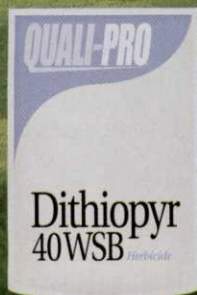


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Steven P. Forrest is a golf course architect with Toledo, Ohio-based Arthur Hills/Steve Forrest and Associates. Forrest is the current president of the American Society for Golf Course Architects. He can be reached at 419-841-8553 or spforrest@arthurhills.com.

OFFERING REAL ADVANTAGES

Jeff Brauer and I have been friends for a long time. He grew up in Toledo, and I grew old in Toledo. So, it's not unusual for us to talk nothing but golf while we try to break 100 on some of the world's most difficult courses. Aside from the wonderful camaraderie we share, my discussions with Jeff also have a great side effect: They help make me a better golf course architect.

The American Society of Golf Course Architects affords its members similar benefits – only on a much grander scale. Through the ASGCA, members such as Jack Nicklaus, Pete Dye and Tom Fazio are able to use each other as natural resources to foster professionalism, support design excellence and, ultimately, help grow the great game of golf.

Gaining individual knowledge from collective experiences affords ASGCA members the insight necessary to plan and assist in successful course development and renovation projects. Working with an ASGCA member eliminates much of the guesswork in choosing a qualified architect. That's why many potential owners, superintendents, managers and developers use ASGCA as their source for seasoned architects for their next course projects. As the ASGCA president, I'm proud to say as many as 88 percent of PGA, LPGA and Senior PGA Tour events are played on ASGCA-designed courses in a given year. That statistic speaks volumes.

ASGCA architects have a thorough knowledge of the game, valuable expertise with financing and permitting, and a sound understanding of how to cultivate the landscape properly to preserve the beauty of the natural environment within a course design. They have a familiarity with heavy construction, agronomy, hydraulic engineering, soil science, geology and civil engineering. With such a diverse skill set, ASGCA professionals are able to preside over an entire project, maximizing a course's full potential.

It's also safe to assume ASGCA architects have been around the block because membership in the organization demands it. Our requirements ensure ASGCA membership candidates have spent a minimum of eight years practicing golf course architecture and developed at least five 18-hole courses (or the equivalent) from beginning to end. However, the vast majority of members have experience that far exceeds these initial minimums.

Membership candidates have their work meticulously scrutinized by other ASGCA architects in what often amounts to a two-year process. First, candidates attain sponsorship from three current members familiar with their work. Then, four of the candidate's representative courses are evaluated by other ASGCA members via a course walkthrough or a round of play. These reviewers also discuss the course design with professionals who know it well (the owner, superintendent or local pro) to attest to the ASGCA candidate's involvement in the project and his influence on the course's inherent strengths and weaknesses.

I'm proud to say as many as 88 percent of PGA, LPGA and Senior PGA Tour events are played on ASGCA-designed courses in a given year.

Following a candidate's course evaluations, a panel interview is conducted where select ASGCA members question an applicant about his experience, design philosophies and goals. During the interview, candidates must demonstrate a firm grasp

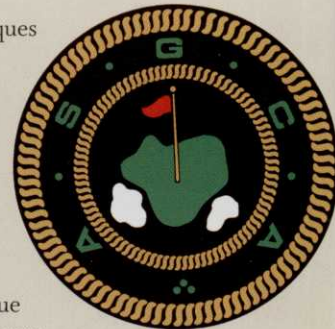
of design techniques and best practices. It's not an inquisition, just an opportunity for veteran ASGCA members to truly understand a candidate's unique insights on the many aspects of course design and development.

Once admitted, new ASGCA members abide by a code of ethics and continue professional development by attending various educational seminars presented throughout the year that keep our members abreast of the always evolving art of modern golf design and construction. At the annual meeting, industry insiders introduce ASGCA architects to new innovations and design trends. Perhaps just as importantly, we engage in informal social gatherings where members readily feed off each other's shared experiences – both good and bad.

The ASGCA's educational events often have a direct impact on clients. I look no farther than my friend Jeff, who relayed a specific example of how new erosion-control strategies presented at a recent ASGCA meeting helped save his client money, avoid fines and better preserve the construction site and surrounding lands of their course.

