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Jack Brennan founded Paladin Golf Marketing in Plant City, Fla., to assist golf course owners and managers with successful marketing. He can be reached at jackbrennan@tampabay.rr.com.

ANALYZING DEMAND FOR ROUNDS

In my last column (GCI, February, page 20), I explained how to calculate golf rounds demand for a marketplace. The column left some readers with questions about the demand formula: Where do I find that number? Why do I add or subtract a percentage for age or income differences. What does it tell me?

The demand analysis is just a snapshot of what your marketplace should be producing (golf rounds) based on state averages. Variances will exist based on your region within the state, but state averages don't necessarily pertain to all regions of a state. As an extreme example, golf demand in Manhattan won't compare to North Salem, N.Y., because of population density. Another variation factor in this example is that North Salem is located on the border of Connecticut, and therefore, you would have to blend the participation rates and average rounds of New York and Connecticut to get an average of those for this city. Additionally, there are many statistical market adjustments that need to be considered when preparing an accurate demand analysis (e.g., the percentage of core golfers versus occasional golfers, ethnicity, gender, etc.). For a simple demand analysis, you need to adjust for the two most significant demographics: age and income. That's why it's a snapshot.

But the more important question is, "What does the demand analysis tell me?" First, you need to know how your course's performance compares to the average range you projected for your market. Is it higher, lower or within the range? Is it good, bad or average? If your rounds are lower, that suggests you're not getting your fair share of market rounds. That alone will be cause for you to critically review why. Curb appeal, price, maintenance, service, location and advertising exposure could be several reasons.

Your next step would be to evaluate, objectively and critically, the courses in your market area that compete directly against you for golfers' time and money. Part of your competitor analysis will require you

to segment what business they're getting compared to you. How many rounds were generated from outings, hotel stays, seniors, leagues, etc. Are they getting compared to you? Knowing this will provide you an opportunity to target certain segments with your promotions. This becomes the basis for marketing planning.

On a more sophisticated level, a simple demand analysis compared to market demographics can reveal opportunities that might not be observed readily. For example, I was hired by a client who purchased a golf course solely to control the land for other business reasons. He didn't care about the golf course, per se, but he wanted to know if the operation could be profitable (it

income growth segment drew the attention of several board members, and the strategic planning discussions changed to creating an upscale public facility catering to this growing income demographic. This opportunity proved more successful than allowing the club to compete in an oversaturated medium-level golf market and more profitable than letting the golf course go to seed. The initial demand analysis told us there was a serious positioning problem for the course as is. Then it was a matter of research to determine the most opportunistic positioning.

Now, what if your demand analysis reveals population-based rounds, but after your market research, you calculate facility reported rounds are 25- or 30-percent higher? It means the courses in your market are being played by golfers from outside your market area. Most likely, it means

A demand analysis example

250,000	Market population in a XX-mile radius
10.0	Golfer participation rate in your state
25,000	Number of golfers in the market
25	Average frequency of play in your state
625,000	Rounds of golf projected for the market
610,000 - 640,000	In this hypothetical example, adjust rounds for age (slightly lower than the state average) and income (slightly higher) and create a range of demand.
20.5	Number of 18-hole equivalents in market radius
29,756 - 31,220	Average rounds per 18-hole course in XX-mile radius

hadn't been to date). If it were going to be a financial drain operating it, he would be satisfied with just the land. From the simple demand analysis, we knew the course was underperforming.

After all the aforementioned market research was completed, I analyzed the income demographics and future income growth projections. The fastest growing and most substantial income segment was the \$75,000 to \$150,000 range. In 2000, it was 6.8 percent of the market, but by 2005, it was registering 13.3 percent of the market and projected to more than double (26.8 percent) again by 2010.

My report provided information the client requested. My added observations about this

tourism or visitor demand. I discovered this after conducting market research for a client. The employees, pros and g.m.s didn't recognize any tourism play. It took extra time and a few interviews with those in the hospitality industry, but I was able to identify the sources of tourism pressure. Not surprisingly, no course was marketing to this demand. No course until then, at least. Owning that opportunity segment of business will generate significant rounds and revenue.

