

money because of transition problems, rounds at Willow Springs increase. But despite the increase, the course doesn't suffer from the problems usually associated with heavy play.

"We average 44,000 to 56,000 rounds per year, but on two greens, just divide that in half because golfers are only on greens for half a year," Golden says. "You don't have to battle the constant wear problem that most courses do."

Golden doesn't have the expenses associated with employing a huge grounds maintenance crew; he employs about four in the winter and six in the summer.

"It's more work a couple months out of the year, but for

the most part, it's just normal maintenance," he says.

Golden doesn't know of any other courses that have dual greens and guesses some might be deterred by the initial cost associated with installing a second set. But, he adds, if a major architect tried it on a course, the concept probably would catch on quickly and spread to other courses.

Another consideration that should convince superintendents about the concept is that there's always a plan B.

"I sleep better at night because I have job security," he says. "If something goes wrong, if there's a catastrophe on the greens, I have a backup." — HW

## Association heads cite teamwork as main factor of show's success

The official numbers weren't out at press time, but the heads of the three partnering organizations that hosted the Golf Industry Show say early results point to success, especially with educational conferences.

"The feedback has been 100-percent positive," says Steve Mona, c.e.o. of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

The GCSAA, the Golf Course Owners Association of America and, for the first time, the Club Managers Association of Amer-

ica hosted the trade show and individual education conferences Feb. 19 through 27 in Anaheim, Calif., and promoted the need for teamwork.

Show-related numbers, provided before the show ended, indicated the attendance reached 23,000 — the highest of the three GIS events that have been held. The number of exhibitors, which has reached about 700 in previous years, was on track to reach 1,000 this year, according to the GCSAA. Mona cites the addition

*(continued on page 119)*

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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.

## CALCULATING YOUR ROUNDS

This is a good time of year to be involved with golf course marketing. Ideally, the marketing effort for a facility begins just after Thanksgiving and continues with a targeted sales process that lasts through at least March. The only difference between Northern golf courses and Southern golf courses is that courses in the South are slammed with business at times during the winter when courses in the North are closed. However, management of all courses should be reorganizing their marketing strategies and implementing their sales tactics at this time.

Whether your course is closed for the winter or you're watching every tee time book, by now, you've evaluated the past year's successes and shortcomings. But what constitutes market success, and what constitutes market failure? Where do you start with your evaluation? I'll give you a hint: It has little to do with budgets, profit plans or making a bonus. Reaching those types of objectives is always satisfying, but you should ask yourself how your course fared with regard to market share? What's your share of the market, and what's your fair share of market rounds?

One of the first things I do when I'm on a new assignment is calculate a market demand analysis. I want to know how many rounds of golf a market (i.e., the population) should be playing, how many golf courses are in the market, and what the average number of rounds being played per an 18-hole equivalent is. Knowing these numbers, you can determine your course's average market share.

But there are numerous subjective adjustments or considerations that must be made to provide a closer view of your course's average share or fair market share. For example, municipal courses and resort courses usually will generate more rounds than market averages, while private clubs will generate slightly fewer rounds than market averages.

To conduct your own market demand

analysis, start with the National Golf Foundation's participation rate and average rounds played per golfer for the state you're in. For example, for Florida, the NGF's participation rate is 10 percent. The average annual rounds per Florida golfer was 33.3 for 2005, according to the NGF.

The next step, determining your market area, is more subjective. First, determine where your course draws most of its play from. Two accepted areas for medium-level and above public golf are a 20-mile radius and a 40-minute drive time. Choose the one that fits the majority of players who golf at your course. With that population figure, you can calculate the beginning number of market rounds played. However, some demographic adjustments also must be considered. Determine the first population- or consumer-based number first.

**“But there are numerous subjective adjustments or considerations that must be made to provide a closer view of a course's average share or fair market share.”**

For example, let's say a course's market has a population of 100,000 within a 40-minute drive. Ten percent of 100,000 equals 10,000 golfers, and 33.3 multiplied by 10,000 golfers equals 333,000 market rounds of golf. If there are nine 18-hole equivalents in a 40-minute drive area, there are 37,000 average rounds played per 18 holes. That's the starting point.

