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CHAPTER/ASSISTANT RELATIONSHIPS

“Rising tides raise all ships.” I’ve heard industry veterans recite this quote because they truly believe we all benefit from those individuals who are active in improving our industry.

During the three years I’ve contributed to this magazine, many of my columns have focused on association involvement opportunities for assistant superintendents. In giving your time to your association, you’re helping yourself and everyone else.

From personal experience, my 2007-08 tenure serving the GCSAA Assistant Superintendent Committee (ASC) was one of the greatest opportunities of my career. While this group had many goals, its main theme was to emphasize the benefits of membership and promote participation. Recognizing that chapter organizations are vital in increased involvement, we formulated a guide to walk chapters through the process of creating opportunities for assistant superintendents.

This brilliant committee did not have to think long and hard about what to include in the template. Most of the ASC members had prior experience engaging their local constituents from working on their respective chapter boards. It was the ASC’s goal to create a model for what an assistant superintendent advisory position on a chapter board would encompass.

Before getting overexcited about this idea, we needed to determine whether there was a need for it. With the good folks at GCSAA as our resource, we learned about 30 percent of GCSAA chapters had some assistant activity on their boards. We knew the template might help grow this number.

This template, which is available at gcsaa.org/chapters/chp_mgmt/WorkingWithBOD.asp, contains eight parts in which our committee tried to answer possible questions that might arise.

It starts by explaining why chapter associations should consider incorporating assistant superintendent activity into their board structures. The job market is not what it was years ago; you’re seeing assistants with longer tenures before they’re able to ascend to the next level. So instead of hoping these future superintendents will want to become active in the chapter association when that time comes, take the time to develop that mind-set now. That way, as assistants, the desire is there when they become superintendents.

While taking part in chapter activities benefits assistants in a variety of ways, there are noteworthy benefits for the associations and superintendents:

- Improved recruitment and retention of Class C members;
- A larger pool of volunteers for chapter events;
- Help generating new ideas and thoughts for seminars, events and meetings;
- An increase meeting and event attendance from the Class C members;
- An increase in longevity of the association due to the development of future leaders;

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- Help preparing assistants for professional meetings they may attend with their superintendents or alone, such as board meetings and green committee meetings.
- An increase in assistant value to employers by furthering their industry;
- Bringing recognition to the superintendent and golf course of the participating assistant;
- Help with membership and or seminar costs; and
- Exposing assistants to opportunities that may provide an extra benefit to their employment.

Golf is steeped in heritage and tradition and I’m proud to have experienced a very small part of it. However, most would agree the positions of superintendent and assistants have evolved over the years, as well. It’s time to embrace that change and include assistants in enhancing our profession.

The concept of assistant activity in GCSAA chapters may be foreign to some groups, but please accept this information with an open mind. To those chapters who’ve adopted this concept, thank you, and please continue to support this idea. To all chapter officers reading this today who have no assistant position at the board level, please know that by engaging your Class C members, you’ll ensure the perpetuity of your hard work and that of those before you. **GCI**

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Rethink Tomorrow



Doug Carrick, ASGCA, is the incoming president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. Carrick is president of Carrick Design, Golf Course Architects, based in Toronto. Carrick can be reached at doug@carrickdesign.com or 417-447-6295.

DESIGN IN 2009 AND BEYOND

While the current economic difficulties combined with the resulting slowdown in golf course and residential development is troubling to all those in the business, it's a good time to reflect on the state of the game, past trends, as well as successes and failures. As the economy rebounds, it will be important to formulate a strategy that will ensure the successful future growth in the game of golf and in the development of golf courses, golf course communities and golf resort developments.

Here are a few trends, suggestions and ways to capitalize on demographics that I see as important to keep in mind.

Here come the baby boomers. As the population of baby boomers continues to head towards retirement age, there's no doubt that the demand for new golf courses, golf lifestyle communities and unique golf destinations will continue to grow, especially in markets that are undersupplied. As the financial markets and lending institutions rebound and confidence is restored, the resurgence in development of golf/lifestyle communities and resorts is inevitable. As these types of developments begin to flourish again, developers must carefully consider what's important to their customers, in addition to applying what they've learned from past successes and failures.