A simple demand analysis can tell you if you're faring poorly or barely average and will help point you in the right direction to increase your course's slow or stagnant rounds and revenue growth. **GCI**

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Reservoir 50 is a new 50% active liquid formulation that is designed for easy injection into irrigation equipment.

Both products work by improving soil aggregation properties. This increases soil porosity and water infiltration. In effect, it "unplugs" the soil and allows more water in the soil profile. This soil activity also reduces evapo-transpiration, and minimizes nutrient and pesticide leaching by "loading" the soil profile with more water.

Reservoir DG and Reservoir 50 remain active in the soil for 3 - 5 weeks and then bio-degrades into natural materials.

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- **Increases soil aggregation properties for greater soil porosity and improved water infiltration**
- **Remains active for 3 - 5 weeks**
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- **Reduces leaching of nutrients and pesticides**
- **Bio-degrades into natural materials**

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PROJECT MANAGEMENT

A golf course superintendent's responsibilities as an owner's representative vary with each project. They depend on the construction contract and members of the owner's design team, such as the golf course architect and engineering and financial consultants who will work together to protect the owner's interests.

Golf projects often are defined less formally than vertical construction. It might not be your final responsibility to check the contractor's pay applications for math errors, for example, but there's nothing wrong with pointing out the ones you find. Overall, the team is responsible for the following tasks:

Assure the contractor's compliance with plans, specifications and the contract. This requires daily construction monitoring by knowledgeable people such as yourself.

Attend regular progress meetings. Clear communication always helps create a smoother-run project. Regular meetings can resolve small problems before they become bigger ones, which are more difficult to solve.

Approve acceptable work and materials. An owner must be reasonable and timely when determining acceptable work. Acceptance is conditional to later events. For example, a contractor will have to fix leaks in an irrigation system that develop after acceptance until the end of the guarantee period.

Note defective work to be corrected. This should be done in a consistent, firm and timely manner to reduce conflict.

Reject work and materials that don't comply or haven't been corrected. Rejecting work is serious and occasionally leads to contractor claims and lawsuits, so it shouldn't be taken lightly and should be done only if defective work isn't corrected. You'll want to do this as a team and

put it in writing, stating exactly why and what part of the work is rejected and offer the contractor a chance to fix the problem. Rejecting materials when delivered is a common occurrence.

Stop work when it's clear continuation won't yield satisfactory results. Stopping a portion of a contractor's work usually is a last resort because it might lead to a claim for a delay.

Direct the contractor to work within applicable laws written by/for ADA, OSHA and EPA, and provide a work safety plan. While this is a contractor's responsibility, courts sometimes rule failure of the owner to reasonably require contractor compliance might indicate complicity in wrongful acts.

Rejecting work is serious and occasionally leads to contractor claims and lawsuits, so it shouldn't be taken lightly.

Monitor the project schedule. It's the contractor's responsibility to meet the schedule. When he falls behind, it's frustrating and costly because missing grassing by a month can set back a reopening an entire year, which has considerable revenue consequences. An owner has the right to demand corrective measures, but specifying exact measures might make an owner partially responsible for that schedule, leading to disagreements.

Coordinate, monitor, review and/or approve tests, samples, contractor provided designs and shop drawings as required in

the contract. Some items, such as greens mix, concrete strength, etc., can be determined to be satisfactory only through testing against specified standards. An owner will arrange to have these made or have the contractor conduct the tests and supply the results for the owner's review.

Interpret plans and specifications in conjunction with the golf course architect when given the authority to do so. In most cases, the golf course architect or irrigation designer will retain this duty, but in some areas they rely on the superintendent, especially when it might be a matter of preference as much as quality.

Resolve disputes and arrange solutions when problems arise. Document daily activities to create a project record. Make anything you write part of the official project record for all to see and make use of.

Review and approve payment applications by the contractor. Make sure they're paid for no more than the work that has been finished in case they leave the project before completion, but don't withholding funds unreasonably. With golf projects, estimating completed work is usually pretty straightforward. If there's mix on six of 18 greens, greens mix placement is 33-percent complete. It's rarely necessary to be more complicated.