One calculation or adjustment to consider is that NGF's state participation rate and state average rounds calculations are for the



population age 18 and older instead of the total population. So, an adjustment factor of 17 percent to 25 percent is appropriate for the majority of golf markets to be inclusive of the 0 to 17 year olds because they participate less and play less frequently, according to Edgell Consulting and Pellucid Corp., golf market research specialists. By adjusting the Florida market average by 17 percent, average rounds per 18 holes come out to 32,190 rounds. With a 25-percent adjustment, average rounds come out to 27,750.

Average age and household income are the two demographics that impact rounds played calculations the most. Remember, we're trying to get a snapshot of a market. If the average age for a market is higher than the state's average age, increase the number of average rounds by that percentage. For example, if a market has an average age that's 5 percent higher than the state's, average rounds increase by 5 percent to 33,800. Now, if the average household income also is higher than the state's average household income by, say, 2.5 percent, don't increase the new calculation by that amount. Go back to your original 32,190 market average, multiply by 1.025 for what now creates a range of 32,995 to 33,800 for average market rounds. In general, as golfers age, they play more golf; and as their incomes rise, they play more golf.

Use these types of calculations as an analytical opportunity to see how your course is performing relative to market share as a whole. Are rounds at your course within this range of market averages? Does that mean your share is good, bad or indifferent relative to your course's positioning in the market? What's your realistic fair share of market rounds? These are questions of which you should know the answers. **GCI**

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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).

## SAFETY'S LINK TO LITIGATION

**"S**afety first" is an important mantra for golf courses because golf isn't supposed to be dangerous.

No one likes to be involved with litigation, and because of that, the number of golf course-related lawsuits is small. Gradually, litigation has made golf courses more responsible for golfer safety. Older courses that have closely spaced holes often have the most problems.

If you're currently preparing a master plan, you might evaluate your course in terms of risk rather than risk and reward. As a golf course architect, I've seen legal responsibilities arise from wayward shots, cart paths, ponds and steep slopes.

### WAYWARD SHOTS

Most state laws consider golf inherently dangerous and unintended shots as recognized risks. Thus, golfers voluntarily have assumed the risk of wayward shots, often relieving courses from liability. However, courses must minimize their risk by keeping the preponderance of golf shots out of high-traffic areas such as greens, tees, practice areas and cart-path parking areas where danger is greatest.

Parallel fairways usually are less critical because golfers fan out. Protecting adjacent boundaries is more critical legally because people using adjacent property might not be as aware of risks as golfers. If one area of your course has repeated incidents, the danger is reasonably foreseeable legally, and you need to make changes.

Generally, the best defense is distance separation. Studies suggest most shots land within 150 feet (175 preferred) and 15 degrees (22.5 preferred) on either side of the intended line of play. That's the minimum distance to place fairway centerlines from adjacent property in play areas. Fairway centerline spacing is often

as little as 225 to 275 feet apart because the common rough buffers both holes. Tees and greens might be closer but not much. We need to leave room for high-use cart paths.

Aligning critical areas outside the safety zone is just as important as pure separation for safety of adjacent areas. Older courses find that adding back tees for length often reduces the safety of other areas. Sometimes, it helps to realign them and use hazards to define the line of play to guide shots away from dangerous areas.

Adding vegetation buffers isn't a foolproof screen, and balls occasionally ricochet unfavorably. Despite their ineffectiveness, courts generally view plantings as good-faith safeguard efforts. One club was found liable after a tree was removed, creating an area subject to wayward shots. The club argued that an open, unobstructed sight line made oncoming golfers more visible, and thus safer, although to no avail.

Netting and screens obviously are better for tight areas, but they're such a visual distraction courses hate to use them, even if necessary.

