

**What's the best way for customers to get in touch until all of those deals are finalized?**

Our new website will be up soon. In the meantime call us (503-651-2130) and ask for Russ Hayworth or Lucas Solis, our strategy manager.

**Given the crazy state of the seed market, what challenges do you face?**

Crystal: Plenty, but I'm not really worried because people know us and our varieties. They want the products we have. The real challenge is how much to produce and finding quality growers to do it for us. It usually takes a couple of years to really get production running.

Bill: Other companies like Jacklin have made real inroads (in our absence). We'll have to counteract that. Also, we need to be strong in China and Korea. Lew Sharp is over there a lot and he has the power to spec our varieties, work with architects and such. It's really important that we work with architects

over there to get them on board with us.

Crystal: We have to differentiate our products from the competition. The cool thing is that we've continued our research into varieties and traits. We're not behind on that. We have lots of exciting varieties coming with disease resistance, drought tolerance and other characteristics superintendents are looking for.

**You're raring to go to get back in this business, aren't you?**

Bill: I'll say. I missed it a lot. I missed the sod growers. I missed working on overseeding with the folks in Palm Springs – it all started at La Quinta Country Club down there you know. We really are looking forward to getting re-engaged. The biggest thing about this is that we get to reconnect directly into the market. That's going to be fun!

Crystal: I'm looking forward to being a little more in control and being able to serve the customers quickly and with integrity and high quality products. And to use their feed-

back to improve our products too. Like Dad said, it will be more of a direct connection to a market we really love.

Bill: We want to reconnect. We couldn't do the job we knew needed to be done. We have an opportunity to start over. It's been five years and things move fast – there are new problems and challenges for superintendents – but we think we're ready.

**So Bill...old friend...will you ever actually retire?**

Bill: I don't intend to retire! Not until I check out for good. I just got my plane back (after a crash two years ago) and I'm getting checked out again to start flying. I'm having too much fun to retire. GCI

*Pat Jones is GCI's publisher and editorial director.*

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# WHAT MESSAGE ARE YOU SENDING?

GCI's **exclusive study** shows how the generations interact on the course.

**T**he typical maintenance team is a mix of grizzled ag vets and wet-behind-the-ears turf school grads.

This motley generational makeup can be the source of a number of problems, namely how to communicate and/or interact with one another to achieve and accomplish both short- and long-term goals at a facility.

If you're of the Boomer set, you may have gazed in bewilderment at a seemingly disconnected Gen Y'er, phone in hand, thumbs flailing over a miniature keyboard smaller than a business card. Then again, if you're a Gen X'er stuck in the generational middle, you may look around you and wonder how anything gets done.

During the last quarter of 2011, Golf Course Industry, in conjunction with research being conducted by the Syngenta Business Institute, conducted research about the generational differences among superintendents, assistants and workers of different ages, particularly in how they interacted with one another and how they utilized technology to not only better communicate, but to better themselves professionally.

We sent out 4,000 online survey links to superintendents randomly selected from our

circulation list and received about 250 valid responses. We asked supers a number of questions regarding hiring practices, information-mining and interpersonal communication.

We then compiled all of the data and broke it down along generational lines – separating Baby Boomers (1945-1964), from Generation X (1965-1979) and Generation Y (1980 to present). We also provided comparative results from all respondents to represent all superintendents regardless of generational makeup.