Faster play, shorter courses = more players. Our fast-paced, demanding lifestyles have forced most of us to place a much greater emphasis on effective time management. The aspect of balancing time for business, recreation and family must become a primary consideration for all golf facilities, if golf is going to continue growing successfully into the future. The luxury of spending the entire day at the golf course on the weekend, during business outings or on family holidays is becoming a thing of the past as the demand for balancing time increases. Existing and future golf courses will no doubt have to consider reducing the length of the time it takes to play a round of golf.

What does this mean for the design of future golf courses? I believe we'll begin to see shorter, more compact, efficient and playable golf courses – golf courses that can be played in three to four hours, rather than five hours or more.

The impact of technology. Advances in the technology of golf clubs and balls has no doubt encouraged all golf course designers to design longer, more challeng-

ing layouts to defend par against the highly skilled players. As a result, golf courses have continued to increase in length and in the amount of acreage they consume. Not only has this trend added to the length of time it takes to play 18 holes on modern day golf courses, but it also has placed more demands on our natural resources and has added to the cost of building and maintaining them. Ultimately, it's the golfers who pay for these increases in time and money.

Time to pull together as an industry. Perhaps at no other time in the game of golf's long history has there been a greater need for all of golf's stakeholders to come together to formulate a strategy for the future growth of golf. Golf course owners, developers, managers, superintendents, architects, ball and club manufacturers and the governing bodies of golf must work together to formulate a united strategy for attracting new golfers to the game, for retaining existing golfers

Balancing time for business, recreation and family must become a primary consideration for all golf facilities...Golf courses do not have to be excessively long to be challenging, interesting or inspiring to play.

and for making the game of golf more sustainable.

Golf courses no longer can afford to consume increasingly expansive tracts of land, use more water, maintain more turf or take longer to play. Perhaps the time is right to consider reducing the overall length of golf courses, the distance that golf balls travel, the amount of turf that's maintained, the amount of water that's consumed and the length of time it takes to play.

Ultimately, it's the quality of the game and the quality of the experience on the golf course that's most important. Golf courses do not have to be excessively long to be challenging, interesting or inspiring to play.

For golf to flourish as the world recovers from the recession, it must become more sustainable economically, environmentally and socially. **GCI**



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SHOW ME THE SAVINGS

The most common question our firm gets regarding irrigation renovations is, "Can you show the facility's true cost savings?" The answer is more detailed than most people expect, but we always start by stating that, in most cases, you can't turn your irrigation system into a profit center...not directly anyway.

Anyone who claims an irrigation system renovation will show up in black ink on a spreadsheet atop the general manager's desk most likely is misleading you. That being said, a renovation will dramatically and very efficiently improve course conditions expected in today's competitive market. Great conditions are what bring people back to your course, and an irrigation system is without question one of the most important tools for cultivating quality turf.

An irrigation system is not a panacea. But it is your primary and most effective tool for maintaining a quality playing condition on any course. So, we could argue it's actually a revenue producer – it maintains members and attracts new players.

This argument is further supported by golf courses that don't invest in their infrastructure and offer poor playing conditions, which ultimately hurts rounds and encourages golfers to shop out their experience.

Below are some efficiencies-of-scale as they relate to true savings realized from specific irrigation renovations:

- Central control upgrade with ET-based, on-site weather station(s)..... 5-10%
- Open architecture pump station logic, VFD drives & water treatment10-15%
- Sprinkler & piping network (heads with 1.1 SC's & DU's of 80% or better) with proper spacing..... 15-20%

- Soil & turf GIS profile mapping with moisture sensors10-15%
- TOTAL.....40-60%*

*Depending on region, these efficiencies could represent from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of dollars in savings.

TDR & SOIL GIS MAPPING

The map above shows soil-moisture distribution across several fairways on an upper-Midwest course in mid-summer. Soil-moisture data were collected by TDR (time domain reflectometry) using an on-site mobile sampling system. Data analysis and mapping were done using GIS software.

