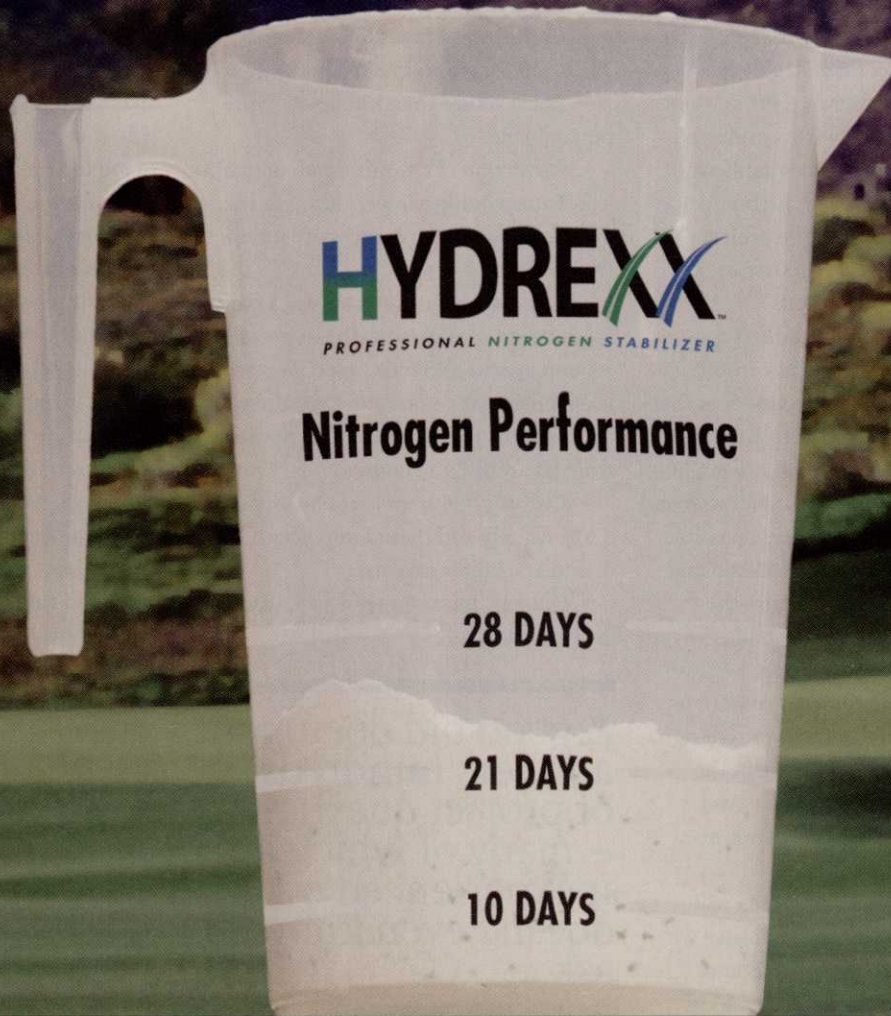




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**Jeffrey D. Brauer** is a licensed golf course architect and president of GolfScapes, a golf course design firm in Arlington, Texas. Brauer, a past president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, can be reached at [jeff@jeffreymbrauer.com](mailto:jeff@jeffreymbrauer.com).

## BID OPENING EXPECTATIONS

If you become involved with reconstructing a golf course, it's likely you'll have a bid opening. While some projects are negotiated with a preferred contractor, most owners inevitably want to know if they've received the best price, which requires one to bid the project competitively using a golf course architect to prepare the documents.

Some clubs opt to bid small and medium-size renovation projects without using a golf course architect to save fees that typically equate to 7 to 10 percent of the construction cost. However, there are numerous examples of the service more than paying for itself through the best possible construction price thanks to bidding and construction evaluation to assure the quality designed is the quality built.

Bid openings are always tense because architects' design agreements require us to design within a budget and to redesign (at our cost) if the bids don't meet the budgets. So, I'm always nervous. And naturally, the first bid usually ends up highest.

Normally, we're confident bids will be close to our cost estimate because we track unit costs from recent bids and adjust our estimates for inflation, local conditions and materials, and project size. But this has been more difficult during the past year when oil prices have boosted plastic prices for drain and irrigation pipes and trucking costs for almost all materials.