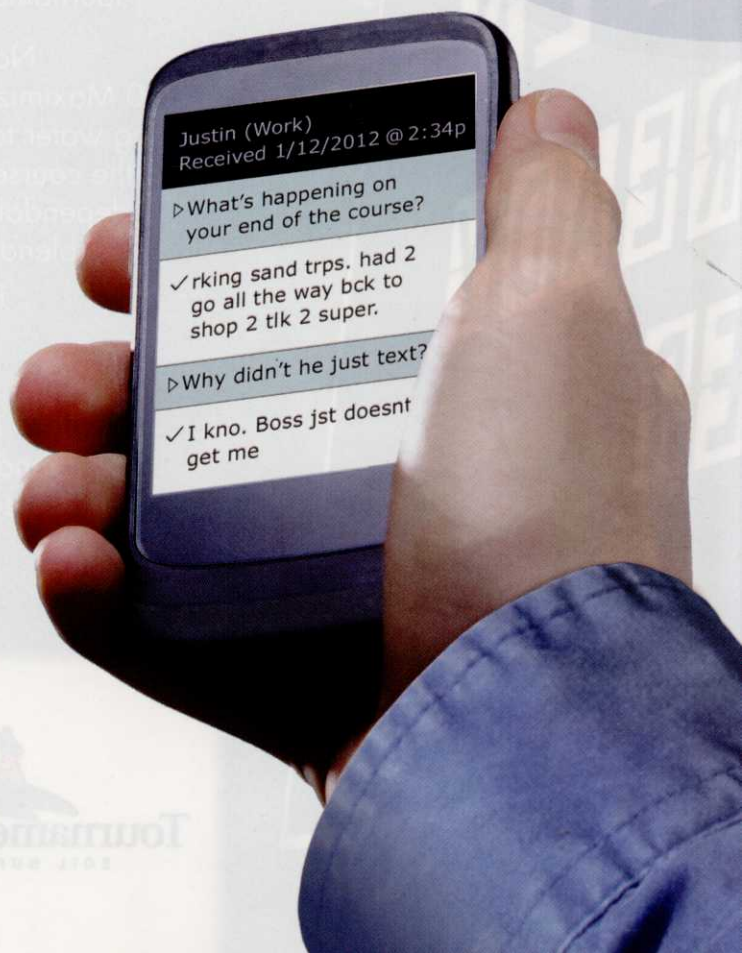
Some of the results weren't surprising, as the responses broke along generational lines as you'd typically expect. Others, though, did offer some food for thought and served as a catalyst for further analysis. So we went ahead and conducted one-on-one interviews with respondents from the different generations to root out particular management challenges and showcase how superintendents better communicate intergenerationally and navigate through generational boundaries.

We'd be remiss, though, if we didn't point out some possible flaws or areas of contention with our survey results. For example, our survey was conducted online, so it predisposes that all respondents regularly

used the Internet, and therefore, had basic tech and social media knowledge. In addition, by sheer numbers and makeup of the industry, there are more Boomers than Gen Y. Therefore, their percentage of respondents were higher. Lastly, we chose many of our technology questions based on our direct interaction with superintendents in the industry

and the trends we perceived as current and influential.

At the very least, the following results are interesting and conversation provoking food for thought – regardless of your generational affiliation. Hopefully, though, it helps give you a better understanding, and maybe a better appreciation, of those you work with on a daily basis.



# YOU'RE HIRED!

Often it is “who you know” when it comes to seeking qualified job candidates to fill out your maintenance team.

