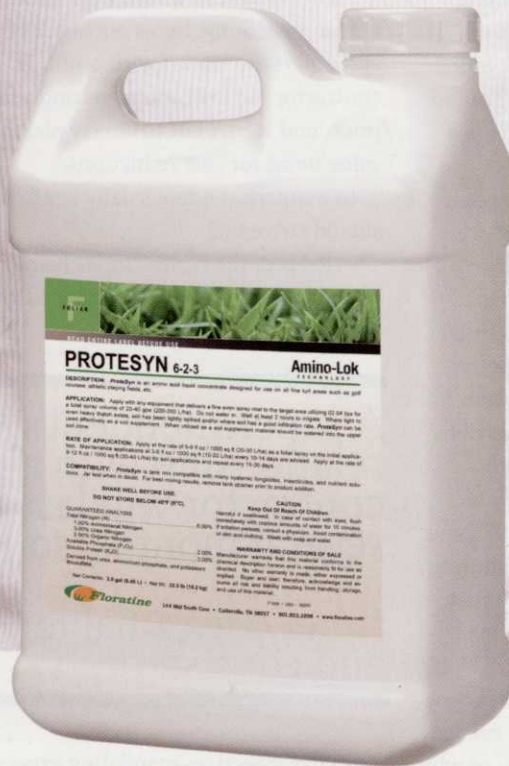


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Jeffrey D. Brauer is a licensed golf course architect and president of GolfScapes, a golf course design firm in Arlington, Texas. Brauer, a past president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, can be reached at jeff@jeffreymbrauer.com.

INTERFACING WITH CONTRACTORS

I asked contractors for tips to give superintendents about the contractor/superintendent relationship. There were some common refrains, starting with the concern about the number of good superintendents who've lost their jobs soon after a renovation project. It seems no one praises superintendents for their good work, but they sure get called out when things seem to go wrong – and a lot can seem to go wrong with renovation projects.

In some cases, superintendents get so involved in construction, they neglect other responsibilities that are visible to club members. It's more common for members to have false expectations that a reopening will occur sooner or better than it actually does. This expectation creates ill feelings that are unreasonable, and the superintendent usually pays.

Superintendents should strongly recommend the best contractor possible and implement clear communication starting from the planning phase until well past reopening to set realistic expectations for the schedule and playability. This includes estimates of achieving peak condition and playability differences, such as new USGA greens versus old ones, or why bunker sand won't settle immediately.

A superintendent's relationship with a contractor will last several months, so it pays to be civil, timely, reasonable and consistent. While there are some adversarial conditions in the contractual relationship, superintendent must realize:

- You both have the same objective – an on-time, quality project.
- The contractor and its personnel are professionals, just like you.
- Profit isn't a dirty word. Don't try to reduce it unnecessarily.
- The contractor's costs are higher

than yours. Some owners might lament that tile cost \$0.45 and contractors charge \$4.50 for it, not figuring in the costs for gravel, material waste, trencher rental, labor, travel expense, home-office overhead, contingency and profit.

- The contractor doesn't bid each item at true cost. Some items are break even and others are loaded with profit. If the contractor bid low, you're getting a fair price, and it isn't fair to cherry pick high-value items for cost reductions.

In a superintendent's daily work, he should strive to:

- Respect the contractor's chain of command. Give directives only to the supervisor.

A superintendent's relationship with a contractor will last several months, so it pays to be civil, timely, reasonable and consistent.

- Give directives mandating expected results, not work methods. The contractor is responsible for those and might use different machines and methods than you expect. Don't make him change if the job is done right. Be aware that directing specific actions or methods might make you liable for injuries or delays. For example, if you want irrigation pipe laid deeper, tell the supervisor, but don't direct workers to retrench.

- If you desire a certain construction method, ask in the beginning. Contractors want to comply with the superintendent's or owner's wishes if costs are similar.

- Don't write memos for the file. Share your concerns in a timely fashion rather than secretly documenting errors to cover yourself. That doesn't help the project now or you later if things turn out poorly.

- Respect the budget. If the specifications call for \$12 per ton of green sand, you can't order the contractor to use a \$30 per ton of green sand without a change order.

- Understand the contract, which is likely different than ones you've used with past projects.

- Take care of your responsibilities. As an owner's rep, you'll have responsibility, so make sure you get it done. If you must arrange for power to be installed in the pump station, plan for inevitable electric company delays. Chances are you'll still struggle to have power on time.

- Help the contractor, which usually results in going above and beyond what's stated in the contract. If you can easily lend materials, equipment or labor to reduce the contractor's cost in one area, such as mowing to reduce turf stripping or tree trimming, by all means, do it because you'll likely ask the contractor for extras later. Remember, it's a two-way street.

