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THE PETER PRINCIPLE

In its raw form, the Peter Principle states simply that systems (i.e., golf associations) tend to develop up to their management's collective level of competence, after which incompetence prevails.

Some might look at the Peter Principle as a statement of pessimism and negativity when, in fact, it's not. First and foremost, it's based on the constructive premise that the principle only applies to people and/or organizations that have committed to realizing stated goals and have moved well down the road to realizing these goals. However, because every human being has personal limitations, so too must their collective leadership teams. The Peter Principle doesn't apply to the lazy, indifferent or the inadequate.

Therefore, when I say the CMAA, GCSAA and PGA have reached their Peter Principle levels collectively and separately, I'm also freely acknowledging these associations' dedicated pursuits of excellence through their developing years to the near present time. However, life is life, and the lay board members and professional staffs that serve these associations, as presently constituted, have advanced these associations as far as they can go. It's one thing to manage an association during its formative years when there were fewer members, only a few million dollars of revenue and modest educational responsibilities, but it's quite another to manage an association once it matures with performance objectives of more than 25 million members, \$25 million of annual revenues, highly sophisticated educational requirements and a responsibility to elevate a profession.

The insidious characteristic of the Peter Principle is that it approaches stealthy and delivers its knockout blow without anyone being the wiser. Consequently, board and staff members continue on their ways believing they're still managing their associations on level playing fields, when in fact the landscape has changed dramatically – to the point where these associations inexplicably have stagnated without anyone

knowing it. The impact the Peter Principle will continue to have on these associations in the future will be devastating if left unchecked because:

- Well intentioned CMAA, GCSAA and PGA boards of directors, being transient in nature and sensing they're no longer able to stay on top of issues as they once were, increasingly surrender their operational policy determining roles to staffs, not seeking control, but always willing to accept it.

... lay board members and professional staffs that serve these associations ... have advanced these associations as far as they can go.

- Furthermore, once staffs assume control of operations (not necessarily all policy matters), the associations' future development potential quickly becomes limited to their staffs' ability to generate new programming. However, because staff members aren't hired for this purpose and therefore lack the necessary vision and skills, new program development and the future growth of these member-based associations become terminally limited.

Extensive talks with CMAA, GCSAA and PGA veteran core members confirm these two premises and provide further the insight that core association members are quite displeased: (i) that the board members they elect to do a job turn this responsibility over so easily to staff members that don't have the prerequisite experience to develop the cutting-edge programming that members require to advance careers and their professions; and (ii) that these staffs aren't being held accountable for their actions by the association boards or general memberships.

Freeing the CMAA, GCSAA and PGA

from the clutches of the Peter Principle, while addressable tasks, will require vision, commitment and patience because the goals to be realized are both simplistic and complex. For example:

- The more immediately realizable objectives are those affecting staff performance because change can be effected here with immediate direct action. To accomplish this change, the following commitments would be needed: (i) that the present association boards of directors begin to recognize that operational control of their associations has been transferred to staffs some years ago and accordingly they must commit to reacquire this control (i.e., boards set policy, staffs implement policy); (ii) that definitive job descriptions that would hold c.e.o.s and all staff department heads accountable for specific assignments are carefully prepared and put in place; and (iii) that association staffs be expanded to include an experienced program development component to insure that recommended new programming will have the opportunity to be developed on merit and flow through to the memberships.

- The more difficult, time-consuming challenges to address are those directly affecting board performance because it's always more difficult to effect change at the top of the organizational chain. Basically, until these association boards understand the need to bring private sector expertise to their policy-making forums, their associations will continue simply treading water.

Two high-profile examples where private sector expertise is helping to guide golf organizations to sustained success are The First Tee and the USGA. These two golf organizations succeed because individuals with proven, private-sector experience have been integrated into their leadership teams. (See my September 2005 column.)

If present club managers, golf course superintendents and golf professionals want to leave vibrant growing membership associations their children and grandchildren will respect – and some will consider establishing careers within – the lessons of the Peter Principle must be learned hard and fast now. **GCI**

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ARE YOU A CHIEF EXECUTIVE?

Have you ever said, “I wish I were the c.e.o. of Jacobsen, John Deere, Toro or Syngenta?” Or when shopping, have you ever said, “I wish I were c.e.o. of Wal-Mart, Microsoft, Best Buy or Exxon-Mobil?” Although your position as golf course superintendent (or similar title) might seem far removed from the c.e.o. of one of these companies, you actually have responsibilities in common. These commonalities are crucial as you lead your maintenance staff and as you participate in the management of the facility at which you work.