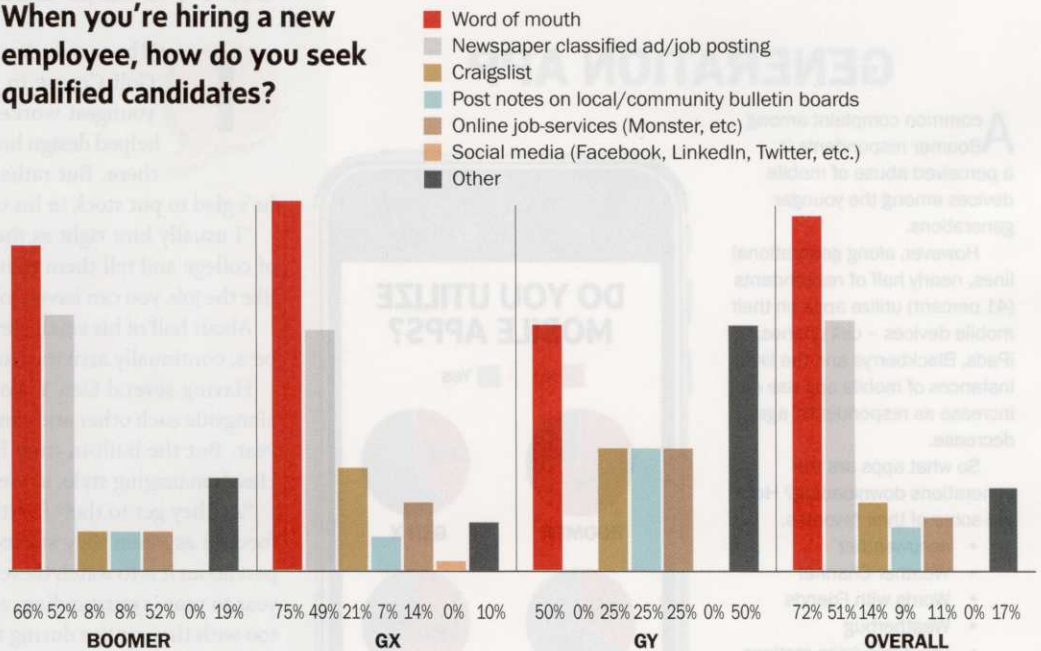
Across generational lines, word-of-mouth networking is the preferred way to find quality hires with nearly three quarters (72 percent) preferring this method, according to the research data. Conversely, new-fangled social media outlets were a resounding flop when it came to soliciting quality workers.

Broken down generationally, the trends remained relatively consistent among the different age groups but with a few notable exceptions. For example, Boomers and Gen X favored placing ads in newspapers, a practice Gen Y did not subscribe to. Likewise, Gen X and Gen Y showed some affinity toward Craigslist, the popular free online classifieds service, as a source for quality candidates; however, very few Boomers were logging on.

Also, Gen Y respondents liked community and online job boards, a practice Boomers weren't entirely sold on when finding workers.

“Other” responses included the course's own website, both national and local association websites, college and high school job boards, internal HR departments, and even simply placing a “hiring” sign out in front of the facility.

## When you're hiring a new employee, how do you seek qualified candidates?



## KEVIN HICKS COEUR D'ALENE RESORT GOLF COURSE

For Kevin Hicks, the difficult part isn't in handling the rifts between the generations in the grounds crew at Coeur d'Alene Resort Golf Course in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Regardless of how they're getting along, his biggest concern is keeping their work up to his standards, and that means motivation.

The biggest difference he sees among the generations in his crew is where the motivation for each group lies, he says.

“The people who work here who are coming back every year who are in their upper 40s and early 50s, they crave a little more stability than the younger sets, and they're motivated differently,” he says. “My toughest group is my college-and-under group because they're a little fickle, and they're motivated differently, too. For some, they've got an entitlement mentality that can be tough to get over.”

Stability is tough to emulate on a course, and Hicks can't make the job look any more appealing to younger workers than it really is.

“It's really important to communicate about what the job is right at the start,” says Hicks. “It's not a glamorous job and you're not going to get rich doing it.”

But rather than splitting his time between reaching to each generation's general desires,

he finds a middle ground to promote the overall group.

“You've got to find other ways to motivate them,” he says. “A lot of things we do are pretty universally motivating. We'll cook hamburgers once in a while or have an outing on another local course together.”

But his most successful team-building motivator trades the golf ball for something slightly larger. His team takes part in a softball league populated by other local golf club crews throughout the season.



Hicks

“It was a great motivator that kept people interested, and had a cheesy little trophy, but it was something to talk about. All you have to do is add a ball, and your team can have a lot of fun. It bridges the whole group really well; we had our 60-year old guys playing along with our college guys.”

On the flipside of motivation is discipline, which can be a little more divisive across those lines, says Hicks.

“I think discipline is the biggest one you have to adjust for the different generations,” he says, as every age group needs a different style, even

(continued on page 73)

“I think discipline is the biggest one you have to adjust for the different generations.”

