

I call it the Cobweb Club. So often, I hear contractors and even superintendents say over and over, "But that's the way we've always done it." I admit that when I hear those words, I stop listening and start looking for a way to remove the dust.

Sometimes, I'm the guy who gets the call to mediate between historical precepts and determined advancement. Often, these discussions aren't friendly.

There are ways to do things, which are "field choice" type things, wherein no one really cares how something is accomplished — as long as the end result is there, such as leveling a sprinkler head, trenching a main line or cutting cups. There are various ways to skin these cats, but often the end result doesn't dictate a change in technique as long as it is done on time and done well.

Certainly the devil is in the details, and there is no substitute for quality control to make sure the end result is the correct one.

Recent advancements in drainage materials and techniques, selection and use of turf-grass varieties, construction equipment options and several other areas give us options to explore. Simply put, those who do explore are going to get ahead.

Field choice is one thing, but cutting the edge is another and that means examining our methods and always trying to do better.

In the mid-1980s, when I was cutting my teeth in construction, it was rare to see an excavator (track hoe) on a job site that did anything but trench work and rough construction. Dozers did the majority of the shaping. But this subset of equipment has come so far in options and ability that recently I've had discussions about not using anything but track hoes to shape.

Part of that is because in order to get what the architect is looking for, the well-run track hoe can build the feature better than anything else. I hate it when I hear corporate monkey speakisms, such as "thinking outside of the box," but the truth is that is exactly what examples like this represent.

I could go on and on citing example after

A Club You Don't Want to Join

BY DAVE WILBER



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example about how progress is upon us in construction and renovation. In fact, I've had the opportunity to discuss and study many construction methods of the past. Some of them are so darned amazing that we really do wonder why we gave them up.

I sure would have liked being there when dozers were first brought to the job site that was the domain of horsepower provided by real-live, hay-burning animals. The fact is that evolution is interesting, except when you find yourself making buggy whips when automobiles are the new vogue.

Today, we are being asked to do really unique and different things. New construction is often seen as a degree of competition and renovation work often seeks to update a facility for many right (and sometimes wrong) reasons.

Because of those expectations and simple progress in general, we owe it to our clients to look at every possible way to avoid the same old way only because "that's the way we do it." We also owe it to ourselves to be discerning enough to know when we're looking at snake oil or perhaps a real innovation.

The Cobweb Club is nothing about age, and everything about attitude. Check yourself. Are you doing it "just because" or is that method really the bomb?

If someone asks you to do something a bit different than usual, can you keep the dust off your shoulders by giving it a try?

And if you are the one asking for a better way, have you really done your homework?

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