Look at the chief executive roles in a small business or organization. Although golf courses have interesting and varied leadership structures, chief executive roles always are crucial for a maintenance staff and facility. As I’ve worked with golf courses, farms and other small businesses, I’ve grouped the chief executive roles into three categories:

- Focus on leadership. Set direction and establish the business culture.
- Strategic direction and implementation. A greater focus on external forces and changes.
- Assemble, engage and develop a winning work force.

A golf course superintendent should be concerned about chief executive roles because these roles are the greatest challenge and the biggest opportunities for leaders of small businesses, including golf courses. During the past several decades, the challenge for golf course superintendents, and owners and managers of small businesses, has been being a manager as well as a worker. Excelling at the chief executive role is a challenge as well. These roles are crucial regardless of the size of the business because of three factors:

1. The degree of business competitiveness – overlooking one business opportunity or threat can mean the demise of a business or facility. This is especially true

for golf facilities as the industry transitions from a growth industry, where there was some truth to “if you build it they will come,” to a mature industry, where opportunities still abound amid stiffer competition.

2. The complexity and diversity of attributes sought by the customers of the golf facility. Facilities increasingly will specialize to meet specific attributes (needs and wants) of members and customers.

3. As amazing as change has been recently – especially regarding information and communication technology – many experts and futurists predict the rate of

experienced the fun culture of Disney World or Disneyland while attending the Golf Industry Show. Southwest Airlines is about enjoying your travel. In your local community, what businesses or organizations come to mind when you think about a distinct identity? What’s their identity? What’s the culture of the golf facility at which you work?

My son and I recently played a course that we returned to because of its uniqueness and culture. The course was typical and wasn’t distinct except for a 575-yard hole. Just when you thought you had conquered it, there was a dogleg and a pond right in front of the green. The TPC at Sawgrass is defined by its island hole. Other facilities’ cultures come from specific events; a characteristic of their founder;

Although golf courses have ... varied leadership structures, chief executive roles always are crucial for a maintenance staff and facility.

change will continue to increase. It will challenge every organization to avoid being blindsided by the change. (Blindsided means being adversely impacted because a competitor recognized and/or responded more quickly to change.) For example, Montgomery Ward, K-Mart, Sears and JC Penney were blindsided by Wal-Mart, and Polaroid was blindsided by digital photography. Each of these companies is out of business or downsized significantly.

Returning to the three categories of chief executive roles, focus on a key component of the first one – establishing the business culture or the culture of your maintenance staff. Business or organizational culture is about being distinct and having a clear identity. Think about national companies with a culture. Starbucks sells coffee, but the culture is one designed to allow you to linger. Many of you have

or a renowned golfer, superintendent, golf pro or landmark. Furthermore, there’s a culture associated with your maintenance staff. What is it?

Spend time this winter thinking and talking about your chief executive roles as you lead your maintenance staff. Think about your chief executive roles with your golf facility. You’ll have to work with others – the golf professional, club manager, committees, owners, etc. – but your future, the future of your maintenance staff and the future of the facility at which you work will benefit from your chief executive leadership, ideas and insights. **GCI**

For additional insights about the role of chief executive, the author will be leading complimentary Webinars. Visit www.aLearningEdge.com/Webinar to enroll and for a list of dates.

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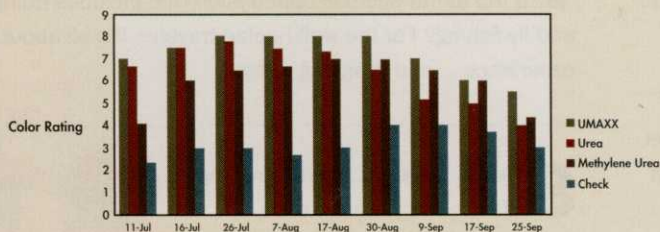
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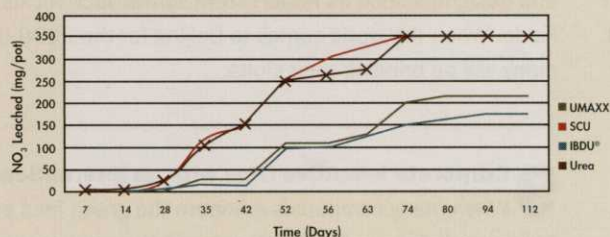
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{TRENDS}

Trends that will shape golf and lifestyle travel in 2008

Gordon Dalglish, president of PerryGolf, a golf and lifestyle travel firm, doesn't have a crystal ball, but his experience in the travel industry and knowledge of what motivates golfers to take trips is the basis for the following trends.