—Kevin Hicks

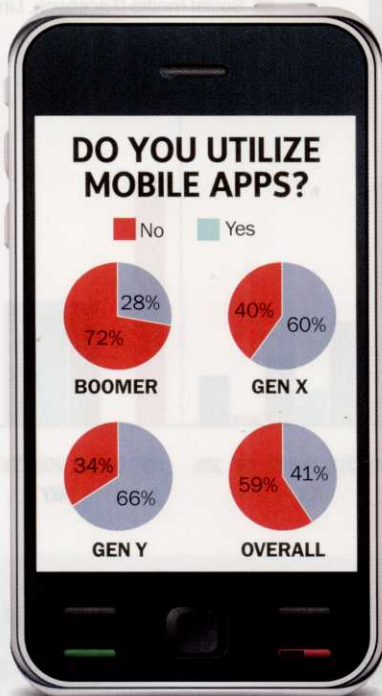
## GENERATION APP

A common complaint among Boomer respondents is a perceived abuse of mobile devices among the younger generations.

However, along generational lines, nearly half of respondents (41 percent) utilize apps on their mobile devices – cell phones, iPads, Blackberrys and the like. Instances of mobile app use do increase as respondents' ages decrease.

So what apps are the generations downloading? Here are some of their favorites.

- Accuweather
- Weather Channel
- Words with Friends
- Weatherbug
- Local television stations
- Maps
- ESPN
- Gas Buddy
- Toro NSN
- DropBucket
- Sunseeker
- Agrian Mobile
- GIS 2012
- TweetDeck



## GETTING THE WORD OUT

Nothing beats a one-on-one conversation when conveying important work-related information, according to survey respondents.

Overall, a phone call (72 percent) was the go-to method across generational lines, followed by face-to-face meetings and email (both 66 percent). The gap widened when it came to text messaging, with only a third (34 percent) of respondents choosing that method. Social media venues ranked considerably lower among favored forms of critical communication.

These trends remained relatively consistent when the data was broken down generationally.

### When you need to communicate critical work-related information, what do you use?

	BOOMER	GEN X	GEN Y	OVERALL
Email	62%	70%	50%	66%
Text message	34%	32%	25%	34%
Phone call	69%	72%	75%	72%
In-person visit/meeting	65%	61%	75%	66%
Social media	5%	10%	25%	6%
Other	0%	1%	0%	2%

## JIM HASZ LAKE BREEZE GOLF COURSE

It'd be easy for Jim Hasz, superintendent at Lake Breeze Golf Course in Winneconne, Wis., to write off his youngest workers as lazy. A Boomer himself, Hasz helped design his course 21 years ago when he started there. But rather than regale them with his stories, he's glad to put stock in his college-age employees.

"I usually hire right as they're going into their freshman year of college and tell them right off the bat, if it works out and you like the job, you can have a job for four years if you want," he says.

About half of his small crew is made up of younger crew members, continually arriving from the nearby college.

Having several Gen Y workers at one time means they work alongside each other and can help train the newcomers year after year. But the built-in time limit with a college hire fits in with Hasz's managing style, as well, he says.

"As they get to their fourth or fifth year, their interest isn't as focused as when they started out," he says. "But the rewarding part about it is to watch these kids grow. Their maturity level from year to year is outstanding, and they keep the retired guys young too with their antics during the breaks."

Though he doesn't look for a particular type of hire, Hasz says the new workers generally fit in with the group.

"The overriding thing is if you're involved in sports or like sports, everything will work out fine. Now the older guys accept pretty much everybody," he says. "I haven't had any problems between my older guys and my younger guys; but maybe it's in the people I hire, people who can get along with other people."

Hasz spends at least a whole morning working with each of the new recruits to make certain they understand what needs to be done for a chore to keep the course operating smoothly.

"You have to explain everything with them," he says. "I'll teach them how I want it done and explain why I want it done that way. I find if you explain it, they're more accepting to do it your way rather than just telling them you want it that way."

Once they have the hang of it, he'll start them out with some of the smaller jobs, using positive reinforcement to guide them.