### CART PATHS

Because most golfers use carts, cart-path accidents have increased throughout the years. Many golf course architects recommend courses avoid serving alcohol (not practical) and/or use a qualified engineer for cart-path design (not inexpensive). Path designers – golf course architects or not – still must provide adequate room at tees and greens, gentle grades, speed bumps, broad curves, good drainage, and safety railings for bridges and drop-offs.

An issue that's becoming more prevalent is safe road crossing. Tunnels are preferred more than surface crossing on

roads other than minor ones with good visibility.

### PONDS

At least one irrigation pond is a necessity on a golf course, yet ponds can be risks to golfers. Some risk their lives to save a \$4 ball, and kids find ponds to be an attractive nuisance. There's debate about how to make them safer. A safety shelf allows easier exit, but also easier entry. A steep-banked pond allows balls to roll to the bottom, eliminating temptation to retrieve them. Lawyers for victims will argue that whatever you have is unsafe, so the best recommendation is to control unwanted access, lest vandals damage the course or hurt themselves at night. Fencing all perimeter openings is great when practical. If you're adding a pond, keep it within the course interior as much as possible.

Lightning protection (shelters or warning systems) is common, especially on courses spread throughout housing developments with no shortcut to the clubhouse. However, some experts recommend avoiding warning systems because it's an admission that lightning is your responsibility and obligates you to provide even more protection.

### STEEP SLOPES

Occasionally, golfers fall when they're on steep slopes, steps, retaining walls and deep bunkers. Consider eliminating steep slopes entering busy areas such as tees and greens. You might need to conform to Americans with Disabilities Act requirements anyway.

The industry might never provide a risk-free golf course, but design is part of reducing that risk. Many people feel golf courses should provide free sunscreen, stretching areas and painkillers. Can sports psychologists and gambling advisors to protect golfers from bad thoughts and bets be far behind? **GCI**

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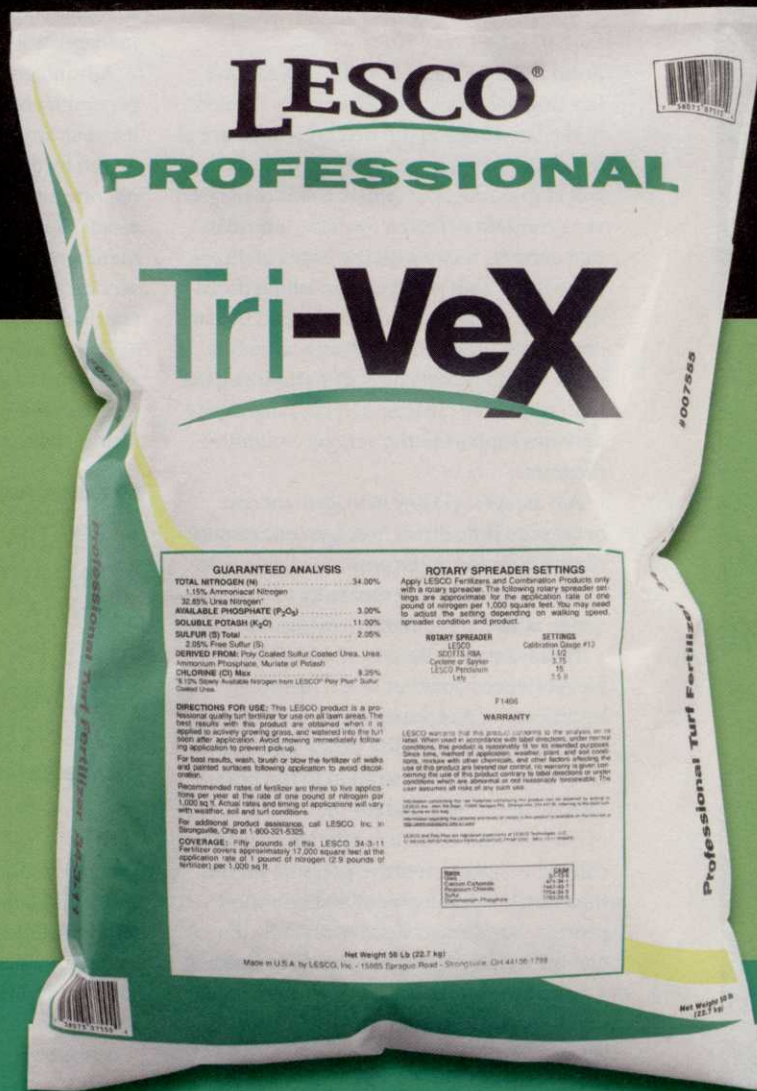
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**Jim McLoughlin** is the founder of TMG Golf ([www.TMGgolfcounsel.com](http://www.TMGgolfcounsel.com)), a golf course development and consulting firm, and is a former executive director of the GCSAA. He can be reached at [golfguide@adelphia.net](mailto:golfguide@adelphia.net)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

