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YOUR ROLE IN CONSTRUCTION

A golf course superintendent recently suggested that, while he has enjoyed my columns about the practical aspects of course renovation, I could help him more directly by writing about how he might be involved in an upcoming renovation project.

It's a great suggestion because a superintendent usually becomes an owner's representative based on the theory that he knows most about the golf course components that are installed. While this is true, superintendents rarely have much training in construction management, and in general, the golf construction industry is less sophisticated about contract administration than other fields, where full-time administrators are the rule, and it's often a separate profession from designers.

Of course there are seminars, books and even college majors about construction administration. Federal, state, county and city agencies often have their own contract administration manuals and protocols. It's a big subject, so let's look at the big picture of construction evaluation.

A superintendent's role in construction can be stated simply as watching all construction as if he's going to live with the results, which is exactly what happens. After construction, a superintendent's job will be affected by how the contractor handled the details. Every poorly tied-in, green seed-bed edge; bad irrigation thrust block; missed drainage area; or uneven piece of sod a superintendent can prevent by directing a contractor to install them correctly means there will be one less problem for him to fix after construction. Even if the contractor fixes the problem under warranty, it's one less hassle and one less

deterrent to maintaining the course. So, it's likely a superintendent will push for the best detail work possible.

In theory, a superintendent should see everything put in the ground to assure the best possible installation. Construction evaluation is a full-time job if done right. In practice, a superintendent – given his other responsibilities, which ought to be reduced by being out of play or through delegation – should ride throughout the course as often as possible, visiting each construction operation as frequently as possible, often unannounced, to let work forces know he's watching regularly. The more a superintendent sees, the more mistakes he's likely to catch or prevent.

A superintendent's role in construction can be stated simply as watching all construction as if he's going to live with the results.

Contractually, it's not as simple. Normally, a superintendent is protecting an owner's interests by having his crew do a quality job under a prescribed budget and a services contract, if any. A superintendent's work as an owner's representative means he'll be working within parameters set in a golf course design agreement and a multimillion dollar construction agreement to get what an owner paid for under those agreements. Those agreements can be daunting, but a superintendent can't avoid them, and his first order of business is to become

familiar with their basic outlines and most important details.

Responsibilities can vary, but generally, a golf course architect is responsible for designing and specifying the improvements, usually with an owner's and superintendent's input and approval. During construction, an architect probably is contracted to visit the site about once a week. Under those limitations, he can't see every construction operation or detail, especially if buried after installation, so a designer and club will rely on a superintendent to monitor construction quality daily. Depending on a superintendent's exact role, he'll report any problems to a golf course architect or have the authority to direct a contractor to correct mistakes.

A contractor is responsible for building the project to a golf course architect's specifications. The best ones follow the letter of the specs closely and even try to provide a bit more while still trying to make a reasonable profit.

Human nature and the dynamics of the three-party contract suggest that, no matter how professionally everyone approaches the project, there will be at least some minor conflicts of opinion, if for no other reason than a contract is set up to encourage that for the best resolution dispute.

That type of contract puts a superintendent right in the middle of things. He'll find, like all things, it's really a people business. A superintendent's first responsibilities include maintaining a professional presence and attitude on behalf of an owner, working within the parameters of a construction contract between an owner and contractor, receiving what might be reasonably inferred in the construction contract from the contractor, and working within a construction contract and budget.

Next month, we'll cover specifics. **GC**

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WEB SITES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Can there be a greater difference between night and day? I thought not until I noticed the difference between when a superintendent applies for a job with the support of a personal Web site and when a superintendent applies for a job without one. The availability of a quality, personal Web site transforms the job application process from an arduous, uphill climb to coasting down hill on a well-oiled bike. If you doubt me, read on.

STANDARD JOB APPLICATION PROCESS

The traditional job application process unfolds in the following, always-challenging manner:

1. From the start, trouble begins when candidates submit a cover letter with a resume because candidates have a bad habit of overloading their resumes with too many words, pages and supporting photographs that make it difficult for a search committee to evaluate their applications.

2. Once received at the club/course, the game of resume Russian roulette begins – applications are put into an ever-growing pile that frequently caps out at more than 100 resumes per job opening.

3. The glaring weakness with the search process is that search committees generally don't know how to identify the approximate six best candidates they want to interview. Consequently, search committees resort to what's tantamount to a lottery process to identify who will be interviewed and who won't, leaving most of the better applicants without an interview opportunity.