Just in case market conditions have changed dramatically, we usually provide alternate bid items so we can adjust the final contract up or down to meet budget. This usually involves changing specifications rather than changing the basic design. When trying to reduce a budget, typical targets include:

- California versus USGA greens (\$190,000 savings on a recent bid).
- Local rather than imported white bunker sand.
- Reduction of tee-mix depth or quality.
- Fabric bunker liner, although this quickly is becoming a necessity rather than a luxury.
- Cart path width. It's always a painful decision to narrow paths, especially around greens and tees, but concrete is expensive. It's even more painful to accept paths that are less than eight-feet wide all around the course.
- Curbing. Courses that eliminate curbs usually add them later, poorly tied in and at a larger expense.
- Bunker, tee and green size, usually in that order.

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**A good bid document answers hundreds of project questions – many of which an inexperienced owner doesn't even know to ask ...**

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There are many instances in which you shouldn't be overjoyed at receiving a bid lower than expected. One is when it comes from a bidder the architect or client doesn't want to work with. It's best to eliminate unwanted bidders through a strong prequalification requirement, such as being a certified member of the Golf Course Builders Association of America, or an invited bid list rather than go through the lengthy and expensive bid process only to be told you don't care to work with them. That way, you'll be

happy to work with any successful bidder.

Golf course architects also are concerned when the low bid is more than 5 to 7 percent lower than the next cluster of bids. This can indicate the contractor has missed something significant in the plans or has financial troubles and needs a job too desperately. This is why most bids allow an owner to accept the lowest reasonable bid or the one he deems is in his best interest.

Architects know how to put a bid together to assure the bidders truly are bidding apples to apples. When a club asks contractors for bids independently, assuming everyone knows what it wants when rebuilding a green, there's room for error. Most likely, the low bid is a result of a contractor bidding to build it in the least expensive way (not necessarily a bad thing) rather than the way you want it built.

Architects also know how to write bid proposals and contracts that cover the many details of a large financial transaction that protects the owner if the project doesn't go as smoothly as anticipated. A good bid document answers hundreds of project questions – many of which an inexperienced owner doesn't even know to ask – that considerably affect the bid price, the product quality and the owner's satisfaction.

Lastly, an architect is experienced in contractor negotiations. Besides determining the final bid price and contracts that minimize change orders if those arise, he'll assist you in negotiating fair change orders that will save you money.

While you might envision a golf course architect as providing you artistic vision, our experience with design agreements and payments reflect our real value: protecting you financially and legally through complete plans, specifications and bid documents. The well-planned, functional and artistic design is a bonus. **GCI**

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**Jim McLoughlin** is the founder of TMG Golf ([www.TMGgolfcounsel.com](http://www.TMGgolfcounsel.com)), a golf course development and consulting firm, and is a former executive director of the GCSAA. He can be reached at [golfguide@adelphia.net](mailto:golfguide@adelphia.net) or 760-804-7339. His previous columns can be found on [www.golfcourseindustry.com](http://www.golfcourseindustry.com).

## A TWO-YEAR PRESIDENCY

The surest way to have someone question your sanity is to suggest it would be appropriate for GCSAA presidents to serve two-year terms (actually, two one-year terms). I can hear the outcries already: The presidents are overloaded now; how could they possibly double their term lengths, take on deeper workloads and keep their jobs? In my judgment, the two-year-presidency concept isn't only appropriate, it's a necessity.

The persistent problem with the one-year term is it denies each president the opportunity to lead because it's virtually impossible for a president to initiate new programming and see it through within a 12-month period and because it's so easy for board members and staff to simply outwait a 12-month president on any debated issue. Consequently, one-year terms mandate the GCSAA presidency remain a pure ceremonial position.

As part of the present one-year format, presidents have no leverage and, consequently, surrender any idea of leading the association and its members to new ground (i.e., the GCSAA is a rudderless ship at a time when it requires newfound leadership to find its way in today's very demanding world). Fortunately or unfortunately, there's no one else to provide the necessary leadership but the association president, given the opportunity. The GCSAA no longer has the luxury of one-year ceremonial presidencies.