The soil-moisture patterns reveal three important characteristics related to irrigation and water management. First is the significant variability in moisture across the six fairways shown, caused by soil and topography differences. Finer textured soils and flat or depressed areas collect and hold more soil moisture, while slopes, high points and coarser soils hold less moisture and are drier. The patterns indicate three distinct irrigation-management zones from wet to dry across the sample fairways.

The main irrigation objective is to achieve as uniform a distribution of soil moisture as possible. To this end, each of the three zones requires varying amounts of water. The maps allow specific heads in each zone to be controlled to match site conditions and create more soil-moisture uniformity. This zoned method of irrigation has shown that improved conditions and turf quality can be achieved using less water.

The second soil-moisture-data application is evaluating irrigation system performance. The map reveals



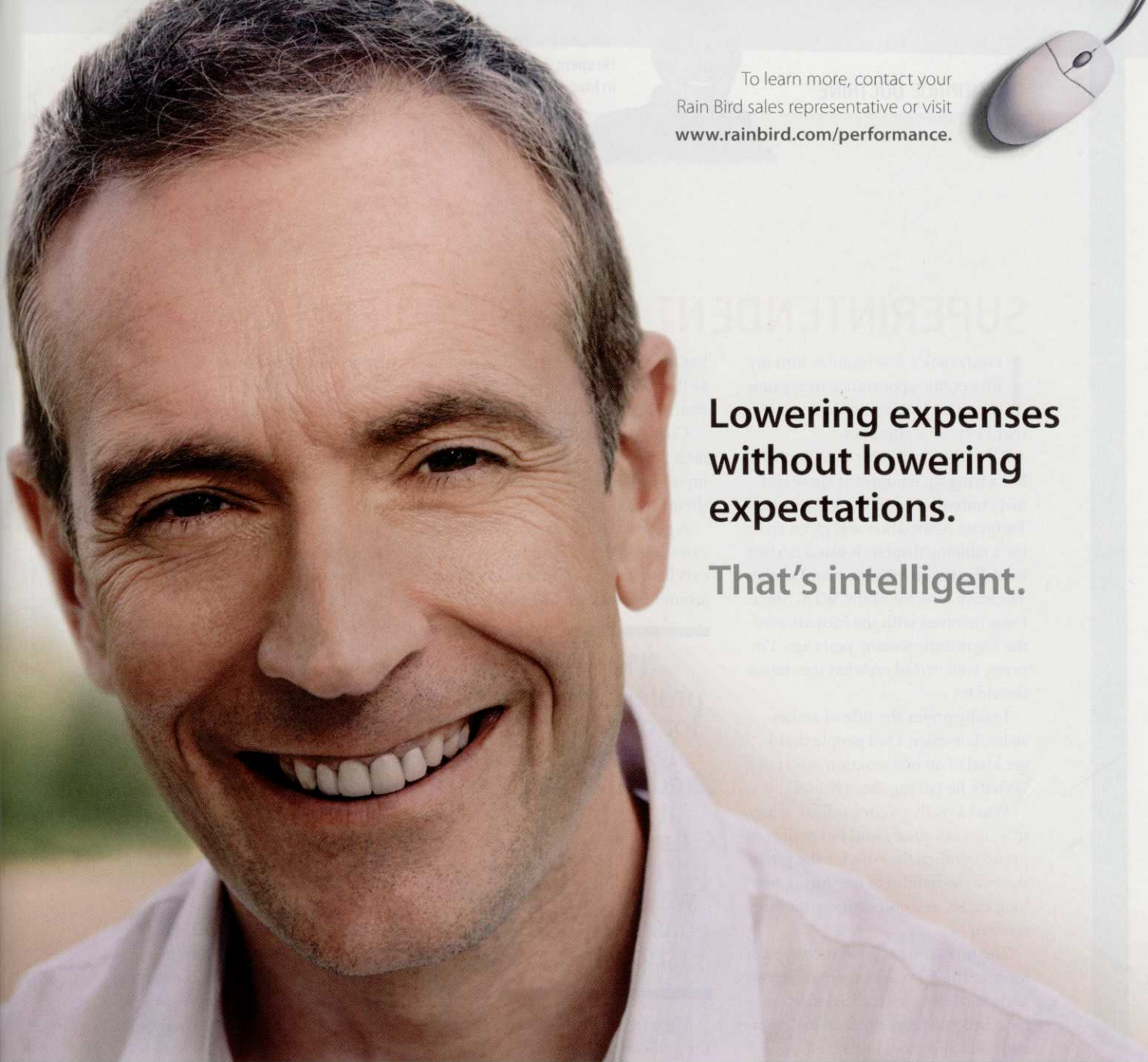
a distinct relationship between specific sprinkler heads and wet and dry areas in the fairways. The map also identifies possible issues with individual head performance. Addressing these specific problems is essential for improving overall distribution uniformity and, ultimately, playing conditions.

