

Only you can protect the image and integrity of the profession. No marketing campaign or Professional Development Initiative has as much effect on how people perceive you as your own work ethic, conduct and appearance.

Personal appearance seems to get overwhelming attention in some circles, though it's only a small part of your image. One superintendent recently told me his crew calls him "The Chameleon" because he often changes clothes if he has to go to the clubhouse for lunch or a meeting. He's not being a prig; he's just being professional.

Being a professional doesn't only mean wearing a coat and tie and knowing which fork to use at dinner. It means being knowledgeable in your field and using common courtesy and honesty in your everyday dealings with co-workers, members, customers, suppliers and superiors.

But if superintendents control their own destinies, who controls the images of our local and national associations?

The responsibility for those images, in part, falls to each group's board of directors. When the boards adopt programs and create partnerships, they don't operate in a vacuum. Although they may meet in small groups to conduct association business, they have to answer to the entire membership in the end.

While we as superintendents wrestle with our own individual images, associations wrestle with the problem of how they appear to their members. Our national association, the GCSAA, is no exception.

Though the GCSAA has clearly become a player in the golf business, some superintendents might wonder if it has purchased its place at the table for the price of its soul. I don't believe it has.

A few years ago, when the GCSAA formed partnerships with industry corporations to sponsor many of its ongoing programs and conference events, the move met with significant resistance from traditionalists, who saw such partnerships as selling out superintendents' interests to those of

Associations Still Have Their Souls

BY JOEL JACKSON



THE GCSAA'S
CORPORATE
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the almighty dollar. They claimed it tarnished the image of the independent nature of superintendents. Coming on the heels of every PGA tour event and college football bowl game having a corporate name in the title, it was an understandable concern.

But most people I have talked to consider it an investment, and they believe there was much soul searching and debate among board members before they approved these partnerships.

There is a certain level of trust we should have in the board members to make decisions on the national association's behalf. The GCSAA doesn't have a PGA Tour, Ryder Cup or U. S. Open to raise money for programs or professional development. On the other hand, it does have valued industry partners who willingly contribute to the betterment of the profession.

The GCSAA's corporate partnership program is a reflection of what local chapters have done for years. Local associations solicit sponsorships and donations from local suppliers for their own golf outings, tournaments, field days and state conferences frequently.

They put up signs and run newsletter ads recognizing the vendor support. I don't see any difference between those long-standing practices and what they're doing on the national level.

If there's a concern about our image, we shouldn't look to the national to take care of it for us anyway.

Look in the mirror first. If you're happy with the person looking back at you, you should have no worries.

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