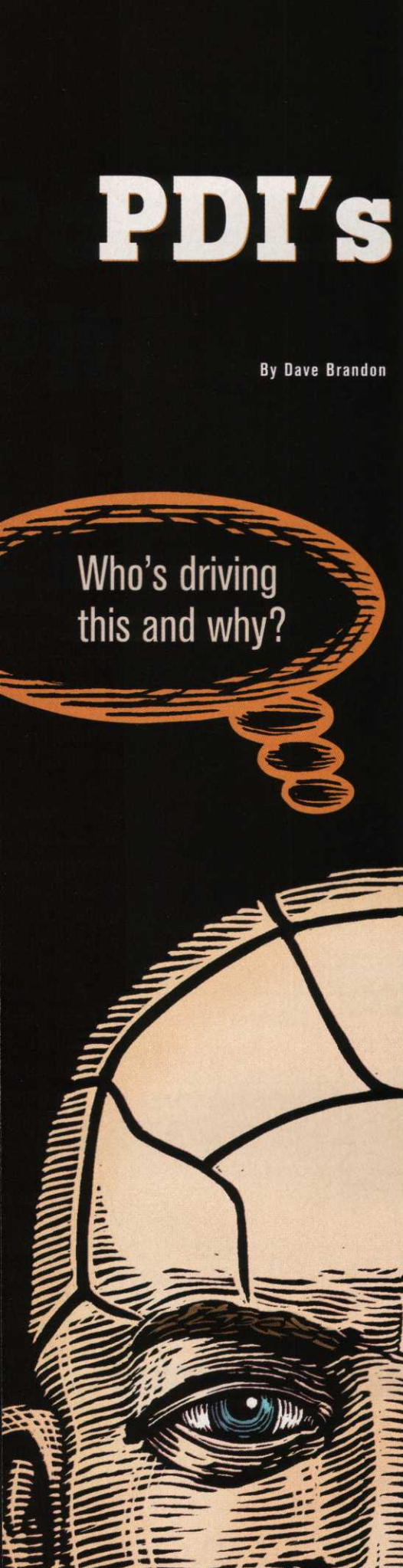


PDI's

By Dave Brandon



Who's driving this and why?

Potential Pitfalls

Here's a hypothetical situation: An employer or headhunter seeking a superintendent calls the GCSAA. The prospective employer is then asked to answer a questionnaire specifying the needs for the position. GCSAA enters this information into its database and a list of candidates pops out of the computer.

Sound good? Maybe, except that you won't be on that list unless you're a Class A or certified member. And no matter how many years of great experience you have, if you don't meet certain formal education requirements, you'll never be on that list. This is the reality of the Professional Development Initiative.

By now, you and many more fellow superintendents are becoming aware of this initiative being set forth by GCSAA. To date, GCSAA has reportedly spent nearly a million dollars for the funding of this research and analysis. Many of the benefits put forth in the PDI are valid. But upon closer examination, the initiative includes potential pitfalls that could exclude many capable superintendents from achieving their professional goals.

The main drive behind the initiative is education. Who can object to that? Education is the cornerstone of our profession. But don't assume that opposing PDI is equivalent to opposing the educational avenues it could open. Instead, the opposition's concerns are primarily about the need for the full disclosure of the costs of the program as well as how and why the initiative is being proposed.

Before you read on, promise you'll do this: Take the time to investigate what's

being proposed, and make up your own mind and communicate your view to your local chapter delegate. On the surface, this initiative is being packaged and sold to you in ways that may seem irresistible. But we the opposition believe the more you find out, the more you'll agree with some of our concerns. For example:

The degree dilemma

New superintendents who hope to obtain Class A status or certification will be required to have two- or four-year degrees. The two-year degree could be in turf or a related field, but the four-year degree could be in any discipline. Under the proposal, current members that haven't achieved a degree (or certificate) will be grandfathered into the new Class A status.

The grandfathering clause is not clear on how long this "amnesty" offer is available. Suppose, for example, you're a grandfathered Class A member without a degree and you lose your job or pursue another non-superintendent career within golf for a while. You would be reclassified as an inactive member. When you were ready to take a superintendent's position, you would never be able to attain a level above Class B unless you returned to school for a degree.

What's more, there is the fundamental question, "Does a degree necessarily make one superintendent better than another?" Look around at the next chapter meeting and then decide for yourself.

Branding

Those that have the desired criteria will be considered a "branded" Class A member and will be actively promoted and

Continued on page 101

PDI's Potential Pitfalls

Continued from page 38

marketed by the GCSAA. These are not our words; these are in the words put forth in the PDI presentation and used by many PDI supporters in discussions on the GCSAA "Talking it Over" Web forum. (Note: The forum has been a great communication tool. We urge everyone who has access to a computer to visit this site.)

In short, it's clear that GCSAA intends to put even more of its resources and efforts behind these "branded" superintendents in the future. Is this the role we want our association to play?

Continuing education

If passed, everyone who wants to maintain Class A status will have to accumulate a certain amount of continuing education credits/professional development units and meet other educational criteria. This will cost both money and time. No one seems to know how much, but it's hard to conceive it will be cheap. In addition, those not grandfathered in will have to prove certain competencies that must be validated by a third party. Should we agree to something without knowing what it will cost us?

What's driving it?

The PDI was initially put forth under the premise that "this is what our employers want." Later, the message radically shifted to "this is what we, the members, wanted." Curiously, the great majority of members don't even seem to know this issue exists. How could it be what "we" wanted?

Ask yourself who's really driving this and why.

Get involved

Again, we invite you to please get actively involved with where the GCSAA is headed. The GCSAA isn't just an elite group of leaders or a building in Lawrence, Kan. The GCSAA is you, me and the rest of the membership. The debate surrounding this initiative will, in some way, directly effect your future as a superintendent. This is not about "politics," it's about your livelihood.

We assure you that those of us who question this initiative are proud to be GCSAA members. Because we have chosen to voice our concerns, we have been called whiners, complainers and extremists. We have been told we may even be jeopardizing ("splat") our future in golf course management.

But like those who support PDI, we are concerned about the future of our association and profession. We represent every region in the country, range from students to veteran certified superintendents, work at properties from nine holes to multicourse facilities, and hold positions from assistant greenkeeper to general manager.

Many of us have college degrees and some do not. We are not a vocal minority. We are simply people who care passionately about the future of our profession. But don't just

take our word for it. Get informed and get involved.

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Positive About PDI

Continued from page 39

strong in technical training.

- Most seminar presentations didn't use the best methods or materials.
- We think of seminars as the primary way to improve skills.

Recommendations

This information led the MSRG to make the following recommendations that are the centerpieces of PDI:

- GCSAA should refine its education program to provide superintendents with the non-technical competencies employers demand.
- The association should provide a tool for members to identify those proficiencies that, if mastered, would bring additional value to their employers. This would improve tenure and compensation.
- GCSAA should teach superintendents to use the competencies in managing their relationships with their employers.
- Employers must be educated about the skills and abilities we possess.
- We should use our skills to influence employers to make hiring decisions based on their golf courses and their demands.
- GCSAA should adopt new membership standards based on what we do, instead of our title and years in service.

We did not make these recommendations without great thought. We spent considerable time working on the membership classifications. We found this to be a difficult subject on which to find agreement, but did compromise on the recommendations that you will find in the graphics in this section.

The MSRG established a one-year period to communicate the proposal to the membership through chapter presenta-

Continued on page 102