It's clear the only way to create a fit between a working superintendent and a two-year presidency would be to reconfigure the presidential job description to minimize time dedicated to interfacing with sister golf organizations and to maximize the opportunity for the president to focus on the more critical needs of the membership and profession. For example:

The first scheduling issue that must be addressed is the traditional practice of having the GCSAA president attend virtually every one of the industry's key sister association events (the U.S. Open, the Masters,

the PGA Championship, the British Open, the Ryder Cup every other year, the USGA annual meeting, the PGA annual meeting, the CMAA annual meeting, Golf's 20/20 meeting and several international events in Canada, Europe and the Pacific Rim) within a calendar year. Any wonder why the GCSAA wears down its presidents and gets little in return?

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As part of the present one-year format, presidents have no leverage and, consequently, surrender any idea of leading the association and its members to new ground.

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Incoming GCSAA president Ricky Heine estimates he'll be traveling and representing the GCSAA for 75 days during his presidential term. It's not difficult to imagine the GCSAA president could make better use of this time to better serve GCSAA members than dedicating as much as 1,000 hours a year to flying throughout the country to repeatedly meet with the same body of industry officials as a good-will ambassador.

The pressure this extensive travel schedule places on GCSAA presidents can be comfortably eased without sacrificing industry effectiveness by dividing the annual presidential travel schedule equally among all GCSAA board members and c.e.o. Steve Mona. Each board member should be able to represent GCSAA effectively at these sister association events and report back dutifully, otherwise that person shouldn't be on the board. The objective would be to limit presidential travel for non-GCSAA

events to about five days a year.

The next obstacle to overcome would be to reschedule board meetings (except for those associated with the Golf Industry Show) and change them from the more socially oriented three- and four-day meetings with wives at premier hotels and resorts throughout the country to tight, efficient two-day business meetings (without spouses) at the Lawrence, Kan., headquarters. To insure effective two-day weekend scheduling, board members would fly into Lawrence on Friday, meet through Saturday and Sunday, and fly home late Sunday or Monday morning – a scheduling format that has served the GCSAA well for more than 60 years. Wives would continue to attend the annual Golf Industry Show.

This rescheduling would have several meaningful benefits:

1. Presidential travel days, including those needed to attend all GCSAA events and meetings, would be reduced from as many as 75 days to less than 20 days a year, which would render two-year terms plausible.

2. The reduced travel time would allow two-term presidents adequate time to shepherd meaningful, new programming that would directly benefit GCSAA members through to completion.

3. While the GCSAA board always has attracted solid leaders from within membership, the problem has been there hasn't been enough of this. The opportunity that the two-term presidency presents to make a difference would open the leadership floodgates within the GCSAA.

4. Eliminating the scheduling of board meetings at the country's best hotels and resorts would take away the persistent perk incentive for members seeking board service, resulting in better qualified, more dedicated boards serving the GCSAA.

5. The GCSAA would be refreshingly perceived throughout the golf industry as a tight, two-fisted business organization commensurate with the everyday mission of its thousands of members serving the country's approximate 16,000 golf courses.

Leadership begins at home. **GCI**



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**Robert A. Milligan, Ph.D.**, is professor emeritus from Cornell University and senior consultant with Madison, Wis.-based Dairy Strategies. He can be reached at 651-647-0495 or [rmilligan@trsmith.com](mailto:rmilligan@trsmith.com).

## UNDERPERFORMING EMPLOYEES

“One rotten apple spoils the whole barrel.”

It might seem cliché, but science supports the idea behind this old saying when considering teams such as golf course maintenance staffs. Research by the Gallup Organization shows the clear relationship between (a) increased productivity, reduced turnover and less absenteeism, and (b) answering “yes” to the question: Are my associates or fellow employees committed to doing quality work?

About one in three of the more than two million in the Gallup database answered “yes” to this question. However, their answer is highly sensitive to one or more rotten apples among their fellow employees. When employees perceive the presence of one or more poor performers, the proportion answering “yes” falls to one in five. Conversely, in the absence of rotten apples, one half answer “yes.”