The third useful site characteristic revealed in the map is the precise definition of areas that could benefit from subsurface drainage.

I can say definitively that facilities we've recently renovated have realized substantial net increases in newly generated rounds and memberships compared to the cost of improved irrigation performance.

I should note that irrigation upgrades are interrelated by nature, so to improve one component without the other will not maximize efficiency or course playability; irrigation system improvements are based on applying specific sprinkler and site data at a high level of accuracy. If one does not take advantage of system features and applications, savings will not be realized.

In the end, it's a win-win for the facility and the golfing community – the club or golf course boosts revenues, and the community enjoys true cost savings and dramatically improved playing conditions. **GCI**



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Monroe Miller is a retired golf course superintendent. He spent 36 years as superintendent at Blackhawk Country Club in Madison, Wis. Miller can be reached at groots@charter.net.

SUPERINTENDENT TURNED SALESMAN

It only took a few minutes into my first public appearance in my new part-time job for me to recognize that I'm now a salesman.

The Toro distributor in Wisconsin has a bang-up equipment show and turf conference, and the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association was given space for a tabletop display. It was a perfect introduction to my new world as the executive director of the WTA. Since I was involved with the formation of the organization many years ago, I'm pretty well versed on what the duties should be.

I really prefer the title of ambassador, but when I tell people that I get kind of an odd reaction – sort of a “What’s he talking about?” look.

What I really am, regardless of any title, is a salesman. And I'm really proud to officially work for the group that was so helpful to me during my long career as a golf course superintendent.

The turf sales profession changed a lot over the 40 years I spent observing and interacting with it. Salespeople have become more professional, more educated and more organized. In ways, their progress has matched that of golf course superintendents.

Companies selling to golf courses always have recognized that it doesn't matter how great an item is if it doesn't move off the shelf.

What they have increasingly recognized is that success is more likely if the sales staff is educated in turf and extremely well versed in their products.

Nearly all of the salespeople I dealt with later in my career were university-trained in turf and had work experience on a golf course. Several had graduate degrees from our best land grant universities, enhancing their competence and credibility with customers like me. A career in sales

has become an option for undergrads as they map out their paths in the golf course business.

Changes in attitudes toward salesmen have been so great that many like myself looked forward to visits from them.

A good salesman is like a university extension agent in many ways – an excellent source of information from around the state or region he serves.

The turf sales profession changed a lot over the 40 years I spent observing and interacting with it ... Salespeople have become more professional. In many ways, their progress has matched that of superintendents.

They are usually keen observers of the golf course scene and can share information about what's working and what isn't, what problems are surfacing around the state, and generally what kind of season superintendents are having. Their extensive travel and their connections put them in a position to keep us well informed. And yet, despite the opportunity, they never share someone else's business when inappropriate; they know gossip isn't appealing.

Sales professionals have assumed an important role in our professional organizations. The Wisconsin Turfgrass Association would suffer greatly without salespeople on our board, in our officer roster and on our committees. The leadership and legwork they give to our field days and conferences

are essential, and their input makes these events significantly better.

As I consider the new circumstances I find myself in, facing new and somewhat unfamiliar responsibilities, I think about the qualities of the best salespeople who called on me – honesty, courtesy, enthusiasm, sincerity, knowledge, competitiveness and a good product.