- If you provide work – by contract or volunteering – do it well and on time. The project schedule depends on it. Only volunteer where you have actual, not expected, expertise. Performing work, such as seeding and fertilizing, near the end of the project usually minimizes potential delays to the schedule.

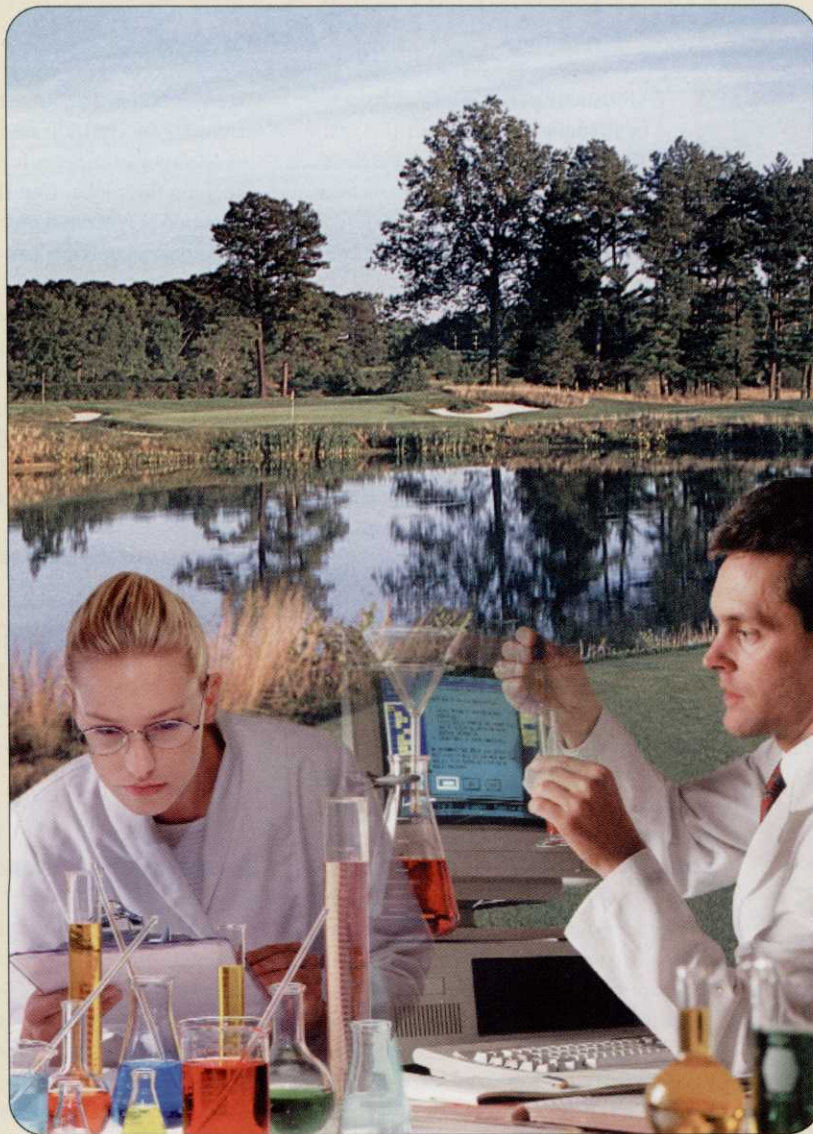
- Interpret specifications reasonably and in light of actual project conditions. Most contain some boilerplate written long ago and are restrictive and geared towards the worst possible conditions. They're written for the worst possible conditions in mind.

- Don't force the contractor to redo numerous low-value work items if you expect cooperation. **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.

WRITTEN CONTRACTS

Unfortunately, this summer hasn't been unlike any other for the past 15 years in the sense that I always receive three to four calls or e-mails from well-qualified, successful superintendents who've been summarily dismissed during the month of August – each asking how to best deal with this core shattering news. How many times is this scenario repeated each year? I estimate as many as 400 times each year throughout the country. This might not seem to be a big number, but it's significant because it's enough to sustain the ill-founded premise that the golf course superintendent profession doesn't command employment respect.

Then, do we have to remind ourselves of the devastation wrought when superintendents get turned out precipitously. The opportunity to work through the balance of the season and to leave a job gracefully is generally denied; their families immediately face the loss of primary income; mortgage payments are put in jeopardy, or employer provided housing is quickly term-limited; family health coverage fades; children living at home will have to change school systems, while older children's college tuition payments also are put in jeopardy; and finally, the dismissed superintendents face the daunting task of finding a replacement job on short notice, without credible references, wearing a "just fired" sign on their backs. Can there be any greater trauma forced on good families? Not likely.

