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*Cover photo: Michael Black, Black Sun*

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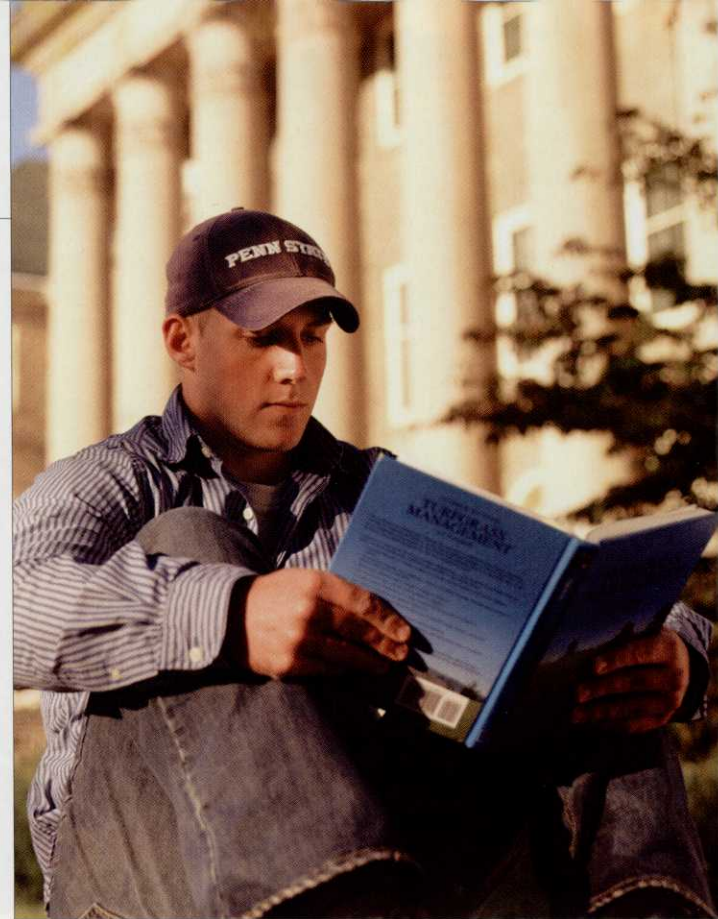
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### LET'S MAKE A DEAL

CNL Income Properties intends to acquire 28 U.S. golf course properties from affiliates of American Golf Corp. The purchase is part of a combined transaction with Evergreen Alliance Golf Limited and American Golf in which EAGLE is purchasing 14 additional courses from American Golf.

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### ONLINE POLL: GROW-IN EXPERIENCE

As a golf course superintendent, do you wish to have more grow-in experience? Visit the GCI home page to vote in this online poll.

### DIGITAL LIBRARY

You can view last year's digital issues of *Golf Course Industry* any time you want on DVD. The digital library contains all the 2006 issues on one disc. The DVD is available at the online bookstore – [www.golfcourseindustry.com/store](http://www.golfcourseindustry.com/store).

### EDITORIAL MISSION STATEMENT:

*Golf Course Industry* reports on and analyzes the business of maintaining golf courses, as well as the broader business of golf course management. This includes three main areas: agronomy, business management and career development as it relates to golf course superintendents and those managers responsible for maintaining a golf course as an important asset. *Golf Course Industry* shows superintendents what's possible, helps them understand why it's important and tells them how to take the next step.





**John Walsh**  
Editor

## BUILD A BRAND

**D**uring my travels the past couple years, I've heard several speakers talk about branding and the importance a brand has in the success of a business. They've lectured about brand development and how it helps manufacturers, distributors and even magazines like this one. Building a brand helps identify the value of a business, and if a brand is well known, it's supposed to make selling for that business much easier. That, in turn, makes the business more profitable – the obvious goal of all businesses.

A brand helps enhance marketing positions, allows companies to set premium pricing, builds market loyalty and differentiates a business from its competitors. A brand has value, and sometimes part of that value is intangible. Marketing professionals say small companies, even a single golf facility, can build a brand. A brand not only includes the product you offer (e.g., the best-conditioned golf course for your dollar), but services as well. And every person who works at a golf facility is part of those product and service components of a brand. In golf, your brand is an experience because the only thing a golfer can take with him when he leaves the course are items from the pro shop, but that's not the main reason why golfers come to your facility to begin with. It's not the main reason for the business. The course is.

The keys to building your brand are: having a committed focus, recognizing your core competencies and values, consistently delivering your product and services, and providing an atmosphere for pleasant golf experiences. Ultimately, the brand helps your customers build confidence in your business because they know what to expect.