"Experience is the best teacher," he says. "With my older guys, they've been with me for years and they're much more dependable. But I'm finding that sometimes they're starting to feel a little like they know it all. They do stray away from what I want and I have to reel them in a little bit now and again."

But when it comes to the technical side of turf, Hasz keeps his message the same regardless of the age group.

"To me, I don't have to change all that much. If I've got an older gentleman, I teach him in the same way as I do the younger kids," he says. "It's just the process I go through. The thing that may change is that they may have more experience on some equipment whereas the younger guy may not, so you just spend a little more time with the younger guy."

Hasz also splits up his teams to give each the best balance for the job assigned, he says. He'll put the younger workers together sometimes, or have one of the older crew members help keep them in line. Together, they usually get through the assignment more quickly. But the college crew members help keep the job fun.

"We get our work done and have a good time," he says. "When it's fun, it's not work."

## GENERATIONAL GAP

As the age gap widens, so does a disconnect between the generations, according to the survey data.

For example, Boomers report that they are relatively comfortable working with Gen X coworkers, with only 1 percent feeling a disconnect. That gap widens, though, when it comes to dealing with Gen Y workers, with more than a quarter of Boomer respondents (26 percent) feeling a disconnect. No love is lost with Gen Y and their attitudes toward Boomer coworkers, either. According to the data, a third (34 percent) of Gen Y find it difficult to relate to their Boomer colleagues.

Interestingly enough, Gen X workers feel some disconnect with colleagues on both sides of the generational gap. More than 10 percent feel some generational distance between themselves and Boomers and 20 percent sense a gap between themselves and Gen Y colleagues.

### Who do you feel a disconnect with?

BOOMERS ON WORKING WITH...			
	Boomers	GenX	GenY
Don't work with	2%	4%	3%
No	<b>96%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>71%</b>
Yes	2%	1%	26%

GEN X ON WORKING WITH...			
	Boomers	GenX	GenY
Don't work with	0	0	0
No	<b>89%</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>80%</b>
Yes	11%	2%	20%

GEN Y ON WORKING WITH...			
	Boomers	GenX	GenY
Don't work with	0	0	0
No	<b>66%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Yes	34%	0	0

## MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

We asked respondents what they believed were their top challenges when managing across generation lines. Here are some of the top or most frequent responses.

- Getting them to show for work on time. Keeping people off mobile phones during work activities.
- Boosting morale without using bonuses or raises based on merit.
- Finding staff that doesn't look at the job as just a paycheck.
- Getting the Boomers and Gen Y working together.
- Being able to provide them with great enough challenges.
- Motivating (workers) in a down golf market.
- As a boss, making sure they understand that I understand their issues.
- Employees not listening to how I want things done.
- Pride in work and attention to detail, self-motivation.



### RYAN CUMMINGS PLYMOUTH COUNTRY CLUB

Even though Ryan Cummings, superintendent of Plymouth Country Club in Plymouth, Ind., is just a year or so shy of Gen Y himself, he's always heard he's got the spirit and drive of a Boomer or beyond.

"I don't normally fit the mold of the generation I'm defined in," he says. "I have maybe a different work ethic, but you're always going to have those differences even within a generation. You have to look at your crew and figure out how best to communicate with them on an individual basis."

There are a few differences in how each generation communicates on the course, though.

"A Boomer wants more of a formal, direct communication style," he says. "A Gen X or Y'er wants more of a social, indirect form of communication. For instance, I'll allow them to use their cell phones to text me or my assistant rather than driving to the other end of the course. From the initial hire, I try to sit down and figure out the best way to communicate with them to get the job done."

Within his small team, they span four generations, reaching from college-aged workers to before the end of World War II. Sometimes, they split along generation lines based on what they assume about each other even when working together, he says.

"There's the old cliché that the older generations see the younger with that negative connotation that they're all wild and they just don't get it," he says.

"The older generations sometimes don't see the work ethic in the younger generation because it's just a different work ethic. The older generations just come to do the work and have a tremendous amount of pride in what they do. They take more of a pride in their use of the equipment, maybe because they've worked on that particular piece for 20 years.