The common denominator throughout these arbitrary dismissal cases is that the superintendents don't have written contracts. Appropriately, we should note that a recent GCSAA compensation report indicates only 21 percent of all superintendent members have written contracts, which means four of five of the 16,000-plus working superintendents throughout the country will unnecessarily face the possibility of unexpected dismissal every year, with the accompanying likelihood of being forced to accept severely restricted severance packages. Is

it any wonder that a recent Golf Course Industry survey indicated that 52 percent of all superintendents feel insecure about keeping their jobs? Can there be a greater injustice perpetrated on an entire profession than what these two inversely related percentages suggest?

To add further insult, while only 21 percent of the only essential individuals serving operational golf are granted written contracts (or the equivalent, letters of agreement), roughly 70 percent of golf professionals and over 80 percent of club managers are granted this assurance.

... one-year agreements and no written contracts have reduced superintendents ... to second-class citizenship status.

The basic reason why private clubs don't generally grant written contracts is because their search committees don't trust their own judgments when hiring a superintendent from within such a technical environment. To protect themselves, accordingly, clubs offer one-year generally verbal agreements and back this up by refusing to grant written contracts so they'll always be able to dismiss potential hiring mistakes immediately. While much has been made of the lack of written contracts issue, the ongoing one-year employment concept also is lethal because it can make it difficult for superintendents' families to borrow money to buy a house, a car or whatever. Clearly, this combination of one-year agreements and no written contracts have reduced superintendents and their families to second-class citizenship status.

Having defined the problem, our attention turns to the plausible ways this

injustice can be rectified.

First, superintendents can help themselves in the way they conduct negotiations when initially hired or whenever employment renewal discussions arise. All this begins with the superintendent affirmatively inquiring about a written contract. If and when this possibility is denied, the superintendent should immediately plant the seed for earning three months of future security notice for each year of continued successful employment to a cap of 12 months. Many fair-minded employers will react favorably to this approach because it eliminates the risk of a bad hire, i.e., superintendents earn incremental job security only after proving their value during a period of time.

Then, the GCSAA should take the initiative with a series of nationwide multimedia-based educational programming, sooner rather than later, to rectify this injustice. This might not be as difficult a task as it might seem because of the reality that about 95 percent of all golfers and volunteer board/committee people serving golf throughout America have written employment contracts, wouldn't tolerate anything less for themselves and don't know that so few superintendents have the security of written contracts. Once they find this out, they'll be angry the men and women who provide the quality golf courses they play every day and their families are being treated so callously. By tapping into this reservoir of goodwill, the GCSAA would be able to convert a professionwide debilitating negative to a precedent-setting positive.

Furthermore, I recommend the GCSAA use the aforementioned concept of earning job security incrementally three months at a time as the cornerstone of its national educational campaign to the point where the GCSAA might produce a short video mock interview illustrating how comfortable this interview exchange can be. This interview profile then would be sent electronically to each chapter and then on to each chapter member. Armed with this visual negotiating model, superintendents soon will learn how to negotiate their way to secure written contracts. **GCI**

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INTERESTING READING

Last year (September 2006), I received an unusually large number of positive responses to my review of several of my favorite management books. This year, I focus on the topic of building strong relationships with those you lead, supervise and coach. Of the four books I cite below, the first two have roots in the work of the Gallup Organization about what makes a great manager. The second two books build on the ideas discussed in the first two to enhance the ability to communicate more effectively.

“How Full is Your Bucket? Positive Strategies for Work and Life” – This book emerged from the author’s questioning of the prevalence in psychology of studying what’s wrong with people. The analogy used is a bucket and a dipper. Each of you has a bucket and can use the dipper to fill the bucket by filling others buckets or use the dipper to dip from others and diminish yourselves. The following points illustrate how remiss you can be filling your buckets:

- The No. 1 reason people leave their jobs is they don’t feel appreciated.
- 65 percent of Americans received no recognition in the workplace last year.

Potential to fill your bucket is illustrated by the following:

- Research suggests positive emotions are necessary for survival.
- Nine out of 10 people say they’re more productive when they’re around positive people.
- To be most productive, we need five positive interactions for every negative interaction.

Read the book to learn more about filling your bucket and five bucket-filling strategies.

“Vital Friends: The People You Can’t Afford to Live Without” – This well-researched but easy-to-read book revisits the subject of friendship, especially best friends. Perhaps the most important discovery about friendships – with spouses, friends, co-workers – is that all true friend-

ships (vital friends) are focused on what each person is contributing to the relationship rather than expecting each person to be everything.