As a golf course superintendent, being in contact with the golfers at your course daily is part of building your facility's brand. Explaining to golfers why course conditions are the way they are and finding out what they prefer improves their experience. If your greens are being aerated, do you let golfers know? Do you explain why they're being aerated? Aside from course conditioning, which is the most common way for you to help differentiate your course from others, do you help build your facility's brand and improve golfers' experiences by recommending various types of services to offer customers (babysitting, shoe cleaning and car washes are examples)? Even if you can't actually implement those services because you're busy maintaining the golf course, see to it your ideas to better the facility are presented.

Brands such as Apple, McDonald's, Coca-Cola and Mercedes are some of the most recognized brands in the world. Golf facility examples include Augusta, Pinehurst, Bandon Dunes and Pebble Beach. Analyze those facilities' operations to see if there's something you can glean from them to adapt to your operation and market. Keep in mind you don't have to be known nationally to have a well-respected, strong brand. However, you might end up building your brand to the point where it is known nationally.

Does your golf facility have a brand identity in your local or regional market? If so, can it be strengthened? What are you doing to help build your facility's brand? Are other managers, such as the golf pro and general manager, doing their part? Are you all on the same page regarding the need to build brand awareness to better your business? If not, maybe it's time to sit down and define your brand and execute a plan to develop it. By doing so, your facility might not suffer as much during difficult economic times and might outperform competitors during healthy times. A strong, well-defined brand betters business. So be aggressive and innovative and help define or improve your facility's brand. You'll be better off for it. **GCI**

We would like to hear from you. Please post any comments you have about this column on our message board, which is at [www.golfcourseindustry.com/messageboard](http://www.golfcourseindustry.com/messageboard).



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# GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

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Veteran superintendents such as Bruce Williams, CGCS, offer guidance and career advice to assistants. Photo: John Deere



## Getting a head start

**T**he road to becoming a superintendent these days usually involves much more than obtaining a degree and typing a resume. Assistant superintendents are looking to differentiate themselves from their peers, and that's where Green Start Academy comes in. The program, hosted by John Deere Golf & Turf and Bayer Environmental Science, was held recently in Clayton and Fuquay-Varina, N.C., for the second year and brought veterans to those who are still green in the industry.

Participant Adam Warring, assistant superintendent at The Links at Bodega Harbour in California, was looking for such an advantage. He was recommended by his superintendent, Brian Morris, and wrote an essay to gain acceptance into the program. Warring was one of about 80 attendees participating in the two-day program, which was

jam-packed with activities and information, he says.

The itinerary included a virtual tour of the Bayer research facility in Clayton, a tour of the John Deere Turf Care facility in Fuquay-Varina and sessions with professionals from the industry, including representatives from Bayer, John Deere, North Carolina State University, the USGA, the GCSAA and superintendents.

"It teaches assistant superintendents the new things going on in the industry," says Matt Armbrister marketing manager at John Deere's golf segment and one of the lead organizers of the program. "It's very dynamic; things are changing all the time. If they can learn more, they can manage their staff and resources better. They can learn a lot from meeting and talking to other people who are in the same boat."

The content of the program will be tweaked a little each year to keep the information relevant, Armbrister says. One of the sessions focused on water management, which is becoming more of an issue as that resource becomes more scarce. Throughout the program, none of the content was geared specifically to John Deere or Bayer products, Armbrister says.

The most valuable part of the program for Brett Ziegler, assistant superintendent at Knollwood Club in Lake Forest, Ill., was the opportunity to network and learn from industry veterans such as Bruce Williams, CGCS, of the Los Angeles Country Club and Bob Farren,

CGCS, of Pinehurst Resort in North Carolina.

While Warring says this type of program can help give assistant superintendents a competitive edge, he's frustrated by the seemingly impossible task of breaking into the superintendent realm.

"The information was good, but if anything, I would have liked to have gotten more advice as far as an assistant superintendent trying to move up to a superintendent position," he says.

Warring has searched for open superintendent positions but doesn't find it to be promising. "Typically, on 95 percent of the job postings for superintendents, line one says you must have previous superintendent experience," he says. "What the hell are you supposed to do?"

Ziegler, 24, concedes that it seems to be more difficult to become a superintendent than it used to be, but says it's attainable. His goal is to become a superintendent in the next five years. Programs like the Green Start Academy can help his chances, he says.

"I'm not going to say that if you went to this you're ready to become a superintendent, but at least it opened my eyes a little bit as far as the things I need to do to take that next step," Ziegler says.

The program will proceed next year based on survey responses from this year's participants, Armbrister says. — Heather Wood

A classroom setting allows assistant superintendents to discuss matters openly and to receive feedback from others. Photo: John Deere