With the creative and highly-specialized nature of the profession, it's almost impossible (and likely not prudent) for a governing or licensing body to exist for golf course architects. However, through the detailed application process and varied professional development activities, the ASGCA does its best to provide a reliable starting point for those seeking an accomplished architect to aid in their upcoming projects. If your vision includes the design of a new course or the renovation of an existing one, ASGCA architects offer value, expertise, and best of all, peace of mind.

Working with an ASGCA architect is a comfortable and often enjoyable process – like breaking 100 with an old friend. **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@roadrunner.com or 760-804-7339. His previous columns can be found on www.golfcourseindustry.com.

GOLF'S ABSOLUTE STANDARD

Did you ever wonder what the world's most beautiful woman, diamond or flower looks like? I'm sure many of us have wondered about those things from time to time. However, the problem we face when contemplating whether any one thing might be the best of its class is there are no established absolute world-class standards to measure against. Because all polling is subjective and opinion driven, mankind never has been able to universally designate one thing or that as the very best of its kind. However, there's an exception to this premise, and it exists in the golf world. First, some history.

Shortly after I became the GCSAA executive director during the fall of 1980, I met with headquarters staff to develop the editorial schedule for the following year's association magazine (then known as the Golf Course Superintendent). However, because the GCSAA automatically dedicated its annual March issue to the Masters Tournament – and had been doing so for many years – a problem arose quickly: What writing theme should we adopt for the March 1981 issue? A fresh writing angle was and still is difficult to come by year after year.

I suggested we talk to GCSAA members and staff who attended the Masters the previous year or two and ask them for ideas about the subject based on their visits. Silence fell across the room. I didn't know GCSAA members and staff weren't granted access to the Masters, and this surprised me. When I looked into the matter further, I found out the Masters granted PGA and CMAA officers and heads of staff total-access season passes for the full week, free grounds access to the top class of each

association's membership, and issued the PGA and CMAA annual \$2,500 checks for each association's scholarship foundations. The GCSAA was extended none of these courtesies at the time.

Consequently, I picked up the phone and called then-Masters chairman, the late Hord Hardin, to talk about the matter. Quickly, Hardin advised me he was completely unaware of the GCSAA circumstance and offered to correct the situation immediately. He did and the GCSAA has enjoyed equal footing with the PGA and CMAA ever since.



Augusta National Golf Club employee Chris Hargrove waters the flowers around the clubhouse in preparation for the 2007 Masters. (AP Photo/Gene Blythe)

Now, I want to encourage as many GCSAA members (class "A" and "A Retired" are granted free admission) as possible to make a determined effort to attend the Masters as early in their professional careers as possible and tell them why. But first some personal observations/recommendations relative to attending the Masters:

1. Make hotel reservations up to a year early because available hotel space is always scarce;
2. Make sure to visit the course maintenance facility to see an unbelievable level of

human and equipment organization;

3. The best days to walk the Augusta National course are during the practice sessions (Monday through Wednesday, after which most superintendents then go home) when the final agronomic fine tuning of the golf course is under way; and

4. Wednesday afternoon (when the Par 3 tournament draws the players and gallery elsewhere) the Augusta National golf course literally becomes a living laboratory where you can see the grounds crew applying final grooming touches to the course for the next day's start of play and hundreds of golf course superintendents walking the golf course (alone or in small groups) taking pictures and notes and asking grounds crew members a wide range of questions.

5. A Masters visit is a submittable, educational employer expense.

Golf course superintendents should attend the Masters Tournament early in their careers because they'll see a standard of maintenance excellence that's not available anywhere else – and unless witnessed wouldn't be believed possible.

