

The beauty of our lives and what makes them special is we're different. Everything about people is different, and that's cool. Whether at home with family or working on the job, almost everything is different. These differences are what make the world and our lives interesting, rewarding, challenging and frustrating.

But you and me have something in common: the golf industry. So that probably means that, like me:

■ **You are thankful for this wonderful industry.**

The fact you can make a living doing something you love, in one of the greatest sports in the world, is truly remarkable.

■ **You are thankful for the fact that you've been able to impact so many others through your work.** Talk to your friends who work in other industries. I'm willing to bet they can't say the same thing. Most people I talk to outside of the industry envy those of us who have made a good living working in it.

■ **You feel blessed to have amassed many friends and colleagues in a close-knit community.** How many times have you talked to your golf course maintenance counterparts and heard someone say the best part of his job is the people he's been able to meet throughout his career? Throughout my career, I've had thousands of networking opportunities worldwide, and I've tried to take advantage of every single one of them. Golf is a huge business, yet it's a small one compared with others. Be sure to cultivate relationships with those you meet.

■ **You have seen the industry grow and change in many ways.** You've seen it change in ways that have impacted the game and your career. Technology has made our jobs easier, enabling us to improve the experience for golfers a little bit more each time they play the game. At one point, even nongolfers had interest in the game. After the 2008 U.S. Open, when Tiger Woods beat Rocco Mediate in 91 holes, I had many nongolfer friends tell me they couldn't take their eyes off of the TV because of the excitement.

And yet, if you're at all like me:

■ **You understand that golf isn't the same as it used to be.** The industry is transforming. We're not

If You're At All Like Me

BY MARK WOODWARD



only looking back at what golf was, we're also looking forward to what golf will be. In many cases, it's a little scary. Back in the day, working in the golf industry was fun and exciting. Now, even though we have a passion for golf and our careers, golf is different than it used to be. In today's world, the game has become much more of a business.

■ **You wonder about the future of the industry.**

Because every year, more golf courses are closing their doors than opening them. Granted, many markets were oversaturated with golf courses in the industry's heyday, but when I see more than 100 courses closing during each of the past few years, it gets my attention. Additionally, rounds played have declined in many areas and are flat at best. Hopefully, the grow-the-game initiatives the industry is developing will help, but I'm not overly optimistic. We all know many golf courses are struggling.

■ **You worry about friends who are losing their jobs at vulnerable times in their lives.** Many of them are being forced to say "goodbye" to the golf business, a business to which they have devoted their entire lives. And if you get to thinking about it too much, you'll start thinking about all of the other workers in the business — not superintendents alone — who are affected by golf course closures and downsizing.

So, if you are at all like me, as much as you love the game of golf, the industry and your career, you have the same concerns about golf's future strength and viability that I do.

In this regard, we're not so different after all.

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