1 Couples traveling together for golf and more. Wives and girlfriends who once stayed home or took their own trips while the guys traveled for golf are part of the action now. They're enjoying golf and off-course attractions.

5 The new buddies trips. According to a recent survey conducted by American Express travel agents, women are traveling together more and are indulging in more active and luxurious vacations.



2 Eco-awareness. Trips that demonstrate an environmental sensitivity are increasing. According to research from the Green Hotel Association, a trade organization that promotes ecological consciousness, 43 million U.S. travelers say they're concerned about the environment.



3 Private jet travel. With prices to charter one's own plane as little as \$2,200 an hour for three to five people, private jet travel is within reach of more travelers. Golfers will take advantage of this expedited route to the first tee much more in the U.S. than internationally. But for those whose travel priorities are convenience, comfort and time, two days in the office as opposed to standing in airport security is an attractive trade-off.



6 Wales. It's the British Isles destination most golfers still don't know about. With the 2010 Ryder Cup matches coming to Celtic Manor, there's still time to beat the crowd to that luxurious resort as well as Royal Porthcawl, Tenby, and Pyle and Kenfig.

7 Experiences. Sure you can play Carnoustie, but what about a trip to the Scottish countryside that includes riding, shooting and fly fishing? For the well-heeled traveler, it's all about the total experience ... and bragging rights.

4 High-tech and high-touch service. The Internet continues to be the first stop for trip planning and estimating costs for many, although some travelers prefer to talk to people to plan trips. The efficiency of providing quotes and itineraries online has enabled travel companies to reduce staff and allowed travel specialists to work from their homes. However, most travel firms will never go completely high tech because it's still a relationship business.

8 China. Travelers are discovering a fascinating country and culture that includes golf from some of the game's top architects. A slowdown of domestic golf construction has been a boon for China and designers such as Robert Trent Jones, Jack Nicklaus and Nick Faldo. When the world comes to Beijing for the 2008 Olympics, many will be bringing their clubs.



9 Corporate incentive trips with an international flair. When many companies compare the green fees and cost of accommodations at Pebble Beach and Kiawah Island with those of Scotland or Ireland, they decide to boost their sales incentives and go for the Old Course, Ballybunion or Gleneagles.



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Retired superintendent Jerry Faubel helps place superintendents in the right jobs

It's early November, and Jerry Faubel is spending his days hunting. On most frosty fall mornings, he's after ducks in the wetlands around his Saginaw, Mich., home. But, by afternoon, he's drawing a bead on a different species: people. More specifically, he's hunting for the right people for the right jobs in the golf industry.

Faubel and his business partner, Bruce Williams, CGCS, run Executive Golf Search, arguably the highest-profile placement group in the business. They're the go-to guys for many golf facilities looking for the perfect superintendent, general manager or club professional. In short, the road to some of the best jobs in the industry leads through their firm.

At 66, Faubel and his wife Sally finally are relaxing a bit, but he's no less interested in ensuring a bright future for the industry than he was when he served as GCSAA's president in 1990-1991.

Faubel grew up as a central Illinois farmboy who went off to Iowa State to study agricultural operations. He quickly realized, unlike many Cyclone classmates, he didn't have a big commercial farm to go back to. He also accidentally ended up working on a golf course as a night waterman one summer. He liked it and switched to turf agronomy at ISU. He worked on and off at several small facilities in Wisconsin for almost five years

while trying to finish school. Eventually, he earned his degree in 1969 and sent a resume to Saginaw Country Club. He got the job and stayed for the next 34 years before retiring four years ago.

During four decades at Saginaw, he kept a sharp eye on the quality of the course conditions but never hesitated to volunteer his extra time to the profession. In addition to working through the chairs on the GCSAA board and serving as president, he's served on the USGA Green Section Committee, USGA Research Committee, Michigan Turfgrass Foundation and Mid-Michigan Turfgrass Foundation boards and Michigan Golf Foundation board. Along the way, he collected important hardware including distinguished service awards from the GCSAA and the Golf Association of Michigan.

Oh, by the way, he and Sally raised a daughter, Sarah, who's now a Wellesley/Harvard-educated doctor doing cutting-edge kidney research at the University of Colorado Medical Center.

Not a bad life by anyone's yardstick, but Faubel wasn't done professionally. Along with a few other industry legends, he set out to fill a void in the placement market and create a new way for superintendents and others to match up with the right facilities. Now, after 40 years in the business, he spends his time as a matchmaker extraordinaire for the best jobs in golf.

HOW'D YOU GET STARTED IN THE PLACEMENT BUSINESS?