This and other research support the link between the presence of one or more laggards and employee motivation/performance. This research makes a lot of sense in the context of fairness. With one or more rotten apples, employees question the fairness of their hard work when others are allowed to slide by.

The message for superintendent as supervisors is clear: begin working with underperforming employees immediately and continue until the poor performance issue is resolved. Three recommended steps are: coaching, negative feedback, and discipline and discharge.

### COACHING

When speaking to fellow managers, a manager said, “When I analyze employee performance problems, 90 percent of them result from something I did.” The coaching in this step focuses on redirecting employee behavior rather than reprimanding the employee. It’s natural to blame poor performance on employee motivation, focus, effort and

concentration rather than factors beyond employee control such as lack of clarity, insufficient training, inadequate confidence and unusual conditions.

In this step, observe the employee, analyze his behavior or performance, and talk to him to identify the barriers to satisfactory performance. Then, use positive feedback to reinforce positive behavior and good performance and provide the needed training, support, resources and encouragement to redirect the employee to use behaviors, practices and procedures that result in satisfactory performance. Here’s an example:

Garth is a new employee whose performance was acceptable initially. Although he seemed motivated, he failed to pick up the pace of task achievement satisfactorily and started to regress. Performance wasn’t adequate, and other employees noticed. As the superintendent observed Garth, he noticed a pattern of hesitation during task completion. When talking with Garth, the superintendent determined the hesitation resulted from insufficient confidence in his ability to complete the tasks correctly. Garth hadn’t mastered the tasks to the degree necessary. By increasing positive feedback where appropriate, providing retraining and temporarily reducing the number of tasks assigned, Garth’s performance picked up. In this situation, a reprimand likely would have shattered Garth’s confidence, resulting in even poorer performance.

### NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

As it becomes clear an employee’s energy, focus, concentration, effort and motivation is the cause of the poor performance, a superintendent should shift from redirecting to providing negative feedback. The employee still might not accept that he’s the cause of the unacceptable performance. To the degree possible, it’s to a superintendent’s advantage to convince the employee his effort, energy, etc., is the problem. Asking questions rather than telling the

employee what to do is often helpful.

We normally think of negative feedback as a reprimand. Instead, I encourage you to think of it as providing the employee a choice: correct the behavior and/or performance issues or incur a specified consequence.

Specifying the appropriate consequence is a challenge; however, without a specific consequence, you’re not providing effective negative feedback. The consequence must include sufficient discomfort to cause the needed change in behavior.

### DISCIPLINE AND DISCHARGE

When negative feedback appears to be insufficient, consider a formal discipline and discharge procedure. Check on the rules and procedures for discipline and discharge at your course. The important characteristics of any process include:

- The purpose is employee success. Termination is a potential outcome but not the purpose of the process.
- Every step is based on the employee (not the supervisor) making the choice to perform or incur the consequence including termination.
- The process must be fair, including the presence of clear consequences (with the consequences becoming increasingly uncomfortable), and detailed documentation of the performance and consequences.

The common steps in a discipline and discharge procedure are:

- Provide a verbal reminder that’s also recorded in writing in the employee file;
- Provide a written reminder that’s also delivered verbally;
- A suspension, which is sometimes called a decision-making leave day. The employee is directed to spend the time deciding whether he wishes to return and perform satisfactorily or seek other employment (be discharged). I’ve seen excellent results from the use of suspensions; and
- The employee chooses to terminate employment rather than perform.

The bottom line is that, at the first sign of performance problems, a good manager will begin coaching and redirecting. **GCI**



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## Quotables

"Superintendents don't want checks on their golf courses such as a 10-foot-by-10-foot square in the middle of a fairway or the corner of a green. Their job is on the line, so they won't do it. Universities can take various areas and let them become stressed or even die, but on a golf course, that can be unacceptable."

- **Clark Rowles**, CGCS, of Nakoma Golf Club in Madison, Wis., about testing biostimulants

"The turf responded like I was giving it first aid."

- **Dan Petersen**, golf course superintendent at the Warren Golf Club on Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming, about the noticeable difference after aerifying regularly

"There's nothing like being out there on the course by yourself in the morning. It's the closest thing you can get to heaven on earth."

