

**A**ll of us, in our own way, are feeling a sense of apprehension that we probably haven't experienced in our lifetimes. We worry about our jobs and our 401(k)s. We worry about our children, nieces, nephews and other loved ones. We worry about getting on planes. To put it simply, we worry about uncertainty.

Uncertainty is the only constant in our lives now — and for the foreseeable future — as we try to define the meaning of a post-Sept. 11 world. But, as Sir Isaac Newton wrote, the unknowable is defined only by the knowable. It may seem trivial to consider our business life in a time of war, but here's what I think we *know*:

■ Golf has survived and prospered immeasurably in the United States through two world wars, the Depression, a dozen recessions and cultural fads too numerous to count.

■ This is clearly not a great time for high-end facilities that depend on air travel or corporate outings, but the "getaway" market always bounces back.

■ Conversely, the core of the golf market — local clubs and daily fees — may actually benefit during a time when the nation wants to stay close to home.

■ The world may have changed, but the expectations of golfers have not.

That last observation is not mine — it's the surprising consensus of the many superintendents, owners and others with whom I've spoken or corresponded.

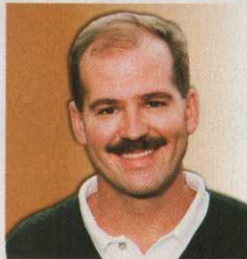
When asked how their operations will change because of the double whammy of a slow economy and terrorist attacks, not one said they plan to take a step backward in terms of conditioning or quality of management. In fact, few folks I've talked with believe they'll spend less or do much differently next year. As one superintendent put it, "War or no war, our players aren't going to accept anything less than we've provided in the past."

The fact is that the grass will grow, people will come out to play and golf will go on. The question is: How can you make sure that they come out to play at your place?

So what can you do to maintain rounds, revenue and reputation in a time when choosy players have more options than ever before? Our en-

## Seeking a New Sense of Normal

BY PAT JONES



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tire editorial staff is looking at that question now, and their findings will be at the heart of our December "Golfdom Report" issue.

In the meantime, here are a few great ideas gleaned from a timely article on the Carolinas GCSA Web site ([www.cgcsa.org](http://www.cgcsa.org)):

■ Concentrate on the areas that really count. Reduce time and money spent maintaining areas out of play.

■ Consider reducing part-time employee labor costs or arranging job-share opportunities.

■ Challenge the need for non-essential projects or consider doing them in-house.

■ Communicate frankly with ownership about what impacts cost reductions might have on quality.

■ In colder months, anticipate frost delays and schedule "late starts" to reduce unnecessary labor costs.

The bottom line is that facilities affected by a slow economy will have to think outside the box, be creative and find new ways to provide value for the golfer's dollar.

That's my take on the professional level. Here's what I think on a personal level.

As a nation, a lot of us seem to be asking, "When do we get back to normal?" When I hear this, I'm reminded of something Steve Mona said repeatedly after he became CEO of the GCSAA and instituted sweeping changes in the organization. Frenzied staff members would ask, "When do we get back to normal?" Steve eventually started to say that we wouldn't ever get back to the "old" normal, we'd just try to find "a new sense of normal."

That's where I believe we are today — searching for a new sense of normal. I sure hope we like it when we find it.

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