As an owner's representative, you'll probably get involved in some trade-outs and negotiations. However, other than minor situations, you're not allowed to revoke, alter, enlarge or waive any of a contract's provisions, at least not without formalizing it and getting approval from the other parties.

The general rules to follow are:

- know what's in the contract;
- set a tone; and
- be consistent and timely.

Most construction disagreements and litigation result when projects begin informally and don't follow contract procedures closely. More next month. **GCI**

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Jim McLoughlin is the founder of TMG Golf (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 or 760-804-7339. His previous columns can be found on www.golfcourseindustry.com.

MARKET REFOCUS

I can remember not too long ago when it was considered a moral victory to have the name of the host golf course superintendent read at the on-site, post-tournament ceremonies throughout the PGA Tour. More times than not, however, superintendents weren't invited to closing ceremonies. Since then, respect for the superintendent's work has grown to the point where the names of hosting superintendents customarily are mentioned, appreciatively, within virtually every golf tournament television broadcast. Not surprisingly, the USGA always has been well ahead of the curve relative to recognizing the indispensable role of the golf course superintendent at its national championship events.

Now, thanks to recent GCSAA initiatives, the association's logo, with a short promotional sound bite, is presented within many TV broadcasts of PGA Tour, Champions Tour, LPGA Tour and major golf tournaments. While clearly this is deserved recognition/progress, it's time for the GCSAA to change gears and move beyond identifying itself as representing the nation's golf course superintendents (a necessary first step) to educating the national golf community regarding the person who brings such unique value to the game of golf as a golf course superintendent.

I've often said the game of competitive golf, like baseball, is a statistically intensive environment that lends itself well to self-promotion. (See my May 2005 GCI column). Similarly, the world of golf course maintenance also interfaces with a rich, to this date untapped, statistical environment that begs for attention. Accordingly, the time has come for the GCSAA to adjust its media approach to fill a new role as a media advocate for the previously unfocused on cultural world of the golf course superintendent and the profession that embodies this noble group of warriors.

For example, following are several sample statistical information packets that might be individually presented within

telecasts – together with voice-over commentary and a supporting visual with the GCSAA logo. These 15- to 30-second commercial segments would be used to stimulate public interest in the intriguing world of the golf course superintendent:

- Golf course superintendents throughout the country are entrusted with the responsibility for the care and highest quality maintenance of an estimated 2,062,500 acres of golf course properties, with an estimated total real estate value of \$20,625,000,000. (Data derivation: 16,500 courses multiplied by an average of 125 acres per course [all sizes] multiplied by \$10,000 average value per acre.)

It's time for the GCSAA to change gears and move beyond identifying itself as representing the nation's golf course superintendents ...

- Golf course superintendents throughout the country are tasked to develop and precisely manage operational maintenance budgets totaling an estimated \$11,550,000,000 annually. (Data derivation: 16,500 courses multiplied by the average operational budget [all size courses] of \$700,000.)

- Golf course superintendents collectively throughout the United States maintain an estimated 189,000 golf course greens, totaling an estimated 945,000,000 square feet of grass that are mowed an estimated total of 47,628,000 times each year. (Data derivation: 10,500 equivalent 18-hole courses multiplied by 18 greens per course at an average 5,000 square feet per green; then 189,000 greens multiplied by seven

cuts a week multiplied by a 36-week average golf season.)

- Golf course superintendents are responsible to efficiently manage the placement of an estimated 821,520,000,000 gallons of water on the nation's golf courses each year. (Data derivation: 130,400,000 gallons or 400 acre-feet per course a year within southern climates and 26,080,000 gallons or 80 acre-feet per course a year within northern climates roughly averages to 78,240,000 gallons per course a year throughout the country; then 10,500 equivalent 18-hole courses multiplied by 78,240,000 average gallons per course a year.)