4. While the problem is over for those not interviewed, it's just beginning for those selected for an interview because now they face the daunting task of hard selling themselves cold-turkey to an uninformed search committee in a very few minutes. This results in candidates invariably committing interview suicide because (a) they generally wait to submit their plans of action until walking into the interview

room, which guarantees a bland interview; and (b) to overcome the handicaps of ill-defined resumes and late action plans, they talk more about their past jobs than where they would take the target maintenance program specifically if hired.

In summary, is it any wonder that the vast majority of superintendents and assistants applying for jobs not only get discouraged but also begin to doubt themselves seriously?

DEFINING A QUALITY WEB SITE

Before looking closely at the Web-site-supported job application process, it's important to identify what defines a quality Web site because weak Web sites will not get the job done. The simple logic that applies here is that quality Web sites require a quality inventory of links to the home page. For example, the following summary profiles should be linked when applicable:

For the next several years, submitting an application with a quality Web-site address virtually will guarantee an interview.

education history, assistant jobs, superintendent jobs, in-house construction projects, career summary, a consolidated resume, published articles, references and a possible wild card link to address unique situations. (See a model Web site at www.stevenrenzetti.com.)

The majority of the dozen or so Web-site drafts sent to me each month for my review are sub par. Therefore, anticipate it will take working through several drafts before a candidate will be able to finalize an effective Web site. (For further com-

mentary about this subject, read my March 2004 *Golf Course Industry* column.)

WEB-SITE APPLICATION PROCESS

The Web-site-supported application process is evolving in the following manner where applicants:

1. Prepare a more aggressive cover letter that will present the applicant's Web-site address together with a request for access to specific course data/information that will facilitate the preparation of a more definitive action plan.

2. Forward the cover letter with Web-site address via e-mail to the search committee chairman who will distribute the application upon receipt to the entire search committee electronically. Two strategic benefits quickly gain are that the candidate's submittal won't be put in the stored pile of more than 100 hard-copy resumes received and the search committee gains immediate access and time to preliminarily review the applicant's credentials comfortably.

For the next several years, submitting an application with a quality Web-site address virtually will guarantee an interview. Soon thereafter, applications received without Web-site support generally won't be considered seriously.

3. Prepare an appropriate action plan of comfortable length (less is more) that will summarize a candidate's approach to the vacant job should he or she be hired, and submit it electronically to the search committee 10 days prior to the interview. This will allow the search committee to become completely familiar with a candidate's action plan well before interviewing.

This benefits the candidate significantly because it eliminates the need to hard sell and precipitates a solid interactive question-and-answer session with the search committee that allows candidates to present themselves comfortably and effectively in their best professional light. This is how jobs are won.

Not only are quality Web sites the golden key to effective career advancement, they're also the key to elevating an entire profession, given the opportunity. **GCI**



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MOTIVATIONAL WORK ENVIRONMENT

“What can I do to motivate (insert employee name)?”

Undoubtedly, this is the most common personnel management question I receive. It's a great question but also difficult and complex. It's easily the most researched and written-about question in organizational behavior.

Let's discuss the question by making three key observations:

1. In a technical sense, the answer to the question is “you can't.” Technically, all motivation is self-motivation. For example, I'm the only one who can motivate myself. Don't be alarmed. Although true, this reality doesn't stop you from influencing your employees' motivation levels. But remember, your task is to provide an environment in which your employee will choose to be motivated. Think about the analogy of sports coaches. They can't play the game, but they can teach skills and develop strategies and tactics to enable players to succeed when playing a game. Similarly, superintendents can provide the goals, rewards and culture in which your employees will choose to be motivated.

2. Decades of motivation research haven't given us an exact recipe for the ideal motivational environment for employees. However, there are principles – often differing from common practice – that provide excellent guidance. There's more about this research below.

3. Within the general guidelines of the research, each employee is unique when it comes to providing a motivational environment. Some are self-motivated and seemingly (but not correctly) need little attention from their supervisors. Others retain motivation with constant encouragement and compliments. Still, others require stiff consequences to motivate them to refrain from unacceptable behavior (such as tardiness) and remain focused on excellent work.

Author Marcus Buckingham says great

managers discover what's unique about each person and capitalize on it. What you must do to motivate employees can be analogous to putting greens. Each green has a uniqueness that must be recognized and responded to before a course will exceed golfer expectations consistently. Similarly, there are motivation principles that must be supplemented with knowledge about each individual's uniqueness to achieve a motivated golf course maintenance staff.

Remember your task is to provide an environment in which your employees will choose to be motivated.

