



Jacobsen's 10-year agreement with the PGA comes as the organization completed renovation of its two courses at the PGA Village.

Jake's Stake

SUPERINTENDENTS WILL SEE JACOBSEN BECOME 'MORE ENGAGED IN THE BUSINESS OF GOLF'

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

The response so far has been positive. Superintendents are happy that Jacobsen sold its commercial grounds product lines in August to heighten its focus on golf and professional turf-related markets, the company's leaders say.

Superintendents have told Jacobsen, "We're glad you're focusing on your core competency."

But Jacobsen's leaders realize that savvy superintendents ultimately will judge the company's business decision over a longer period of time. They will expect the company to prove itself in regard to the business decision.

Jacobsen, a business unit of Textron, has battled back from a few problems it endured the past few years, such as customer service issues. Jacobsen's leaders, who believe the company is much better off, know it will take time to broadcast that message.

Last year, Jacobsen named Dan Wilkinson to replace Dan Carlson as its president. Wilkinson, who spent 17 years at General Electric and worked under Jack Welch, was hired for his customer service expertise.

Jacobsen had problems filling part orders with its dealers. That dilemma was not helped when Jacobsen decided to move its headquarters to Charlotte, N.C., and consolidated operations there. The moving of people and processes were challenging.

But the sale of the commercial grounds care product lines to Commercial Grounds Care, an affiliate of Schiller-Pfeiffer, allows Jacobsen to concentrate on the golf and professional turf markets with equipment manufactured in Charlotte and Ipswich, England.

Karla Cuculi, Jacobsen's marketing director, also points out that Jacobsen has maintained a parts-fill rate in the upper 90s percentile for more than a year.

Textron and Jacobsen decision makers decided to sell the businesses after looking at the matter systematically. They said they looked at the value of the businesses from all angles. And as they went through that process, they identi-

fied strategic issues that needed to be massaged. In the end, they said they needed to focus on the core of the business — golf and professional turf — and put all of their resources into the segment of the market where they have the most equity.

When and how will superintendents and others begin to notice Jacobsen's increased focus on golf? Company leaders say they will see that through "accelerated product development," which will be heavily researched through the company's customers. Superintendents will see Jacobsen become "more engaged in the business of golf."

An example of the latter is Jacobsen's recent announcement that it has become "The Official Turf Equipment Supplier to The PGA of America" and "The Exclusive Turf Equipment Supplier to PGA Golf Properties." The 10-year agreement comes as The PGA of America completed renovation of its two courses at the PGA Village in Port St. Lucie, Fla., and began renovation at Valhalla Golf Club in Louisville, Ky., host of the 2008 Ryder Cup.

Jacobsen leaders believe the 90-year-old PGA and their 85-year-old company are a good match because of their combined longevity in the market.

In March, Jacobsen also plans to open a new facility in Charlotte, which will house a training center as well as its corporate headquarters, Cuculi said.

"It's one of the more tangible outcomes of this new focus," she added.

Dale Miller, director of agronomy for the PGA Golf Club, said he noticed that Jacobsen had its "ups and downs" the last 10 years, but he believes the company is "back up to standards." Miller uses Jacobsen equipment at the PGA's two golf courses.

"The most efficient operations are the strongest equipment operations," he said. ■

Quotable

"We used to run an alternate-shot couples tournament. We started calling it the divorce open."

— Frank Jemsek, owner, Cog Hill Golf & Country Club in Lemont, Ill.

"Golf is like politics; it's very local."

— Joe Louis Barrow, Executive Director of The First Tee

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