"The X and Y'ers look at things with a more holistic approach," he says. "They really don't see it as a job, but taking care of a green space. They view their job as exercise."

Cummings blends those strengths to get the best out of his whole crew's efforts, he says.

"They all do take pride in their work," he says. "It's just a matter of how it's accomplished that's different. The Boomers and Vets can take a leadership and teaching role, and they can learn a lot from the younger generations as far as tech goes and maybe re-instilling that freer spirit they had years ago."

Cummings strengthens that team dynamic by using a rewards system and course outings to create a bond between crew members even if they aren't part of the same generation. There's also the monthly barbecue or some grabbed time on a rain delay morning when they can all discuss what's happening in the world and on the course. He makes use of the daily five-minute staff meeting to talk about issues facing the whole crew, but also

(continued on page 73)

## How often do you read or access the following for job-/career-/trade-related news and information?

### FACEBOOK

	Boomers	GX	GY	Overall
Never	69%	47%	67%	60%
Daily	9%	16%	0	10%
Once a week	15%	27%	33%	21%
Once month	7%	10%	0	9%
I don't know what this is	0	0	0	0

### LINKEDIN

	Boomers	GX	GY	Overall
Never	75%	56%	100%	68%
Daily	2%	4%	0	2%
Once a week	14%	26%	0	19%
Once month	6%	10%	0	8%
I don't know what this is	3%	4%	0	3%

### TWITTER

	Boomers	GX	GY	Overall
Never	89%	84%	100%	87%
Daily	0	7%	0	3%
Once a week	8%	7%	0	7%
Once month	2%	2%	0	2%
I don't know what this is	1%	0	0	1%

### YOUTUBE

	Boomers	GX	GY	Overall
Never	47%	29%	34%	39%
Daily	0	0	0	0%
Once a week	26%	41%	0	32%
Once month	27%	30%	66%	29%
I don't know what this is	0	0	0	0%

### CRAIGSLIST

	Boomers	GX	GY	Overall
Never	70%	54%	67%	63%
Daily	0	2%	0	1%
Once a week	9%	21%	33%	14%
Once month	20%	23%	0	21%
I don't know what this is	1%	0	0	1%

### TEXT MESSAGING

	Boomers	GX	GY	Overall
Never	49%	36%	33%	43%
Daily	29%	43%	34%	34%
Once a week	18%	21%	33%	20%
Once month	4%	0	0	3%
I don't know what this is	0%	0	0	0%

### BLOGS

	Boomers	GX	GY	Overall
Never	74%	49%	33%	63%
Daily	4%	0	0	4%
Once a week	12%	35%	34%	22%
Once month	10%	12%	33%	10%
I don't know what this is	0	4%	0	1%

## WEEDING THROUGH DATA

Without a doubt, there's a lot of information out there, but how are superintendents regularly aggregating and accessing the job, career or golf trade data they need?

Hands down, YouTube, the popular video-hosting website, was the go-to source for career- and job-related information across generations (61 percent) with the majority participants accessing it at least once a week. Generationally, YouTube is a big hit with Gen X superintendents with nearly three quarters (71 percent) using the site on a regular basis to consume or share information.

Text message was the next favored source for plucking and distributing career and trade information, with 57 percent across the generations sending or receiving career and job text with colleagues at least once a week. There was also a high frequency of daily use among 34 percent of Gen Y and 43 percent of Gen X saying they do this on a daily basis, compared to 29 percent of Boomers.

Facebook was another favorite venue, with 40 percent of participants indicating they use the social media site for informational purposes on a regular basis. Generationally, more than half (53 percent) of Gen X and about a third (33 percent) of Gen Y used the site with the same relative frequency, with a little less than a third (31 percent) of Boomers utilizing their Facebook accounts.

On the flip side, Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y all indicated they don't utilize Twitter for communicating this type of data.