## CLUB MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Very few in the golf industry understand the diverse impact each of the three club management formats profiled below can have on the quality of club operations and the careers of professional staff. The purpose of this commentary is to educate regarding club management options.

### COMMITTEE-DRIVEN FORMAT

From the time the U.S. Golf Association's five original charter member clubs opened in the late 1890s to the first oil crunch era of the mid-1970s, almost every equity private golf club throughout America was managed via a committee driven format – a format that survives today with the board of directors setting club policy and in which board members are appointed to chair and manage committee programs. Professional staff is hired by and reports directly to their respective committee chairmen. A club manager provides support to the various committee programs.

Advantages: (1) low management cost because so little direct management responsibility is vested in the position of club manager; and (2) a proven capability to generate ample budgetary funding to meet club needs.

Disadvantages: Because the club has inexperienced amateur board members setting policy and managing departments, club operational stability varies considerably from one administration to the next. This inconsistency undermines the quality of club life and economic efficiency, which collectively place negative pressure on the membership development and retention process. For these collective reasons, the committee management format has become a dying breed from the late 1970s on, surviving primarily throughout northeast America.

### GENERAL MANAGER-DRIVEN FORMAT

Once the mid-1970s oil crunch changed the economics of the country, and, accordingly, the economics of the club industry as well (see my March 2006 column), the club industry could no longer trust direct

management responsibility to the hands of wavering amateur board members serving as committee chairmen. The obvious answer to this problem was to invest more direct management responsibility in the office of club manager, with the board of directors continuing to set club policy. Thus, the new and continuing era of the club general manager was born.

Advantages: The concept of a quality general manager remedies all the problems listed above generated by the committee-driven format, providing a club with its best opportunity for stabilized quality management. Consequently, better-qualified club members feel comfortable seeking board service, which elevates club performance considerably.

Disadvantage: Long-tenured general managers tend to dominate club governance, thereby creating, in due time, a staff-driven format that has its own set of problems.

Clearly, the general manager-driven format delivers more consistent quality management than any other format.

### CONTRACT-MANAGEMENT FORMAT

Uniquely, contract management turns the entire club management and maintenance responsibilities over to an outside company, which provides complete staffing and operates the club within the budgetary parameters set by the club's board of directors.

Advantages: This structure eliminates the possibility of bad management by providing a minimum level of acceptable management, stabilizes operations, reduces the cost of goods through central purchasing, and spends available funding efficiently.

Disadvantages: While protecting against

bad management, this format unfortunately prevents a club from achieving a high quality level of management because the industry's best professional people don't seek career advancement through contract company employment. Also, the added layer of outside management cost can be expensive, from \$100,000 to \$1 million annually.

### SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS

How many of the approximately 4,600 equity private golf clubs throughout the country use each management format? Committee driven – about 1,200 clubs and shrinking; general manager driven – about 2,800 clubs and growing; contract management – about 600 clubs with static growth.

Which format offers the best possibility for consistent solid club management? Clearly, the general manager-driven format delivers more consistent quality management than any other format. Contract management is safe but never exciting, and committee driven management is highly volatile and capable of going every which way.

