 million on the board to build an 18-hole championship golf course, a practice range, clubhouse, lodge and housing units for 75 guests.

Once it was determined Landscapes would be the general contractor, the normal first order of business, the choice of architect, was already decided since Marsh, a PGA Tour player and an architect, also was one of the investment partners. So, the next steps were to engage an architect to design the clubhouse and lodging, bring in company experts to master plan the buildings, and hire a building contractor with the resources to handle such a large project.

"The rest we did mostly in-house," Kubly says, "although we pieced out all the small aspects like the wells, and dropping pumps into Lake Oahe."

On site every day to oversee construction were Amundson, Tipton, and Rock Williams, Landscape Unlimited's construction superintendent.

The design-build team spoke daily and met every week with Marsh and Kubly. Parameters for everything from root zone to the width of cart paths were set, Williams says, adding: "Adjustments were made, but most things were set in stone. That made life a little easier."


"This is a more simple process than design-bid-build," says Amundson. "There aren't as many people involved, not as many layers. It's a cleaner, simpler operation from



Photo: John Henebry

Sutton Bay Golf Club offers fishing, hunting and an 18-hole championship course. The resort also includes a 9-hole executive course, clubhouse, lodge and housing units for 75 guests.





Sutton Bay's 422-yard par-4 finishing hole challenges golfers with fairway rolls that can leave the ball on upslopes, downslopes, above or below their feet. A variety of pin placements add different challenges each day.



Photo: John Henebry