Surprisingly, though, blogs did not fare as well as expected, especially with the seemingly strong blog presence among the superintendent community. Across generations, more than half (63 percent) indicated they don't use blogs to cull useful information and data. And while blog use was greatest among Gen X supers (47 percent), we suspect that the 4 percent who answered that they didn't know what a blog was were, in truth, pulling our legs or experiencing survey fatigue. **GCI**



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**Henry DeLozier**, a principal in the Global Golf Advisors consultancy, DeLozier joined Global Golf Advisors in 2008 after nine years as the vice president of golf of Pulte Homes. He is a past president of the National Golf Course Owners Association's board of directors and serves on the PGA of America's Employers Advisory Council.

## GOING TO THE SHOW?

“Going to the show?” That’s a question you’ll hear a lot in the coming weeks as the golf industry’s three major trade shows – the PGA Merchandise Show, the CMAA World Conference and the Golf Industry Show – roll out their red carpets to golf professionals, course owners, operators, managers and superintendents. The shows are a good time to renew acquaintances and kick the tires on new products. But if that’s all you’re doing, you’re wasting a great opportunity to do some real business.

Every vendor and supplier whose booth lines the trade show aisles is hoping to leave the show after writing enough business to make their usually substantial show investment worthwhile. That’s why the shows are a great time to negotiate deals for the products and services you’ll need for the rest of the year.

Bearing in mind that a “good deal” is characterized by mutual benefit, here are four elements of an effective trade show game plan to consider as you prepare for discussions with vendors and suppliers.

Bearing in mind that a “good deal” is characterized by **mutual benefit**, here are four elements of an effective trade show game plan to consider as you prepare for discussions with vendors and suppliers.

- **Be prepared.** Before leaving for the show, make sure you understand current market supply and demand pressures relative to the products and exhibitors you want to visit. Review the range of competitive options in advance of the show. Draft a list of targeted vendors with whom you want to work. Be dedicated to your prioritized list and don’t waste time “walking the floor” aimlessly. Use the exhibit floor maps available on each show’s website to create your personal a daily itinerary based on the companies you want to visit. Make appointments in advance and let exhibitors know what you would like to discuss so the appropriate person will be available when you arrive. Be on time and use your time efficiently by getting straight to business.

- **Communicate clearly and honestly.** Let vendors know what you want and don’t want. Can they meet

your needs? Are you right for them? If you have a complaint or criticism, state it in a constructive manner. Everyone wants to do a better job and to have the chance to earn more business.

- **Project your needs beyond the immediate.** The best deals are struck when vendors understand your overall needs and can see themselves helping you meet them. Larger volume is advantageous to all parties; one-at-a-time purchases require significant time for lesser benefit. The more your chosen suppliers understand your big picture plans and needs, the better they can serve you.

- **Understand what’s negotiable – and what’s not.** Timing of purchases and deliveries is important. Purchases early in the year are most attractive to the vendor since everyone has budgets and sales goals to meet. Most vendors believe that an early-cycle (early in the year) purchase is more valuable to them than waiting for the proverbial “birds in the bush.” The longer the year runs, the easier it is for facilities to push a purchase to the following year.

Price is important; but service capability trumps price. If possible, meet the people who would work with you directly and make them a part of the discussion. Local service is very important in most transactions; do business with the companies that provide dependable service.

Terms matter and time really is money. Most vendors offer their best terms for cash purchases. But companies with captive financing options also can help extend your buying power. Understand that there is an attributed cost to leasing – and do your homework.

Loyalty matters. The best deals go to the most loyal customers. Every large customer seeks to leverage size and loyalty in favor of price and terms. Vendors allow the greatest benefits to loyal customers. But driving a hard-bargain and loyalty are not mutually exclusive. So don’t confuse friendship with loyalty. Reliability and mutual respect – not friendship – create the best business relationships.

Thorough preparation, thoughtful dialogue, constructive criticism and loyal relationships are the four corners of a solid foundation for business relationships. Plan now for a valuable show experience, and it’s likely you’ll have one. **GCI**