

According to few superintendents I talked to recently, their clubs won't pay for travel to the GCSAA Conference & Show because the owners say it's just an excuse to party.

I wonder if these same administrators are members of the PGA, Club Managers Association or National Golf Course Owners Associations? Maybe they party at those events (instead of making it a meaningful trip) and assume their superintendents will do the same.

Naturally, there are a few idiots that go overboard and give the GCSAA convention a bad name. They stay out too late, drink too much and fail to live up to their obligations while their clubs are picking up the tab.

Here's a little fatherly advice: You may be out of sight, but you are still on your club's clock, drawing a salary and having expenses paid. Consequently, you still owe your employer your best effort.

I get perturbed at superintendents who complain about some of the national and state conference venues because of the lack of convenient adult entertainment establishments. Pull in your horns for a few days, boys. You can be hungover and stupid on your own time with money that comes out of your own pocket.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with taking advantage of sightseeing, golfing and dining out after business is concluded. That's part of the reward for being organized and doing a good job: You can explore the host city and enjoy some well-deserved relaxation.

But that shouldn't be your primary motivation for coming to the conference. Fortunately, that admonition is reserved for the few. Most attendees don't need fatherly warnings because they do take advantage of what conference week has to offer.

Maybe I'm wrong, but when I first got the opportunity to start attending the GCSAA conferences back in 1985, I was thrilled and excited to be able to attend the premier event of our profession.

If I was able to go for the entire week, I

Conference Is Not Pay-to-Play Event

BY JOEL JACKSON



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filled Monday through Thursday with every seminar I could attend. I couldn't pass up such a golden opportunity to fill in the gaps of my expertise. For those trips that were only for the weekend, I made it a point to attend all the innovative superintendent and other general sessions put on by GCSAA and the USGA.

I give a big "atta boy" to several superintendents I know who work at multiple course facilities. They divide up the mammoth trade show, and each person concentrates on a specialty product or service to reconnoiter and report on the latest and greatest.

No one human being can tour the massive showroom floor without an organized plan of attack. If you don't have a plan, you'll end up wandering the aisles and wasting your time.

When I got home from the conference, I did one other thing besides turning in my expense report: I submitted a brief summary of my activities, including a list of the seminars I attended.

I even detailed the key points that I learned in each class that would help me do a better job for my club. This proved to my boss that there was, indeed, some value to spending over \$1,000 to send me to the conference.

Call me crazy, but I consider attending conferences a privilege rather than a guaranteed perk of the job. Accordingly, I always felt the obligation to act responsibly and deliver a beneficial return on my club's investment. It is possible to combine business with pleasure, but the operative word should always be business.

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