I was always very active at Michigan State and in the industry trying to encourage education. Kenyon Payne, Ph.D., (the longtime head of the two-year MSU turf program) and I became good friends. At the same time, I was involved in fundraising for the GCSAA and got to know Robert Trent Jones. Trent was a tremendous individual who was concerned about education, so he made a large contribution to the GCSAA scholarship fund. He understood that if he didn't have quality superintendents, his work would go for naught. So, when I was president of the GCSAA in 1991, I met with Trent and Ken Payne, and they approached me with the idea of joining forces on a placement business. Trent came up with the name – Executive Golf Search.

As it turned out, Trent was too busy designing the Alabama golf trail to get directly involved, so Ken and I took the ball and ran with it. We started placing superintendents. Bruce Williams came along in a few years and became a critical member of the team.

HOW DID YOU BUILD THE BUSINESS?

It just took off. We never did much advertising. It's all been word of mouth. Our goal is to bring stability to the workplace for superintendents. It's not for personal gain. The idea is to match highly

BY PAT JONES

Jerry Faubel helps bring stability to the workplace through job placements. Photo by Dwight Cendrowski



qualified superintendents with high-quality golf courses. The average superintendent only stays in a position about seven years, then moves on. The major decision of a hiring committee is to identify the person who's going to fit best in its organization. We identify good candidates, but we try to identify the best qualified person who will fit. We've had tremendous success in terms of people staying in positions for long periods of time. Probably 80 percent of our placements are still in the positions we identified for them.

We don't take money out of the corporation. We donate funds back to the GCSAA and universities. Plus, we also help support the Kenyon T. Payne Award at Michigan State through funding travel expenses to the GCSAA conference.

HOW HAVE CANDIDATES FOR POSITIONS CHANGED THROUGHOUT THE YEARS?

I see more highly qualified individuals as a whole. First, the educational process through the universities is better. The GCSAA's educational efforts are light years ahead of where it used to be. The focus on different disciplines – particularly business topics – has helped superintendents be much better managers. It's like night and day. Plus, with the popularity of golf, we've had people come in who might have never considered a career as a superintendent before.



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WHAT'S THE MOST COMMON MISTAKE OF THOSE WHO'VE LOST JOBS?

The ability to communicate is probably one of the biggest problems. The successful superintendent has to have excellent communication skills. Also, they can't start to think of it as "my" golf course. It's the owner's course, whether a country club or a public facility. Most of all, they have to make decisions based on fact, not emotions or politics. They can't get caught up in the political aspects of the job and be stubborn. Politics have done in more superintendents than anything else. They make bad decisions based on emotion and the politics catch up with them.

WHY IS THAT?

Superintendents tend to take everything too personally because they care so passionately about what they do. It's one of the beautiful things about our jobs but it's also one of the most dangerous. You're dealing with business people and you have to be able to back up your decisions with facts. It's really important – when you're dealing in a science – to have scientific information to back you up.

One thing that (being on the board of) the GCSAA taught me is the systematic approach to making decisions. It's tremendous at gathering information and making decisions based on facts, not intuition. It's done professionally. It has brought professionalism to the industry. The money a club pays for the dues is well spent.

Whatever your reasons, you have to build your case before you do something. Let's say a neighbor is hypersensitive to an application practice. They call to complain, and you respond by saying that

you're acting legally. Legally, they should go to their doctor and get on the notification list. Buy, why not instead of getting into a fight, you simply call them in advance. Don't create problems that will cause the club pain. Or, you know a piece of equipment is at the end of its useful life. You usually know that a year or two before so you should build the case for the replacement in advance. There should be no surprises. Boards and owners want to know what's happening. If you keep them informed, they're happy. People don't like being in the dark.

DESCRIBE THE TYPICAL SEARCH PROCESS FOR A HIGH-END SUPERINTENDENT POSITION. WHAT CAN A CANDIDATE EXPECT?

We work for the employer. We try to have as big a pool of candidates as possible in our database. We send a form (to candidates) to help them organize themselves. It's psychologically damaging when you lose a job. We feel sorry for them, but they have to get themselves in order. They need to identify their specialties and areas of expertise.

One good example is that you have two types of expertise among superintendents: construction and maintenance. They're two very different disciplines. The form we send them helps them identify their strengths and weaknesses: They have to consider what they're good at and what they need to work on.

Above all, we abide by the GCSAA's code of ethics. It's extremely important. After we have their information, we'll try to identify their weak points and suggest options to improve them. Finding a job has to be a full-time job. Start thinking about seminars, community college programs – whatever it takes to improve your shortcomings. It's a combination of self-analysis and career counseling. We don't charge