This And That About the Show

BY LARRY AYLWARD

A year ago, during the Golf Industry Show in New Orleans, I heard several people say, "We just need to make it through this year." These people had one thing in common — they were shells hocked by the onslaught of a dreadful economy. Well, we made it through a brutal 2009. Now what?

Not much has changed since last January. Then again, a lot has changed. It's difficult to say where the golf course maintenance industry will be a year from now, but I'm betting it will be in better shape. Last January, we were all freaked out because there were so many unknowns. There are fewer unknowns this year, which is surely healthy for all of our mental attitudes.

San Diego will be a better show from that perspective. People will be more upbeat, having made it through the wreckage of 2009. Bring on the SoCal sunshine.

Don't pile on

Speaking of the people attending the show, don't expect a huge crowd. The show will hopefully draw as many people, about 17,000, as it did to New Orleans last year.

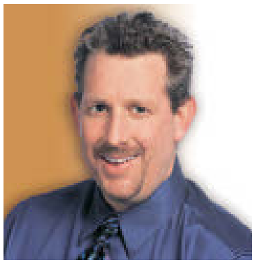
Hopefully.

But if San Diego only draws 15,000, don't make it a point to blame something or someone, like the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, for the poor attendance. Last year, I sensed some piling on the GCSAA for the big dip in attendance (26,000 attended the show in 2008 in Orlando). Rather than accept the down attendance for what it was and why it happened — the crummy economy — some people had to stick it to the GCSAA like it was the association's fault.

"This show is pathetic," they'd say imperiously. "There's nobody here."

If you hear someone whining about the show's size, please remind that cynical person we're coming out of the worst economic time of our lives.

The fact of the matter is attendees should be applauding each other for attending and exhibiting at the show, not complaining about it.



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Speaking of optimism

Golfdom recently conducted a survey of golf course superintendents and asked them if they approved of the job Mark Woodward was doing as CEO of the GCSAA. Thirty-one percent — the highest percentage of four choices — said they weren't sure, meaning most superintendents feel the jury is still out on Woodward.

I was surprised by the findings.

It's been a tough year to be a CEO in any line of work. Many have had to make difficult and unpopular decisions, Woodward included. A lot of CEOs are just trying to keep their ships afloat. Many have failed, but Woodward and his staff have kept the GCSAA's ship from sinking. Give Woodward credit for that.

Woodward didn't have any idea what he was getting into when he took over the GCSAA in July 2008. The economy was slumping then, but nobody expected it to crash like it did. The golf course industry has also been hit hard. Woodward has spent much of his time as CEO dealing with economic troubles.

Woodward took unprecedented measures at the GCSAA to combat decreased revenues, such as implementing seven days of employee furlough, including for himself.

Woodward has also kept a positive attitude, which many of us doomsayers have failed to do.

Back to the survey: 28 percent of superintendents surveyed said Woodward has done a great job as CEO, and 22 percent say he's done "an OK job."

A 50-percent approval rating isn't bad, but Woodward deserves better.

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