What's the impact on golf course superintendent's careers? While committee-driven clubs generally make the most maintenance funding available, they also dismiss a highly disproportionate share of all superintendents throughout the country because of board politics and inexperience. The best place for a superintendent to work is under a solid general manager who's secure working with a strong staff (not all are). The benefits of working for a contract company are always worth noting: better job security, optimum fringe benefits, constructive professional supervision of the superintendent's work (not available anywhere else), and meaningful learning opportunities through company education and procedural infrastructure.

The qualifying element of contract management is that superintendents will never earn top money. The moral of the story, therefore, is to work under the contract management structure early in one's career, then switch out to gain access to pedigree jobs that will qualify a superintendent for top money if and when this becomes important. GCI

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## MASTERING THE TASK AT HAND

**“M**y golfers expect the course to be perfect every day.”  
 “My employees just can’t learn to do task the way they should.”

We all hear statements like these, but they’re not limited to golf course superintendents. Customers’ expectations of products and services without defects and the difficulty meeting those expectations dramatically impacts every industry. For example, the introduction of Japanese cars produced with a “no defects” mentality has had profound impact on the quality of cars we drive.

So how do we instill this “no defects” mentality in golf course maintenance staffs? Well, it begins with mastering the tasks the staff must complete every day to produce course conditions golfers demand. Here are two examples of mastering tasks:

1. A couple years ago, new road construction provided me a better route to work. I learned the new route in a day or two. It took several months before I never reverted to the old route. That time was used to master the new route (no defects).

2. A friend of mine is a good recreational golfer. A couple years ago, he working with a pro and dramatically changed his swing. In a couple months, he learned the new swing, and many of his drives were his best ever. With other swings, however, he would revert back to his old swing with ugly results. At this point, he had to really focus to consistently execute the new swing perfectly (no defects). He had not yet mastered the new swing. It took about two years before he was able to do so.

Just like these examples, everyone has two phases of mastering a task or a new routine in place of an old one: (1) The shorter and easier part – learning the new task or new routine and (2) the longer, more challenging part

– mastering the new task or new routine. The key to the first step is to teach the new task or new routine effectively. The key to the second step is to maintain focus on the new way of performing the task until the new routine becomes a habit.

A manager recently said, “I learned teaching is more than just showing employees what to do and expecting them to do it.” For this manager, the first step, teaching, isn’t easy. It’s more than just showing. The simple but effective prepare-tell-show-do-review job instruction training procedure works best.

**Prepare.** Describe to the employee what you’re about to do. Create a relaxed environment in which you won’t be interrupt-

ed. Acquire and arrange needed materials.

**Tell.** Clearly, slowly and carefully tell the learner how to do the task. Explain why each step is important and why it’s done the way it’s done.

**Show.** Show the employee how the task is to be performed. Encourage questions and reinforce why the task is completed this way.

**Do.** Let the learner complete the task. Have the employee repeat the steps just demonstrated. Provide a few handwritten notes or a checklist to help the employee remember each step. Coach the employee, making suggestions and answering questions as needed.

**Review.** After leaving the employee to perform the task independently, check back to see that the employee is completing the task correctly. Provide quality feedback that reinforces correct steps and redirects those not completed correctly.

You’ve now completed step one, but the goal of the employee mastering the task has just begun. It takes 21 to 30 days to establish a habit, according to research. When completing a task correctly becomes a habit, one is well on the way to mastering it.

The key to mastering a task is maintaining focus on the correct procedure until it’s a habit. Focus is maintained by encouragement, compliments for success and corrections of any defects that happen. Superintendents must not overlook little errors because they’ll preclude mastering a task. Superintendents are great coaches when they encourage, support, correct and teach their employees to excel.

Whether you’re playing a pickup basketball game, a round of golf or a friendly card game, you’re more focused when you’re keeping score. The same holds true for employees. They will be more focused when you establish clear performance expectations and then track actual performance compared to the expectations.