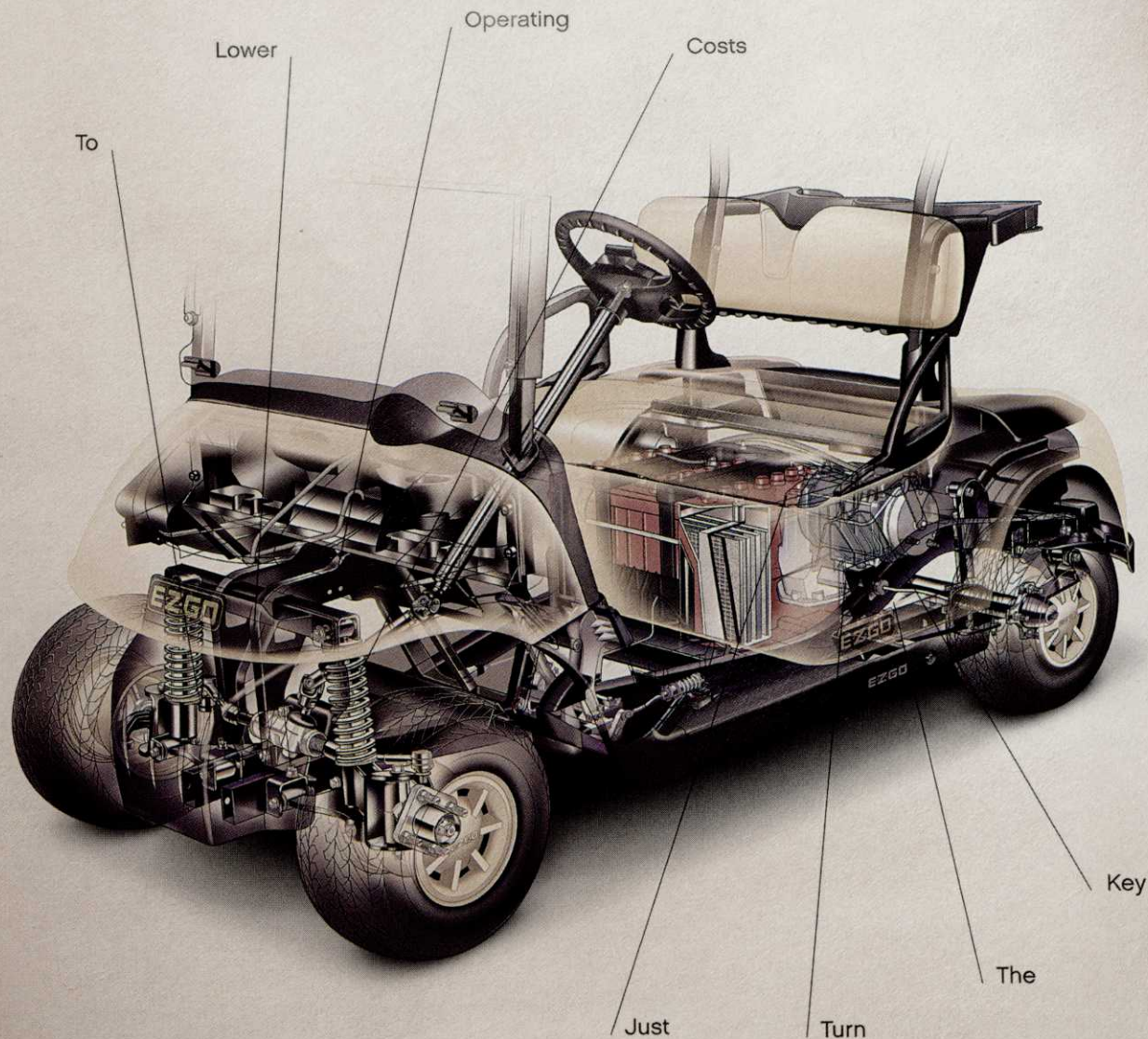
Augusta National might be the only place on earth where it's abundantly clear to all that an absolute world-class standard has been created and is maintained every year.

Once visited, Augusta National will burn a standard of excellence into the minds of every visiting golf course superintendent that will drive his or her career forever. Granted, no golf course superintendent will ever have the Masters' budget or be able to close a course for several months each year to further maintenance practices, but that's not the point. The point is every GCSAA member who visits Augusta National will be reaching for the "impossible dream" (the Masters dream) forever, never realizing it but becoming a better golf course superintendent for life because of the pursuit. **GCI**

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THE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

The only thing managers dislike more than firing employees is conducting a performance appraisal. Why is this, and what should a golf course superintendent do?