The most interesting part of the book addresses the controversial subject of friendship at work with an unexpected conclusion. Friendship at work is OK and nearly essential to being productive. The research reported supports the theory that those with a best friend at work are more productive, more engaged with customers, have fewer accidents and enjoy greater job satisfaction. A couple of concrete research results are:

The research reported supports the theory that those with a best friend at work are more productive, more engaged with customers ...

- Without a best friend at work, the chance of being engaged in one’s job is one in 12.
- When asked to choose between having a best friend at work and a 10-percent raise, having the best friend won easily.

The value of a best friend at work even extends to being a friend with one’s boss.

“Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In” – This is a classic about conflict resolution. Our traditional paradigm of negotiating focuses on winning and consequently is typically win-lose. The authors propose mutual-gains negotiation – a concept more recently referred to interest-based decision-making

– with the goal of synthesizing for mutual gain rather than entering into win-lose competitiveness. The differences between traditional and mutual-gains negotiation are dramatic and have crucial implications for the outcome of a negotiation and, perhaps more importantly, for future negotiations between the parties. The authors present four strategies for mutual-gain outcomes:

1. Focus on interests not positions.
 2. Separate the people issues from the contextual issues.
 3. Invent options for mutual gain.
 4. Insist on using objective criteria.
- These strategies have been applied successfully to day-to-day interpersonal relationships, work relationships and even management (union negotiations).

“Managing to Have Fun” – This is a good follow-up to the aforementioned books. We often hear work isn’t supposed to be fun, that’s why it’s called work. The aforementioned books show that productivity and job satisfaction (including fun) go hand in hand. This book provides four principles for establishing a culture (in your case, within your golf course maintenance staff) that values celebration, appreciation and the human side of business. They’re followed by 52 ideas – one for each week of the year – to generate more fun on the job. The ideas range from simple to bizarre. **GCI**





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By the numbers

\$1 billion What New Mexico's golf and golf tourism industry was worth to the state's economy in the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2005, according to a study from New Mexico State University

0.4 The percentage decrease of rounds played at all U.S. facilities in 2007 compared to 2006 year to date through July, according to the National Golf Foundation

\$1 The amount of money Olde Sycamore Golf Plantation in Charlotte, N.C., donated from every round of golf played at the course Aug. 31 through Sept. 3 to benefit the Fallen Heroes Foundation, which supports families of military members who've become disabled or lost their lives in the line of duty.

110 The number of golf courses that hosted Tee It Up for the Troops tournaments Sept. 7 as part of a fund-raising campaign for wounded American soldiers



5 The number of golf course superintendents Bayer Environmental Science and The Environmental Institute for Golf will send to the GCSAA Education Conference and Golf Industry Show in Orlando, Fla.

The percentage of all rounds played in the U.S. by the 15 million core golfers in the country, according to the National Golf Foundation; it's also the same percentage the same group is responsible for regarding all golf-related spending

87

Quotables

"The poor water quality isn't really a problem for the grass, but it would be a big problem if it was Bermudagrass. Thank God for paspalum. This course wouldn't have been built if it wasn't for paspalum." – **Stew Bennett**, CGCS, at the semiprivate, 18-hole Alden Pines Country Club in Bokeelia, Fla.,

"When I came on board, I reduced water usage 30 percent. I weaned the plant to not need as much water. I add soil amendments, use time-release fertilizers, and aerify and verticut more frequently. I use growth retardants to control top growth." – **Tom Trammell**, CGCS, director of agronomy at Doral Golf & Resort

Fall cleanup and winter prep

The kids are back in school, there's a chill in the air, and fall colors are starting to appear. As you transition to fall, it's important to think about fall clean-up and preparing your course for the winter months. Proper preparation will keep your crew and budget one step ahead this spring. Here are some tips:

1. Cultural practices. Core removal through aeration promotes air circulation in the soil's root zone and should be completed before turf goes dormant. Aeration reduces the amount of thatch on greens and fairways, improves drainage and relieves compaction. Verticutting removes thatch and provides a smoother surface. Topdressing with porous materials such as sand fills aeration holes and smooths the turf's surface. Topdressing also helps to decompose thatch by activating microbes.

2. Chemical applications. In the North, chemical applications are crucial to preventing and curing fall diseases before turf becomes dormant. Preventive snow mold treatments are encouraged if your course experiences significant snow cover. In the South, consider preemergent herbicide applications to control winter annual weeds

and fertilization to help Bermudagrass adapt to impending cooler weather.