- **Doug Petersan**, a retired golf course superintendent and consultant based in Texas

## Consider this

Is the ownership group of the golf course you manage thinking about renovating, reconstructing or restoring the course? No doubt a lot of planning is needed for such projects because there are many things to consider. Mike Hurdzan, Ph.D., a principal of Hurdzan/Fry Golf Course Design suggests focusing on the long-term aspects of such projects and not on the immediate cost. Hurdzan presented some factors to think about at the National Institute of Golf Management earlier this year in West Virginia.

### Golf course factors:

- Rising golf course maintenance standards, i.e., the cost to build and maintain bunkers is more than greens
- More sophisticated member expectations
- Drainage is a high priority
- Changing membership demographics
- Irrigation water quality changes
- Turf stands segregate and change

### Non-golf course factors:

- Outside influences that restrict change
- Adjacent land development
- Hosting tournaments and outings
- Golf and maintenance equipment changes
- An increase of liability

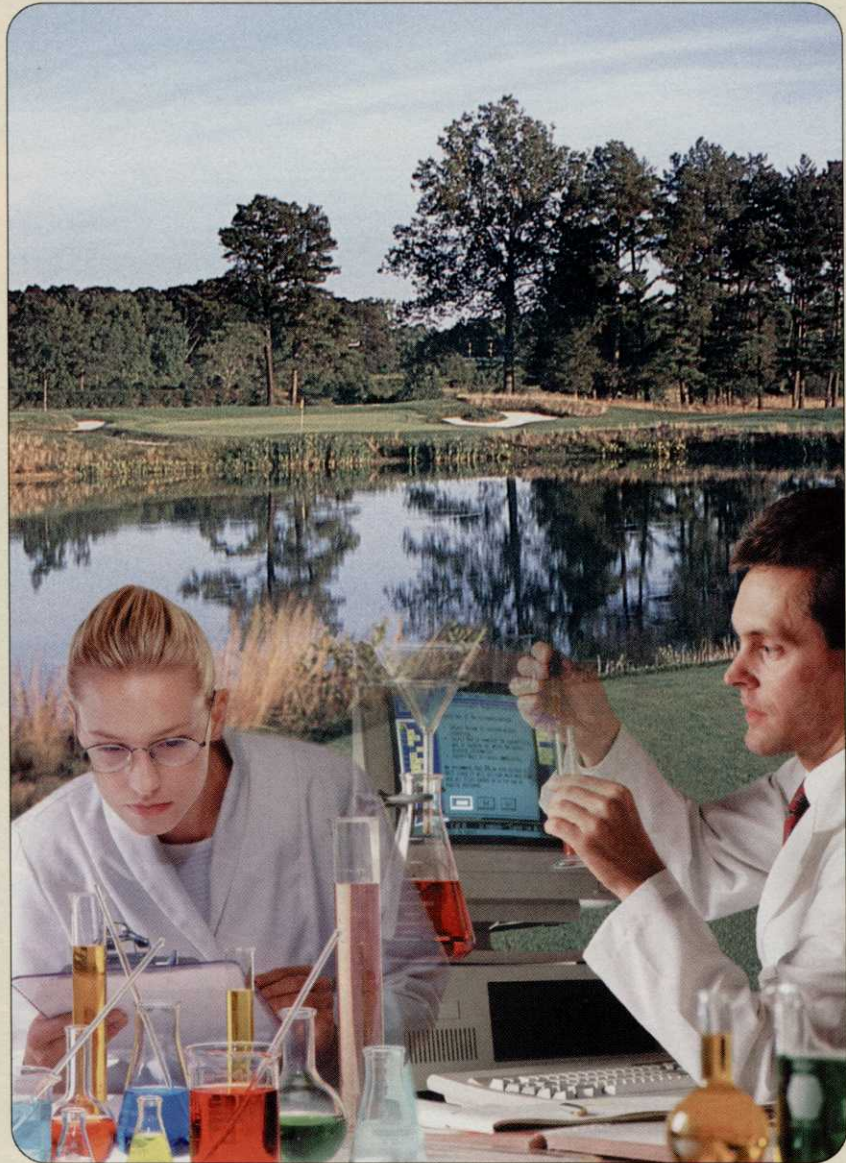




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