

A few weeks ago, I trekked to my local golf shop and headed straight to the FootJoy catalog to order a pair of FootJoy Classics golf shoes. I've followed this same ritual regularly for more than 35 years. Dana, who has taken my order numerous times in the past, apologetically informed me the shoes were no longer available because of the recent closure of the FootJoy factory in Brockton, Mass. The news struck a personal cord with me. A sad one.

I began playing golf when I was 12 on a public golf course in central Illinois. From those first days and through playing in high-school and junior-college golf tournaments, I wore a pair of Classics. Wearing the shoes spoke to how serious one took his or her game. Expensive even 40 years ago, I would save money from caddying or summer jobs to purchase a pair.

Why did I want them? Well, I can't deny that image played an important part. Yet, I developed an appreciation for the craftsmanship, quality and loyalty that came with each pair. From the feel and smell of the leather, to the meticulous hand stitching, to the leather soles (150 steps to make a pair), the shoes never became outdated. I found it rather reassuring that the Classic golf shoes changed little, given the rapid and frequent change in golf clubs and the game itself throughout the years.

Those golf shoes, besides bringing back great memories, made me think the never-changing quality characteristics that come with everything from maintaining golf courses to producing and selling products to teaching or conducting research. Upon reflection (and by no means complete), I've listed a few that come to mind:

- **Completion** — Shortcuts are *not* taken, and nothing is ever missing.
- **Consistency** — Deliver product (agronomically, personally, product development) at the same level of customer expectation.
- **Unambiguous** — Communicate or develop in a means that only has one meaning.
- **Verifiable** — What is developed is implemented correctly through demonstration and testing. The product or activity is reproducible.

I Wouldn't Want to Be in Their Shoes

BY KARL DANNEBERGER



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■ **Modifiable** — When necessary can be changed without impacting the core principles or beliefs.

■ **Motivational** — Develop craftsmen who take pride in what they do, which leads back to completion and consistency.

Although my quality characteristics do not list business concerns, I'm not naïve to market forces. Rob Kelly, a FootJoy spokesman, addressed the reasons for the factory closing. "Demand for the premium shoes, which cost around \$345, has fallen off significantly in recent years," he said. Additionally, the shoes produced at Brockton represented only 2 percent of its annual shoe sales.

It would be easy to categorize me as 1) no longer in the desirable age demographic; 2) resistant to change; and 3) suffers from nostalgia. But I take heart that given the golf shoe brands available, 65 percent of the touring pros still wear the Classic.

At this moment in our industry, cost and efficiency are critical to our survival. However, cost and efficiency can't be the means to all ends. I can't imagine a Rolex watch with a battery so it might run more efficiently.

So be careful with changes you make to your brand in this current economic climate. Once you lose those attributes of quality and loyalty — whether personally or in your product — it will be almost impossible to get them back.

In the future, I guess it's possible FootJoy might start producing the Classic in its Chinese factory. For me, however, I hope there's still a quality shoemaker out there who can restore and resole my pair.

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