

Build it and they will come" might have worked for Iowa corn grower Kevin Costner in the movie, "Field of Dreams." But in golf circles (not to be confused with crop circles), the outcome is not so predictable.

I'm not talking about building new golf courses, which will continue despite the game's current flat-line participation, which is in need of resuscitation in this fast-paced, time-crunched, instant-gratification age. I'm talking about the traditional monthly meetings of local superintendent chapters and the old "scheduling it and they will come" mindset.

Don't get me wrong. I think chapter meetings are the heart and soul of our profession, and I have jumped on the soap box any number of times touting the personal and professional growth I gleaned from participating in them. Like any worthwhile venture, however, it is always the quality and not the quantity that makes them successful.

Geography may dictate having fewer meetings for some far-flung chapters, which makes sense. For instance, some courses are located a hundred miles apart in some areas of the West. And given the dismal attendance numbers in the more densely populated regions that traditionally have monthly meetings, a little introspection may be overdue.

With many operating budgets shrinking, does it really make sense to have 10, 11 or 12 meetings a year at \$40, \$50 or \$100 a pop? I know some chapters have only six meetings a year, which is a little more reasonable. There still may be more room to improve attendance and meeting quality. What's wrong with considering quarterly meetings?

Way out yonder in the Peaks and Prairies (Montana, Wyoming, etc.) and Idaho GCCA hinterlands, they meet twice a year, understandable since some courses are 1,300 miles apart. They get together twice a year for a weekend conference complete with nationally known speakers, regional USGA agronomists, banquets, receptions and golf outings. The meetings are planned before and after peak season. The attendance is excellent. Points are earned.

Build It & They Will Come (or Will They?)

BY JOEL JACKSON



MAYBE THE TIME
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Costs average out, and there's less demand for time away from the job. I liken it to the old fur trappers annual spring jamboree in the Rockies.

Meanwhile, more urban chapters seem to be struggling with attendance, finding a speaker and finding a location beyond the usual half dozen volunteers who host it year after year. Recently, I read a chapter newsletter lamenting that at a recent monthly meeting the excellent golf course, speaker and club food were enjoyed by only 15 superintendents and 20 suppliers. All that work and preparation by host and board members for just a meager response from a chapter having more than 100 Class A, SM and C members. And this is not an isolated incident as you know.

They say the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. Maybe the time is ripe to change our way of thinking about chapter meetings. Obviously each chapter will still hold its big annual fundraisers. These are always well attended.

If you have to get away and network with peers more frequently, there is nothing keeping you from getting a small group together to play an afternoon golf round and share war stories once a week or month. It would be cheaper and less time consuming.

It would also be easier for volunteer board members to schedule winter, spring, summer and fall chapter meetings rather than cramming more meetings into already time-crunched schedules.

It's just an idea maybe worth considering. Don't schedule it so often and maybe they will come when you do.

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