Performance is evaluated during appraisals, but the problem is, in most cases, the appraisal becomes the goal. Although valuable, appraisal isn't the goal. Instead, the goal is to improve performance and enhance job satisfaction. Too often, the performance appraisal is an end instead of a means to improving performance.

Let's look at an analogy. Few of us look forward to an annual physical because it's an appraisal of our bodies' health. We find out if we have any problems, but we rarely leave with ideas and a commitment to improving our health. Again, the appraisal is the end, not a means, to a healthier body. What we need and might even look forward to is a system for improving our health.

Similarly, for the performance appraisal, we need to replace, refocus or supplement it so we have a system that enables maintenance staff employees to improve their performance continuously. The focus of such a system must be improved performance that also results in greater maintenance staff job satisfaction. To meet the goal of improving performance (and job satisfaction), the system must have two key characteristics:

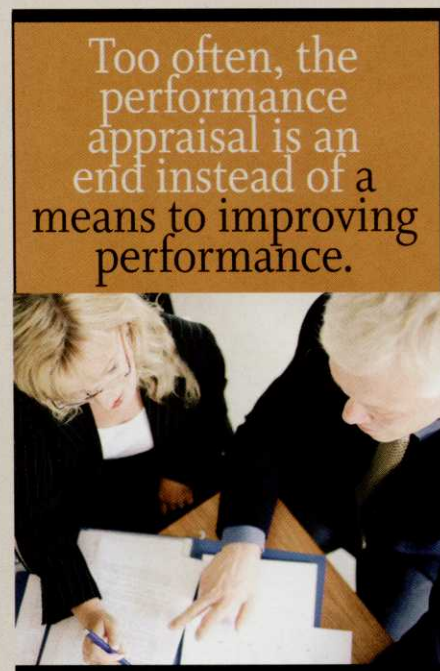
- It must happen when performance occurs – throughout the year; and
- It must be a collaborative engagement between the superintendent and the maintenance staff member or team.

The cornerstone of the system I suggest in my teaching and implement with my clients has two components. The first is providing quality feedback continuously – when the performance occurs. The second is frequent performance management coaching sessions between the supervisor and the employee or team of employees. I typically recommend a monthly meeting, which can be less formal than a perfor-

mance appraisal. My suggested agenda for the session is:

A. Two coaching questions: What went really well in the last month, and what could be improved?

B. Discuss the specific measures of performance comparing actual performance to expectations. Review performance for the month, and discuss the performance measures one at a time, concluding with setting the expected value for the next month.



C. Discuss specific issues for the next month.

D. Other items.

E. Ask how the coaching session can be better next month.

F. Adjourn.

I've found the two coaching questions to be extremely effective when involving the maintenance staff individual or team and making the system collaborative. The first question (What went really well in the last month?) focuses on the positive and sets a

great tone for the session. The second question (What could be improved?) has two advantages. It doesn't put the employee on the defensive because it doesn't ask what went wrong, and you can insist on an answer because there are always areas for improvement. Try it. When asked sincerely and patiently, you'll be amazed by what you learn and the employee engagement that will result.

The actual performance compared to expected performance is the heart of the system. You must work with the employee or team to develop specific performance measure and expected performance goals for each month. The comparison should have a coaching and forward-looking tone. The primary objective is to improve performance, not simply determine whether the goal was met. If the goal wasn't met, view it as being behind 2 to 1 after the third inning of a baseball game and figure how you're going to tie the game and take the lead.

Discussing how the session can be better next time provides opportunities to improve the session continuously. You might go months without any input, but then, a great idea emerges. Keep asking, but don't pressure.

E-mail me at rmilligan@trsmith.com for a Word file containing the agenda and a worksheet to assist with the expected compared to actual performance levels.

I realize many of you are required to complete an annual performance appraisal. In my use of this performance coaching system, an annual meeting is still required and valuable. The focus of this meeting, the annual meeting, is on the long-term issues of training/professional development and career development. For your seasonal workers, it should focus on the opportunities they will have (or not have) if they return for another year. For year-round employees, it will focus on their continuing professional development needs and future opportunities at the course or club.

