

Answer this simple question: Should a Class A superintendent be classified as a professional occupation? If you answered no, stop reading and turn to another page. If you answered yes, can we talk?

GCSAA's Professional Development Initiative Committee has embarked on a multi-year process, through research and member involvement, to create a meaningful Class A brand that will have credibility in the marketplace. (Your chapter should call GCSAA and schedule a speaker from the PDI resource group so you can learn more before it's voted on in 2001.)

Doctors, lawyers, accountants, pilots, electrical engineers, architects and Ph.D.s don't just dabble in their fields of interest for three years and earn the title doctor of medicine, certified public accountant, captain or professor. But dabbling is all it currently takes to be designated as a Class A golf course superintendent.

Doctors qualify through attending medical school and residency, and lawyers qualify by going to law school and passing the bar exam. Right now, to be a Class A superintendent, you only have to fill in your name and occupation on your tax returns and membership renewal forms for three years.

There's nothing required in writing that says you've had any training in agronomy or any other skills needed by a superintendent. You could be the owner's nephew, who likes to play golf, and be given the title of superintendent.

Three years of paying dues and you're a Class A. What's wrong with this picture?

What's wrong is that competency levels are all over the place, and Class A doesn't mean anything without some sort of universal basic education, training and experience requirements. That's why the GCSAA PDI Committee and resource group continues to explore ways to standardize the training necessary to attain Class A status through various combinations of formal education and experience.

The industry has grown to the point where just being a hard-working good ol' boy isn't going to cut it when faced with environmental regulations, OSHA health and safety issues, the American Disabilities Act, Labor and EOE laws

If We're A-ces, We Should Earn It

BY JOEL JACKSON



THE INDUSTRY
HAS GROWN SO
QUICKLY THAT
JUST BEING A
HARD-WORKING
GOOD OL' BOY ISN'T
GOING TO CUT IT

and other issues facing a manager in today's workplace. If course management wants to play dumb and stick its head in the sand, then it can still have a "superintendent." That person just won't be called a Class A professional.

I'm tired of the boo birds raising the Twinkie defense by saying "my club can't afford my dues, won't pay for continuing education, won't pay for travel . . . blah, blah, blah." Today's world is full of people who don't take responsibility for their actions. There are a 100 ways to finance your training and education if it's important enough to become a Class A superintendent. If you can't, don't or won't do what's necessary, then be the best Class B superintendent you can be.

There's no good reason the high achievers in the profession have to be kept down by the lowest common denominators. There's too much at stake to keep protecting the status of those superintendents who are not participating in their chapters, not attending meetings or not engaging in continuing education. If the PDI is approved, current Class As will be grandfathered in — but they will have to expend a little more time and effort to maintain that classification.

This initiative isn't GCSAA staff members creating a monster — it's superintendents trying to give credibility, marketability and widespread respectability to a brand name that people will recognize as a trained professional.

When you walk into a physician's office and see that doctor of medicine degree on the wall, you assume that person has attained a minimum standard of training and experience. Why should a golf club expect anything less from a Class A superintendent?

Joel Jackson, CGCS, director of communications for the Florida GCSA, can be reached at flgrn@aol.com.