Far more experienced public information professionals than I working for and with the GCSAA will be able to generate more meaningful data gems than I have presented here. Never has there been a more inviting, more rewarding road to travel. But this should be only the beginning of a much larger game to be played because not only is the golf course superintendent been long recognized as the most essential individual within operational golf – he or she is the imperative. There can be no golf without the golf course superintendent – playingwise, saleswise, manufacturingwise, or any-which-waywise.

I say this not to further praise Caesar; rather to encourage a well-defined, appropriately spread through time, educational-based marketing campaign that would educate America to the personage, educational depth and responsibilities of the golf course superintendent. Can there be a greater disconnect or any doubt that such a campaign is needed when recent industrywide surveys show the majority of superintendents fear annually for job security, often command less respect than seasonal laborers and generally are denied industry norm separation packages when leaving jobs?

I hope the day is soon approaching when once an individual earns the professional title of golf course superintendent, he or she will be accorded the same level and permanency of respect as employed engineers, accountants, lawyers and the like are shown within their professional fields. This day is long overdue. **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.

THRIVING IN THE HEAT

July and August are the hottest months of the year. It can be too hot for turf, employees, golfers and you. In July, the average high temperature is 104 in Scottsdale, Ariz., 92 in Orlando, Fla., 87 in Valley Forge, Pa., and 84 in Chicago. So here's my top-10 list for making it through July and August with your job enthusiasm and work force intact:

10. Provide positive performance feedback. There's nothing like a great compliment to stay focused or keep going in difficult circumstances like the heat. Be certain the positive feedback reinforces specific actions or outcomes that meet and exceed your expectations.

9. Work alongside employees and lead by example. Seeing that you're able and willing to work in tough conditions motivates employees. When the going gets tough, it's even more important employees see your excitement, passion and willingness to work.

8. Play golf or other activities that refresh you. July and August aren't always the best months to take a vacation, but you can develop habits that relieve the stress of work and create quality time away from work. Research shows how you spend time with family and friends is at least as important as how much time you spend. Schedule time during the day when all family members are together. Talk about the day. Ask each person to share one or two positives from his day – a new friend, an accomplishment, something learned, an exciting experience with an old friend. Go for a walk. Don't look for weeds in the turf or problems with the fairways. Reflect on the serenity of nature.

7. Understand golfers. They can become frustrated more easily and overcritical of the course, your staff and you. Interact with them, work especially hard to understand them and always be empathic – understand their perspec-

tives. You don't always have to agree with them, but you must always understand where they're coming from.

6. Provide redirection and negative performance feedback if necessary. It's easy to justify overlooking inappropriate behavior or inadequate performance because of difficult conditions. Don't be tempted. Obviously, performance expectations have to be adjusted to reflect course conditions; however, continue to provide redirection or negative feedback when there's unacceptable performance. Redirection feedback is redirecting actions without any hint of a reprimand when the inadequate performance isn't caused by the employee. Negative feedback is required when the inadequate performance is because of lack of energy, focus, concentration and effort by the employee. In tough conditions, you should be more focused on redirection feedback and minimize the use



When the going gets tough, it's important employees see your excitement, passion and willingness to work.

of negative feedback.

5. Collaborate with others at the course. You're not the only one affected by the heat (although it is nice in the air-conditioned pro shop and clubhouse). Collaborate with course leadership – the golf pro, the clubhouse manager and others – to minimize how the hot weather affects golfers/guests and employees.