The bottom line: Performance improvement requires a system that operates every day an employee is employed. **GCI**

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Stephen Tucker is the equipment manager at the Ritz-Carlton Members Golf Club in Bradenton, Fla., and past president of the International Golf Course Equipment Managers Association. He can be reached at 941-309-2913 or stephen.tucker@ritzcarlton.com.

ADVANCING TECHNICIANS

Every year, hundreds of golf course managers or owners find themselves looking for qualified golf industry equipment technicians, and every year there seems to be fewer available. Many of the equipment technicians in our industry have made the move from the automotive industry or military, while only a select few end up attending college to prepare for the profession. Of those few who attend college, a low percentage seems to stay in the business. Why is that?

For many years, the golf industry looked at technicians as the mechanics, and many course managers and owners throughout the world still have that same view. However, this perception is changing slowly. With the technological advances in equipment and the evolving role of the golf course superintendent, the position is changing rapidly from mechanic to equipment technician – and for some, equipment manager. The old image of a guy holding a wrench just waiting for something to break down is growing into the image of a professional individual who prepares his own budgets and manages a staff, safety programs, facility, etc. The appeal of the position should be changing, yet we haven't seen an increase of the number of available technicians.

One of the biggest issues is the lack of career awareness. Many people have no idea what a golf course equipment technician is or does. Many people in our industry entered the business by sheer luck or because they knew someone who needed a technician. It's rare to find someone who knew he wanted to be a golf course equipment technician and took such a direction. We need to encourage qualified individuals to take a serious look at this area of the business.

A second issue is the realization of what the industry is demanding of equipment technicians these days. Many equipment technicians and equipment managers need to have a broad skill set. If you work in the

automotive industry, for example, you're generally working in one specific area, such as oil changes, engines, electronics, transmissions, etc. However, at a golf course, you need to be skilled in all those areas as well as welding, reel set-up, hydraulics diagnosis, electrical systems, computers, etc. Also, think about this: What businesses require someone to be in charge of more than a million dollars worth of assets for an average salary of \$35,000 to

One of the biggest issues is the **lack of career awareness**. Many people have no idea what a golf course equipment technician is or does.



\$40,000 a year? But this isn't about pay, it's about making people realize what the industry is asking of technicians. This isn't something that can be fixed because this is a requirement of the industry. However, identifying demands often can change the sense of urgency.

A third issue most technicians face is poor communication with their supervisor. Take all the aforementioned skills, remove communication, and you have a typical golf course equipment technician's job. At many facilities, being an equipment technician is a thankless job. One of the

rewards is being able to see a beautifully manicured golf course that you helped condition, and for many, that's all they need. However, when communication doesn't exist in an operation, you rarely find yourself able to enjoy the results of your work because of time spent scrambling to get things done. This causes frustration and the development of the dreaded "I wish I didn't have to go in to work today" attitude.

With all this said, how do we address these issues? I've always learned that we can't solve worldly issues until we start at home first. Fixing communication breakdowns, building career awareness and improving attitudes always starts at home. Once technicians see they're an important part of the team, they become more reliable and are more willing to get things done, and an operation runs much smoother. Superintendents can help technicians by encouraging them to become involved in associations, educational opportunities and equipment decisions. Superintendents should make technicians feel valued. Superintendents will be surprised by how these simple things can elevate an operation from mediocre to excellent.

For those thinking, "I'm not sure about that," keep this in mind: If you grow the healthiest, most environmentally friendly, greenest turf in the world, how much does that mean if it's not cut well? That technician is integrally responsible for giving members or guests that impression of "Wow!" or "Man, did you see how bad that looks? I can't believe we paid to play this course."

It doesn't matter if you're employed by a top 100 course or a 9-hole public facility – they can all be great, but not without everyone working as a team.

