

On a recent visit with a green chairman who commands a very nice club course, the following nightmarish discussion took place. You see, the green chairman isn't too enthusiastic about bringing in an architect to sort out opinions and help create a long-range plan for the course.

"Why is that?" I inquired.

"They add another layer of bureaucracy," he said, grumbling utter disdain for the men in plaid.

The confidence in his own view was so strong, I thought he might have been joking. Deciding it would be rude to pull out my trusty notebook that comes along just for conversations like this one, the fading memory of the conversation will have to do.

"So you want to do a master plan without an architect?" I asked with a chuckle.

He didn't laugh. Yep, he was serious. Keep in mind that he's also your basic overempowered, self-involved baby-boomer with a few bucks in the bank, which makes him think he's entitled to wisdom on all subjects.

"Well, I guess the good thing is an architect would do what I tell him to do," this member of the Lamest Generation said. "I can pencil out sketches, and he can do the presentations for the committee."

While you're at it, you can attach little strings to his hands, sit behind a curtain and call yourself the Wizard of Oz.

The conversation reminded me of an old Samuel Johnson adage that says advice is seldom welcome. And "those who need it most, like it least."

A disturbing number of courses, both famous and infamous, are going it alone these days with very mixed results. It was one thing if they did this in the 1950s and '60s when there were fewer architects and an overall lack of golf course design awareness. But times have changed and there are plenty of architects from whom to choose.

My advice is to find one. They can come in handy.

Sometimes — believe it or not — the green chairman doesn't know what he doesn't know.

Most Architects Don't Bite, Really

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



YOU DON'T HAVE TO
USE ALL OF THE
ARCHITECT'S IDEAS,
AND YOU CAN
QUESTION HIM
ALL YOU WANT

Sometimes, the superintendent or his boss thinks he's Robert Trent Jones reincarnated.

Sometimes, architects *can* show managers how to make improvements that will save money over time.

You pay an architect to take the heat, answer questions and weed through ideas thrown his way. You hire an architect to come up with the best and most economically viable solution for the majority of golfers. You ask an architect to take his experience studying courses and to offer ideas that will improve your course strategically, aesthetically and economically. You pay an architect to ask him about trees that should be taken out, or the pluses and minuses of adding length.

You don't have to use all of the architect's ideas, and you can question him all you want.

Yes, there certainly have been plenty of bad and overpriced architectural redesigns that can be pinned on the architect and nobody else. It's true that a few architects think they're big golden labs and your golf courses are nothing but fire hydrants where they're supposed to leave their marks.

Most often, though, no one was asking questions or telling architects what they wanted in those cases.

With all of the pain-free opportunities for green committees, managers, pros and superintendents to read up on the basics of design, they can ask intelligent questions. Knowledge-based debate and discussion always leads to better remodels and better master plans.

But to get there, you've got to add that most important layer of bureaucracy.

Seriously, hire an architect. They don't bite. Not all of them anyway.

*Geoff Shackelford can be reached at
geoffshackelford@aol.com*