3. Winterizing equipment. Protecting your equipment through the winter months means saving yourself from costly, time-consuming repairs in the spring. Winterize sprayers and irrigation systems by cleaning and removing water and perform maintenance on leaf blowers, snow blowers, plows, carts and mowers. Proper pesticide storage is critical because some products can't tolerate freezing temperatures. Make sure all pesticides and fertilizers are stored properly in dry, airtight containers.

4. Labor, planning and winter projects. Review labor needs and line up seasonal employees during slow months. Examine budgets and develop the strategy for next year's maintenance plan, taking advantage of early-order programs to buy chemicals in advance and save money. Schedule winter projects such as rebuilding bunkers, tree removal or landscaping.

– Information provided by Kyle Miller, senior technical specialist for BASF Turf & Ornamentals

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SHAWN OF THE DESERT

Arizona superintendent describes what makes him tick, what he thinks the future holds for golf in the West and how he balances work and family

BY PAT JONES

Photo by Chris Loomis

By his estimate, Shawn Emerson has participated in more than 60 overseedings. He's carefully managed the application of 13 billion gallons of irrigation water. About 15 of his former assistants and crew are superintendents throughout the country. He's been on staff for or hosted almost a dozen professional tour events. He oversees six courses, 200 employees and a \$13-million annual budget.

Yet, when we talked, his main goal was to make it to as many of his 7-year-old son's baseball games as possible this year.

Emerson isn't necessarily a name that immediately pops to mind when you think of marquee superintendents. That might be because he's based out West in an industry that tends to be East Coast-centric. Or possibly it's because he's more interested in doing his job well, mentoring and being mentored, and spending as much time as possible with his family.

Emerson, a second-generation superintendent, is director of agronomy for the Desert Mountain Co. courses in Scottsdale, Ariz. The facilities he and his team oversee include the famed

Cochise course – previously the home of The Tradition event on the Champions Tour – and the highly ranked Renegade course. Emerson is a sports nut who grew up in a baseball crazy family, thus, his passion for watching his youngest swing a bat and throw a ball.

Emerson has spent his life immersed in the golf course maintenance business. Born while his father, Bill, was a superintendent in Massachusetts, the family relocated to Maryland where Bill managed turf at several high-end clubs. He spent his teen years playing golf, working in the pro shop and toiling on his dad's maintenance staff. Thanks to a successful high-school baseball career, he did a stint at American University in Washington, D.C., on scholarship playing ball and studying finance – something that would pay off for him later in his career.

In 1983, Bill Emerson moved the family to Phoenix – specifically Paradise Valley Country Club – and Shawn decided to come along and finish his studies at the University of Arizona. He soon hooked up with another of his lifetime mentors, Cal Roth, as an irrigation crew member while Roth was building and managing the TPC at Scottsdale.

“That was key for me because I learned irrigation from the ground up,” he says. “That’s so critical in the West.”

With guidance from his dad and others, Emerson decided to take the leap and earn his bachelor's in agronomy from UA. In school, he continued to work at various courses and make contacts and develop friendships that continue to serve him today. After school, he worked his way up to his first superintendent job at Desert Mountain's Renegade course in 1992. Despite a side-trip to El Paso, Texas, to work at Coronado Country Club for a few years, he's been a fixture in the Arizona golf turf community ever since. He was promoted to the director of agronomy position at Desert Mountain in 1997 and never looked back.

But what makes him tick? What does he think the future holds for golf in the West? And, how does he balance a family that includes his wife of 13 years, Laura, little Jacob and 5-year-old Rebecca with one of the most demanding positions in corporate golf? Let's find out.

WHAT'S YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE WHEN YOU WALK INTO YOUR OFFICE EVERY MORNING?

My major concern is projecting the future for my company. Immigration is the biggest problem in the West. How can we adjust if we have a labor crunch? I've also spent a lot of time on effluent water issues. That's just a fact of life for us. Personally, my biggest challenge is always how to manage people. We have 200 people on staff, and I have to rely heavily on my two agronomists (Jim Key and Keith Hershberger) and seven superintendents.

YOU'VE BEEN A MENTOR TO MANY. WHO DO YOU TURN TO FOR ADVICE?

I've been extremely lucky because there are four people that I've looked at as mentors from the time I was a kid until today. Obviously, my father was first. As a superintendent, he was the best at (club) politics and how to manage up. Virgil Robinson (who preceded Shawn at Desert Mountain) taught me how to break golf course management down into a business. George Thompson (the legendary North Carolina superintendent) taught me to break it into a science. And Cal Roth (longtime head of agronomy for all the TPC courses) taught me how to put things on the ground and make them work. I'm a collage of dif-