In a way, I have the best product anybody could have to sell – turfgrass research at our land grant university. That notwithstanding, the economy we find ourselves in these days may put more emphasis on stewardship responsibilities and relationship building, but aren't these the things that good manufacturer or distributor representatives do also? Often, considerable effort is spent by sales staff to lay the groundwork for an actual sale that may come somewhere down the road.

I suspect that the most difficult thing for me to learn will be dealing with disappointment. It's inevitable that I'll catch someone at the wrong time or that I'll meet somebody who will be less than polite. I'll have to learn how to handle a certain amount of rejection and have to be patient when I am turned down. These are things that really good salespeople handle with aplomb, and they're some of the things about them I admire the most.

Role models for me abound – Hilliard, Abler, Neary, Werth and Wentz, to name a few from my most recent experience. They are all great salesmen, and they have set a high bar for me to clear.

Springtime often comes to Wisconsin in fits and starts, and superintendents (and golf players!) are all waiting for opening day. Me? I can hardly wait to make my first membership sale. **GCI**

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BUILDING A STRONG ASSOCIATION

Over the last few years in my involvement with the launch of the International Golf Course Equipment Managers Association, I've gained a lot of experience regarding association work. When founding the IGCEMA I sought the advice of peers, manufacturers and other associations to set up a strong foundation that could be built upon. Much of what I learned about leadership and brand building I gained from my current employer. Let's face it, no one is going to join an association they've never heard of, so it must be advertised and promoted. Associations need to be built strong to weather the tough times. The economy is not helping, as is people's unwillingness and/or ability to donate their time. So how do you combat these issues?

Almost everyone reading this column belongs to some sort of association, whether they're superintendents, technicians or the editors looking over this article.

I've learned some people want to be involved in organizations, but most of them would rather be a member without responsibility or commitment. This is fine, but what's going to make them attend a meeting or pay their dues next year?

Associations have to be creative in their offerings to the membership to keep their interest, and they have to be willing to change from the norm while remaining focused on the core objectives.

If you want your members to be active within the association, you have to keep them engaged and the only way to do that is to provide something appealing to them. It's easy to go out and find a speaker, but find someone no one has heard before so it's not the same presentation everyone heard last year. Look for topics that are relevant

to today's tasks. Look for ways to "wow" members and you'll keep them coming back.

It's great to have all the insurance programs, shirts and bumper stickers, but many members just want to be kept up to date on the industry, whether it's with the Web site, newsletter or just simple e-mails.

Good leaders with vision and the diligence to see projects through make an association succeed.

They want to know what's happening with their association, other associations, manufacturers, suppliers and members; they want industry news (and gossip maybe), and they want forums where they can air opinions, exchange ideas and chat about problems. Communication is the key; if someone sends you an e-mail regarding an idea or a question, make it a standard practice to reply right away.

It's challenging to keep an association going much less continue to add programs. However, managing those programs and not letting the programs manage you is how to stay ahead.

Create focus groups and committees to help remove some of the workload, be trusting and delegate where you can; you'll find there are individuals out there who are leaders and want to take on projects, but you have to be willing to give them the chance. Where else will you find other association leaders if there are no opportunities for newcomers to serve or gain experience?

If you're having a tough time getting people involved, then you need to explain the benefits to the industry as well as the personal benefits of stepping up and getting involved. Post the success stories of where leaders were before they got involved and where they are now.

Many associations struggle from either the lack of or too much leadership. If you make the decision to lead an association you're making the commitment not only for yourself, but also for those hundreds or thousands of members who are depending on you for their professional growth.

There are many personalities involved in association work and adapting to each one will make you more successful in leading your team and membership. Many people who get involved in the administration of associations are leaders themselves, so it's important that you work together as a team.

Good leaders with vision and the diligence to see projects through make an association succeed. Remember, members are looking for a place to network with their industry peers and stay educated on issues. Don't lose focus of these objectives.

The brand you build with your association – the dependability, vision, financial responsibility and dedication that you provide to your membership – will improve the marketability of your association and encourage companies to advertise, members to join and your board members to remain open to future direction.

No one said it's easy to step up as a leader of an association and put your head above the parapet, but the satisfaction you get from your service reaches way beyond the time you spend in office. **GCI**