

Change is a word we're constantly using personally and professionally. The word is used so much we don't give much thought to types of change. But I rediscovered the meaning of the word change when Michael Jackson died.

It's no secret the death of Michael Jackson dominated the summer news — washing away in its wake all discussion of other famous deaths, political scandal and global crisis. Given his recent weird behavior, lack of a hit in the last two decades and a prescription drug problem reminiscent of Elvis Presley, one wonders why his death is so riveting.

In part, it has to do with the type of change he brought to music. Change itself commonly occurs through incremental progressions. However, when watching those "old" music videos from "Thriller," it's not hard to see how music changed from what it was to what it is now.

Music underwent a transformational change with Jackson. Transformational change is not merely an extension or improvement over the past, but a state change — a complete directional change in how we think of something.

Prior to "Thriller," rock/pop performers in the 1960s and 1970s were influenced by the social events of the time. By and large, they were singers, musicians and songwriters. But the release of "Thriller" and Jackson's subsequent videos and concerts changed a rock/pop singer into an actor, stage performer and dancer along with being a singer and songwriter.

Transformational change can occur in areas besides music, including science (Einstein's Theory of Relativity), politics (The Marshall Plan), sports (Lawrence Taylor redefined the outside linebacker position in American football) and business (the Japanese method of building cars).

Now, to my point: Can transformational change occur — or has it occurred — with how we manage turfgrass environmentally? I'm not sure. To explain my answer, I've chosen two examples from what I consider an important change in golf course management — the effort to be (and no pun intended) more green.

The two examples are the establishment of

Transforming the Golf Industry

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native areas and pesticide reduction. To most everyone in the industry, and to many environmental groups, the incorporation of native areas on golf courses has been a huge and positive change. From a pesticide perspective, we've developed integrated pest management (IPM), and best management practices (BMP) programs to reduce pesticide use. In addition, chemical companies have developed new generations of pesticides that present minimal to almost nonexistent risk to the environment.

Are these transformational changes? Have they changed how we think and manage turfgrass? Are they perceived to be transformational?

Green is an interesting term. In some instances, what green means to a property owner along a golf course is not the same as to a golf course superintendent. The majority of homeowners who live along a course don't play golf and consider the course to be an amenity. To these property owners, tall grass, weeds and ticks is not what they envision as green. In many instances, homeowner associations are forcing golf courses to mow down these areas.

Transformational change?

From a pesticide safety and use perspective, no one can argue with the positive changes we've made. But are we on the cusp of a transformational change? Maybe, but we still face pesticide restrictions and bans.

It's easy to call for change without proposing what it will be. The transformational change that could occur — and it's still in its embryonic stage — is that an entire golf course management program will be based on net carbon use.

Now, that's change that will get you thinking.

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