Perhaps the most frequently referenced motivation theory is psychologist Frederick Herzberg's two-factor theory. The first set of factors, called maintenance or hygiene factors, is crucial to employees because a lack of these items causes dissatisfaction among employees. These factors include:

- Economic factors;
- Security needs;
- Social needs;
- Working conditions; and
- Status.

All managers recognize the importance of these factors. However, most believe that providing fair levels of these factors will provide an environment that motivates most employees. Herzberg's theory maintains that fair levels of these factors will eradicate dissatisfaction largely, but these factors don't create a motivational work environment.

A different set of factors provides the environment to motivate employees. Herzberg's motivators augmented with suggestions for applying them to a golf course

maintenance staff are:

- **Feelings of personal accomplishment.** Just as motivation is personal, so is accomplishment. This is where setting goals or assisting employees to set them becomes crucial. The feeling of personal accomplishment occurs when set goals are met and exceeded, or even come close to amid difficult circumstances. Without goals, it's difficult for employees to feel satisfied. For example, satisfaction can be felt from something as simple as checking off completed items on a to-do list.

- **Recognition for achievement.** Recognition through positive feedback, compliments and reward programs is motivating and reinforces successful behavior. Few managers capitalize sufficiently on this motivator. We are trained to identify problems and, in fact, turf responsibilities require that we excel at identifying problems. For most of us, however, explicitly looking for positives seems unnatural. That, however, is a key part of your supervisory role and is instrumental to building a motivational environment.

- **A sense of importance to the business.** When talking to employees, I've often been amazed at the magnitude of their positive response when they receive a hat, shirt or jacket bearing the name of the course or organization at which they work. It isn't the hat, shirt or jacket that's important, it's the message it sends. However, this is where dissatisfiers (pay, working conditions, treatment) can come into play. If major dissatisfiers are present, they won't be motivational because employees don't feel they're important to the organization.

Other Herzberg motivators include challenging work, achieving increased responsibility, access to information and involvement in decision-making.

Here are three comments about motivating employees to think about:

- Only your employees can decide their level of motivation.
- Only you can establish the environment that will shape that decision.
- Great managers discover what's unique about each person and capitalize on it. **GC1**