It's the responsibility of every equipment technician and superintendent to ensure that our industry grows and is successful. We need to recruit people to our industry and demonstrate how rewarding it is. However, if we can't tackle the small issues at home, we can't expect to grow the industry for the future. **GCI**

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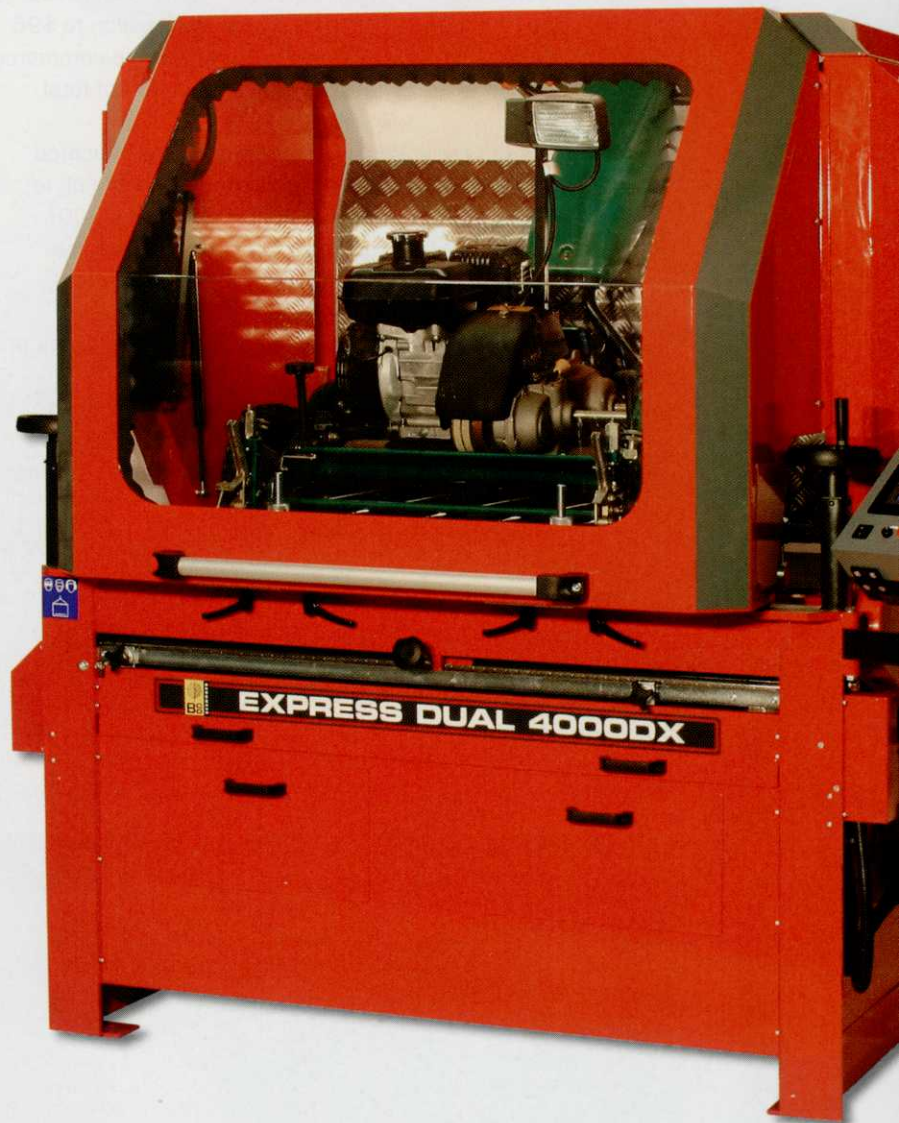
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E-commerce, or purchasing goods and services through the Internet, is growing at a faster rate than the total U.S. economy. A report released in May 2007 by the U.S. Department of Commerce (regarding all consumers, not just golfers) indicates total U.S. revenue increased 8.1 percent from 2004 to 2005, while e-commerce revenue increased 17 percent during the same period.

With 27 percent of sales online, U.S. manufacturers rely more heavily on e-commerce than distributors or retailers. Business-to-consumer retail e-commerce increased from \$76 billion to \$96 billion, or 22 percent, from 2004 to 2005. However, e-commerce sales at retail outlets are modest at only 2.5 percent of total retail sales.