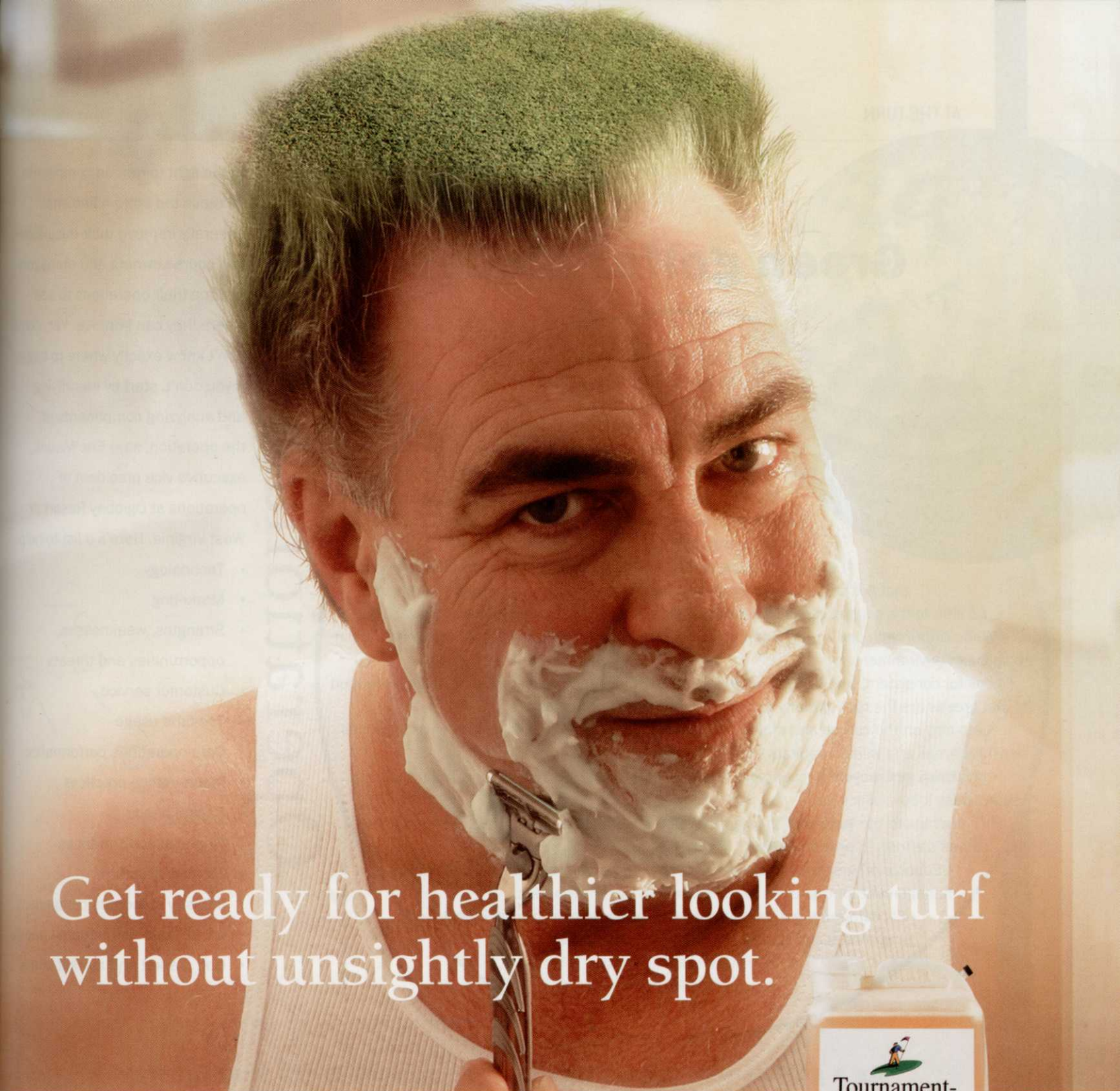
4. Have "informal formal" coaching sessions with employees. One of my most common suggestions to managers is to obtain information from employees by asking two questions: "What's going well with you?" and "What could be going better?" I call this an "informal formal" coaching session because it should be more than a time to BS with an employee but less formal than calling him into your office.

3. Spend time with family and friends. In this space, I've talked frequently about the importance of developing the relationship with employees, counterparts at the course or club and golfers. It's also important to develop and strengthen relationships with family members and friends.

Spend time with them; you need their support. As many of you know, children grow up mighty fast.

2. Listen. Listening is a powerful supervisory tool especially in stressful times. At this time of year, most of your employees have been with you for several months or more. Don't respond too quickly to their seemingly petty concerns or seemingly unreasonable complaints and requests. Often by listening and showing empathy ("I understand your frustration" or "tell me more about what needs to be done"), an employee will vent his frustration or anger, and the situation will resolve itself or be resolved easily.