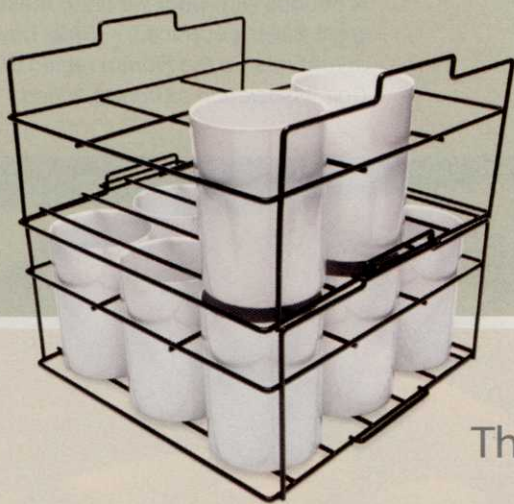
Mastering a task equals teaching plus a continued focus. **GCI**



Employees will be more focused when you establish clear performance expectations and then track actual performance compared to the expectations.



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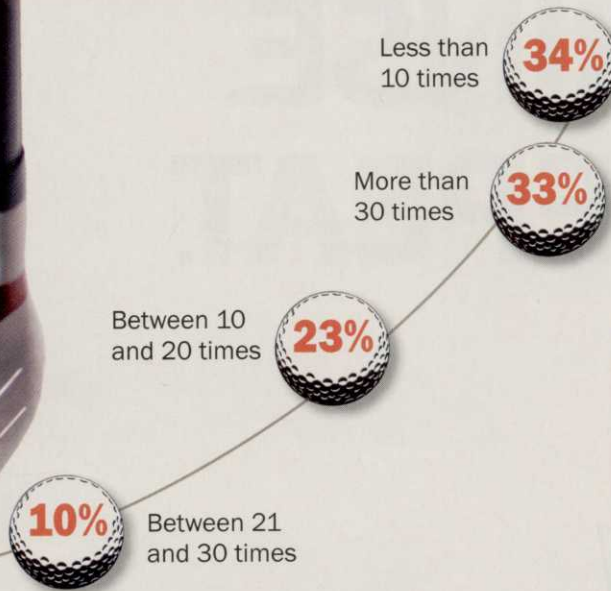
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AT THE TURN

# Fore!

As a golf course superintendent, how often do you play golf annually?

193 responses



## Quotables

"The first time I rode with him around the golf course at Pebble Beach, he asked me more than a hundred questions, and later that night when we were having dinner, I realized I didn't learn anything from one of the greatest golf course superintendents in the world. – **Mark Michaud**, golf course superintendent at Shinnecock Hills Golf Club in Southampton N.Y., about Paul R. Latshaw

"I made it a good investment because I've built the best courses at the best locations." – **Donald Trump** about why he thinks the golf market is a good investment right now

"What we do for the health of the turf is at odds with what we do to make a great playing surface." – **Todd Lowe**, an agronomist in the Florida region of the U.S. Golf Association's Green Section

## How good of a negotiator are you?

Negotiating is more common in the golf industry than you think. Negotiations are common with cart leases, labor agreements, employee contracts and equipment leases. To the right are some tips help you become a better negotiator. They were presented a few months ago at the National Institute of Golf Management by Bob Quintella, deputy director of the parks, recreations and neighborhoods department for the city of Modesto, Calif.

### Top 10 tips for a successful negotiated contract

1. Develop a win-win philosophy
2. Know what's negotiable and what's not
3. Allow for leeway
4. Do your research
5. Be polite, yet firm
6. Make your final offer clear
7. Know when to be silent
8. Commit in writing
9. Review previous contracts
10. Set negotiation parameters

### The 10 biggest faults of negotiations

1. Inadequate planning
2. Inadequate research of issues
3. Failure to negotiate internally first
4. A rigid mindset
5. Giving concessions too quickly
6. Responding too quickly to demands
7. Putting yourself in customers' shoes
8. Not calling a time-out
9. Letting egos interfere
10. Inattentive follow-through