Forty percent of core golfers with Internet access indicated they visit golf-related Web sites at least monthly, according to the National Golf Foundation's 2007 golf consumer profile. While that's a substantial figure, it's less than the percentage who read golf-related magazines or watch golf on TV at least monthly - 60 percent and 82 percent, respectively.



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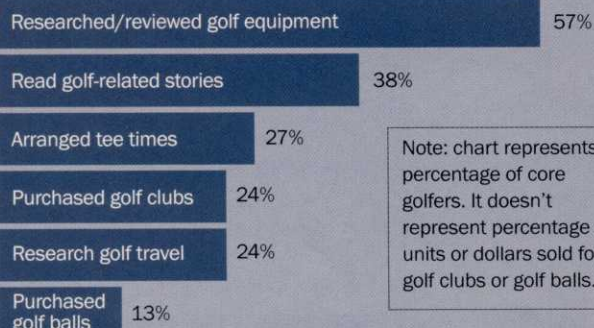
magazines or watch golf on TV at least monthly - 60 percent and 82 percent, respectively.

When looking into golf-related Web sites, golfers are much more likely to read about or research equipment than to make a purchase. No doubt many do their research online then purchase at a traditional outlet. So, the Web continues to be a critical sales tool for manufacturers and retailers, even if all the clicking doesn't lead to an online purchase.

As with the overall U.S. economy, business-to-consumer e-commerce in golf has increased. Companies plying the equipment trade on the Web include traditional bricks-and-mortar retailers along with dedicated e-tailers. And core golfers are logging on to make their purchases because of the convenience, prices and ability to conduct research. **GC**

Source: National Golf Foundation

What core golfers did online (12 months)

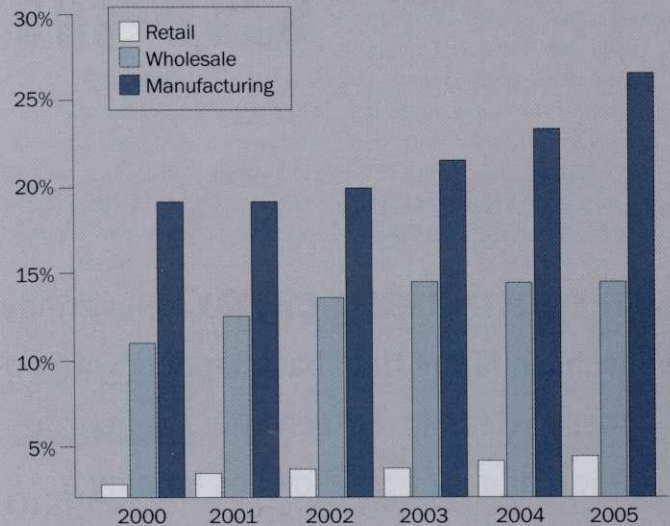


Note: chart represents percentage of core golfers. It doesn't represent percentage of units or dollars sold for golf clubs or golf balls.

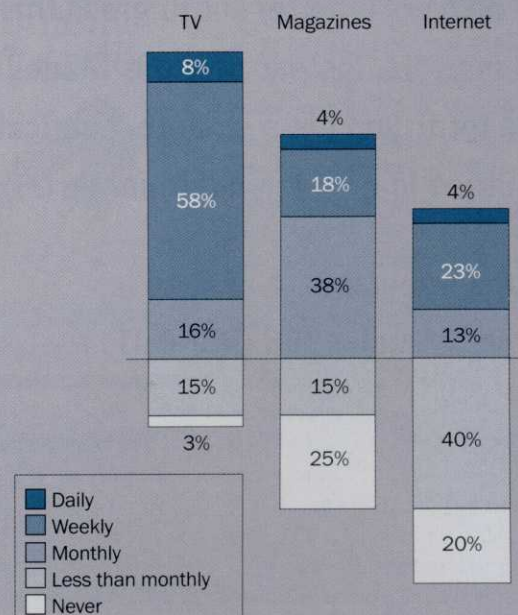
percentage of core golfers

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E-commerce as a percent of total value: 2000-2005



Frequency of golf-related media consumption - core golfers



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