1. Be fair. The key to supervision is fairness. It's easy, especially in stressful times, to just be nice. If being too nice to one person means others – who might be doing a great job – feel they've been treated unfairly, you have just unmotivated those you least want to negatively impact. **GCI**




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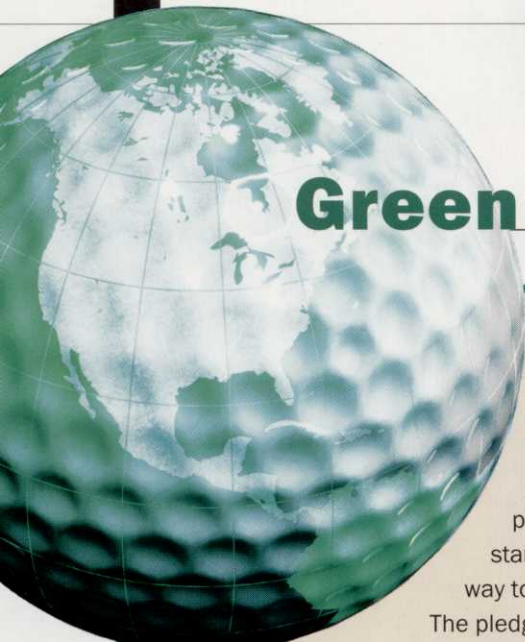


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Green golfer pledge

A golf course staff should encourage golfers to be better environmental stewards. One way to do that is have them take the Audubon Green Golfer Pledge. Copies of the pledge can be placed in the pro shop or given to the starter to hand out on the first tee. This is an inexpensive way to promote environmental stewardship among golfers.

The pledge states:

"I value the nature of the game and accept my responsibility to ensure that golf courses are managed in harmony with the environment. I pledge to:

- Be kind to the course: repair **ball marks** and replace divots to help maintain playability.
- **Walk**, rather than use a cart, when possible. Walking promotes physical fitness, healthy turf and a clean environment.
- Look for consistent, true **ball roll** on greens rather than speed. Lower mowing heights required for fast greens are the root of many turf and environmental problems.
- Keep play on the course and stay out of **natural areas**. Respect designated environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife habitats within the course.
- Use **trash and recycling** receptacles and encourage others to do the same. If you see trash, don't pass it up – pick it up.
- Appreciate the **nature** of the game. Watch for wildlife as you play and support the course's efforts to provide habitat.
- Educate others about the **benefits** of environmentally responsible golf course management for the future of the game and the environment.
- Encourage the golf course to be an **active participant** in environmental programs such as those offered by Audubon International."

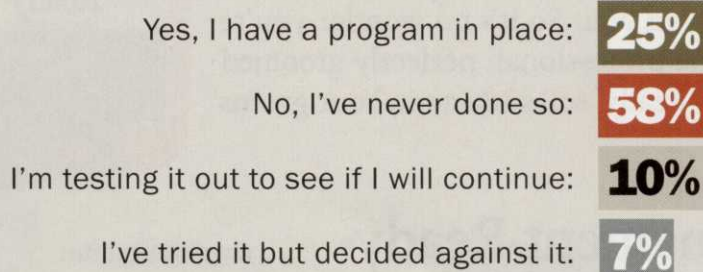
For more information, visit www.golfandenvironment.org.

Operational analysis

In the fight to remain competitive, increase the bottom line and generally improve their businesses, golf course owners and managers critique their operations to see where they can improve. Yet, some don't know exactly where to begin. If you don't, start by identifying and analyzing components of the operation, says Eric Mauck, executive vice president of operations at Oglebay Resort in West Virginia. Here's a list to help:

- Technology
- Marketing
- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
- Customer service
- Tee-time usage
- Core operations performance
- Maintenance practices
- Capital needs
- Financial performances
- Staffing structure
- Industry standards comparison
- Local, state and national trends
- Golf market and market share

As a golf course superintendent, do you topdress your fairways?



Source: Online poll of 134 respondents