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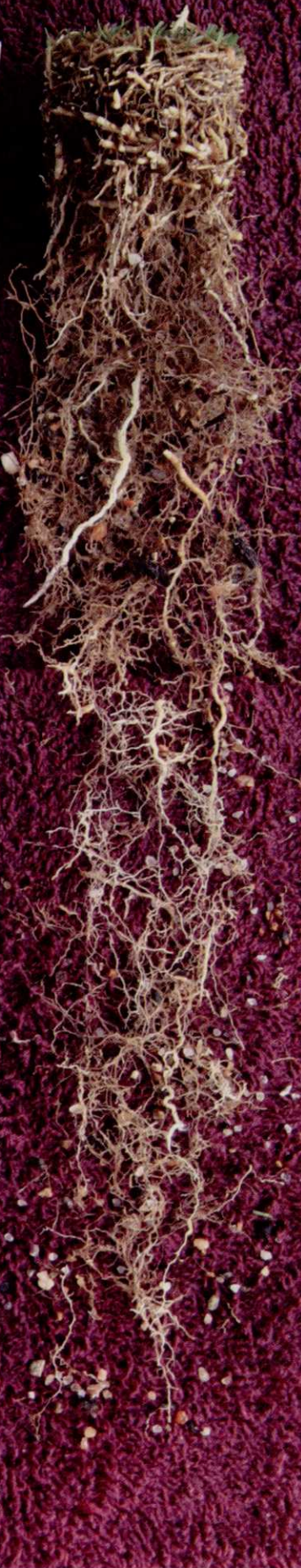
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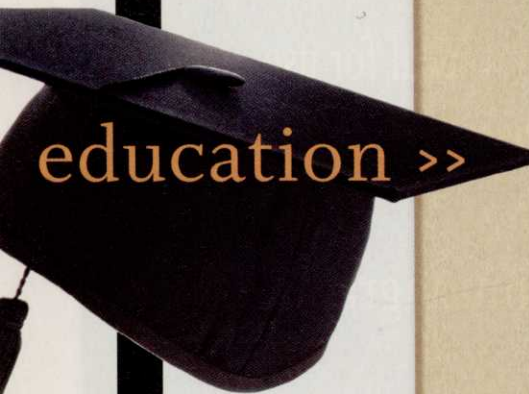
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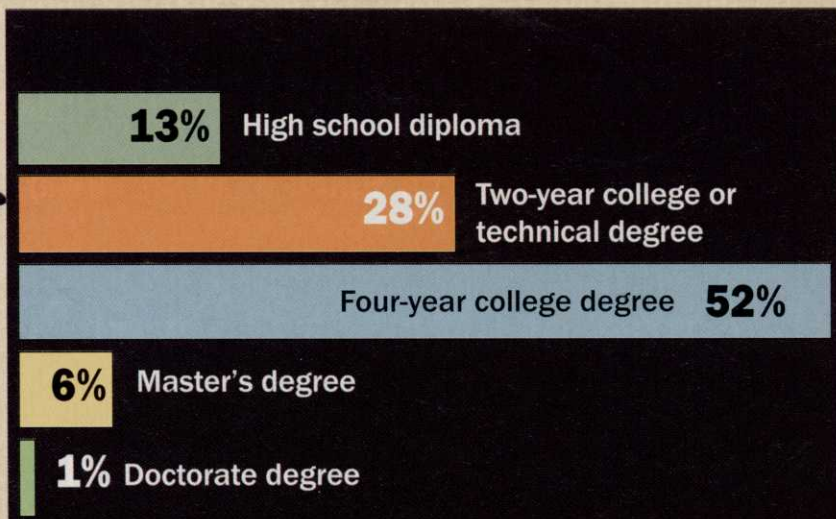
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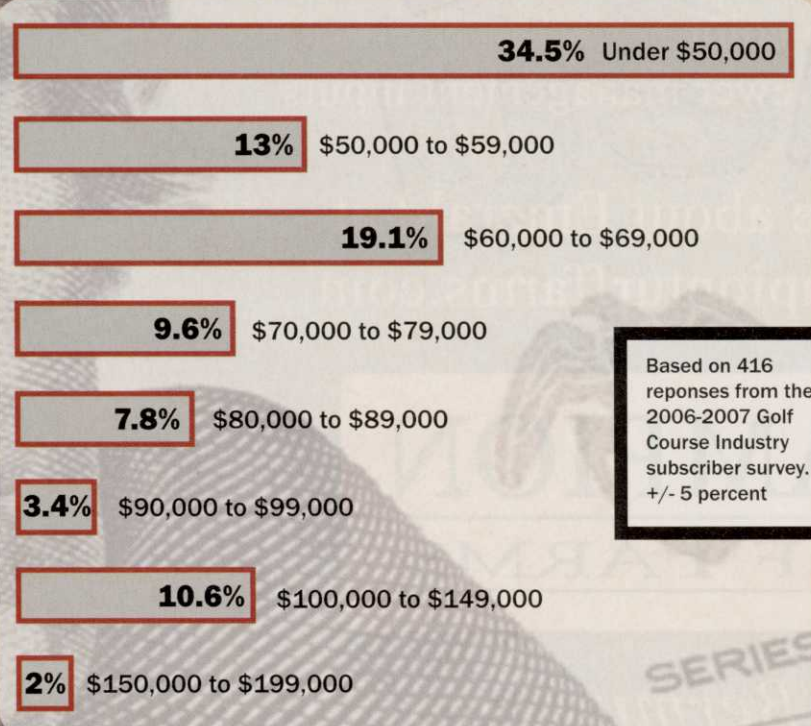
About 7 percent of golf course superintendents have an education higher than a four-year college degree.



based on 158 responses from an online poll, +/- 8 percent

What do you earn?

Less than 15 percent of golf course superintendents make more than \$100,000.



Based on 416 responses from the 2006-2007 Golf Course Industry subscriber survey. +/- 5 percent

Sand in your shorts?

At some golf clubs, bunkers are more of a problem with golfers than greens. Consistency and fairness seem to be the main issues. Most likely, bunkers are a sore spot for many golf course superintendents because golfers complain about them. The following discussion questions – courtesy of Bob Randquist, CGCS, director of grounds at Boca Rio Golf Club in Boca Raton, Fla. – can help superintendents and golfers determine what perceptions and expectations of bunker conditions should be for their golf course.

1. Should a golfer ever have a buried lie in a bunker?
2. Should a golf ball always roll back to the flat portion of the bunker and not come to rest on a slope?
3. On average, what percentage of the time should a golfer be able to get the ball out of a greenside bunker and into the hole in two shots?
4. On average, what percentage of the time should a golfer be able to hit a shot from a fairway bunker onto a green?
5. Should a golfer ever have to play a shot from underneath or against the lip of a bunker?
6. Should the surface of the sand be smooth or furrowed?
7. Does the playing condition of the bunker provide equal hazard to the low- and high-handicap players?
8. Can you determine and define the difference between a fair and unfair bunker?