



At a recent South Texas GCSA chapter meeting, Cook invited members to play in the golf outing. Here Cook (left) is pictured with John Freeman of Brookside Equipment; Debbie Burton, a member at Walden on Lake Houston; and Charles Joachim, CGCS.



PHOTOS COURTESY BOB COOK

For 35 years I've been a superintendent, my longest time spent in Sacramento, Calif., where I worked for 16 years.

Currently, I'm enjoying working at Walden on Lake Houston in Humble, Texas. We're a part of the Century Golf family, which includes more than 60 golf courses.

At Century Golf, we recognize that we are in the membership business. It's our culture. We recognize it every day.

Everyone at our facility is expected to provide service that will develop a positive experience for our members. Yes, that includes the crew back at the maintenance shop, from the head superintendent to the guys operating string trimmers, trying to avoid getting hit with errant tee shots.

It can get a little tricky — maybe even confusing — to most of the grass growers out there. I thought my job was to cut the grass, water, fertilize and stay out of the way. Now you want me to speak to these members and be part of the front of the house? And management's answer was "yes."

So we decided to do what anyone who values his or her job would do — put on a new hat and make it happen. But wait a minute... how do we make this happen?

"T-BAM"

Century Golf stresses the saying "Thanks for being a member." We've shortened this to "T-BAM" when discussing it in-house.

How can my crew and I say thanks? I realize that language barriers can sometimes be a problem, so can slowing pace of play. So I came up with something that says "T-BAM" quickly, without


a spoken word. I created a sticker to attach to all of our equipment and carts.

Employees can wave, and with a quick gesture point to the sticker. You would be surprised how many smiles and thumbs-up we get.

Let's carry this idea inside. How can we say "thanks" over and over? How about we put the same stickers up at the coffee station, the pro shop and even offer the members a sticker for their personal carts?

Each month all the Century Golf superintendents join a conference call at which time we share stories of "T-BAM" moments. A few examples would be playing golf with members, having lunch with a group, communication updates/blogs and speaking opportunities or special projects involving golfers and committees. I'd like to think that these stickers also have added to our effort to successfully make members feel welcomed and appreciated.

We have developed a culture where members invite friends to join the club. The gratification members feel comes from the service they receive everywhere from the parking lot to the end of the 18th.

We all know what membership can mean, whether it be in a church, club or anything else. It says that you're a part of a family. As this family grows, all of a sudden the club has a waiting list, the parking lot is full and you need a tee time to play. All this happens because the staff took the time to say "Thanks for being a member." 

Bob Cook, Certified Turfgrass Professional, is the superintendent at Walden on Lake Houston in Humble, Texas. Cook is happy to share his sticker with other courses. He can be reached via email at bcook@waldencc.com.



When the maintenance crew is asked to further an initiative, a forward-thinking superintendent steps up.

BY BOB COOK, CTP