

We Must Embrace Change Before It's Too Late

BY HEIDI VOSS

This column is dedicated to the late Tommy Pollard, his family and the team at The Federal Club in Glen Allen, Va.

One of the benefits of being a consultant is that the job never

gets boring. You finish up one job and you move along to another locale and another challenge before you have the chance to become complacent. I love this.

It keeps me on my toes.

Change, however, is not always seen in a positive light in the industry. In talking with many club managers, golf professionals and superintendents, they all bring up the lack of job stability in the club industry. I once heard that general managers of member-owned clubs stay an average of 18 months at a job. I think this is a little facetious, but it could still pass as a scary urban legend.

Superintendents are often only as good as the weather permits. When there are extreme conditions, there always seems

to be a shakeup in the industry. Obviously, when all the grass in a county is dying it's probably not because of a superintendent and his staff. Somehow boards and owners seem to miss this.

Speaking of change, I recently heard that a direc-

tor of operations left his post at a club in New York to take a job at a club in Boston. Then the previous director of operations at that same Boston club

took his replacement's job in New York. Were both projects better for the change? Yes. And I say that because each person came into the new position with a fresh perspective and an attitude to make a difference. They both embraced the challenge. Both ownership groups were better for the change.

Change is often out of our control. While it can be caused by other forces, we must adapt to it.

The golf industry recently lost a great man that was living his dream by building a private Arnold Palmer Signature

course on his family's land in Virginia. This 627-acre, 27-hole course was Tommy Pollard's calling. One evening, as Pollard donned his boots to go on a walkabout of the newly shaped nine, he collapsed. Pollard died, and he won't get to see his vision completed and enjoyed by many. His partners and family can take comfort in seeing his dream become a reality, but I doubt there will be a dry eye in the house on opening day. Pollard's team, however, was forced to adapt to ensure that his legacy will live on.

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Many critics have called our industry stagnant and complacent. Unless our industry can change and provide something for the generation Xers, baby boomers and matures, we

will not be around long. We must embrace the challenge and realize that everyone is competing for the same dollars.

The baby boomers comprise the "me" generation, and they have a lot of money to spend. They are also the last age group that knows anything about a premier golf experience. Generation Xers are very athletic and recreationally focused, but they don't play much golf. While they are multitasking machines, golf is not at the top of their agendas. But we must find ways to attract them to the sport through gender-neutral tee times, family emphasis and time-conscious rounds.

Finally, don't let yourself fall into the rut of this being the same old season as last year. Challenge yourself and your team to try new ideas. If you close the door to change, you are opening the door to failure. ■

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