



“We have such a deep passion for what we do that we develop a strong sense of sharing what we’ve learned from being in the business.”

MARK WOODWARD, *Contributing Editor*

The gift of wisdom

Whether we realize it or not we’ve all had them in one form or another. They could have been a coach, a teacher, a minister, an employer, a friend, parents or even another relative. They’ve taught us great lessons about our jobs, our education and our families. Most important, they’ve taught us the lessons of life.

And if you really think about it, the things we learned from them individually aren’t big things. It’s the small things over an extended period of time that collectively add up to the “big thing” and that is the way we live our lives.

By now you’ve most likely figured out that I’m talking about mentors. Mentors are the type of people who change lives.

If you talk to someone who has been fortunate enough to have had one, they will tell you, “I wouldn’t be where I am today if it weren’t for (insert mentor’s name here).”

The golf industry is full of them. Mine happened to be my grandfather, but many successful superintendents in

our industry today give credit for their success to someone in their past whom they worked for or helped educate them.

Mentoring has a great deal to do with two people developing a very strong relationship. As with everything in golf, mentors and protégés develop these strong relationships not only based on what the mentor teaches but also the feelings of trust and confidence the protégé has in the mentor. It has a great deal to do with respect. Mentors have the ability to garner respect from people who seek advice, counseling and knowledge from them.

That’s because mentors are generally veterans in their fields and have been through everything that one can go through and still survive.

In some instances, they’ve learned things the hard way or through trial and error. Because of this, they have that special type of knowledge that only comes with experience. This issue of *Golfdom* is filled with such people (see “Let’s grab a cup of coffee,” page 20). These men have seen a lot in our industry, and I’m excited to see what I can learn from them today.

Many of the superintendents I know — including myself — who have had mentors, maintain the mentoring/protégé relationship throughout their careers. They then maintain a lifelong relationship in their personal lives, even after the mentor retires.

And then something very special happens: the protégé becomes a mentor. And based on the lessons they’ve learned, they now pass on their knowledge and the

knowledge they learned from their mentor. And the cycle goes on.

There is an immense amount of satisfaction that comes with mentoring someone. The cool thing about mentoring is in most cases you learn from teaching others so everyone benefits.

In golf you often hear people say that they want to give back to the industry. I’ve said it myself, many times. But it’s true. We have such a deep passion for what we do that we develop a strong sense of sharing what we’ve learned from being in the business. There’s something very satisfying in assisting a fellow superintendent in solving a problem.

Many times just talking a problem through with someone and bouncing ideas off each other leads to a good outcome. In my experience, superintendents are very good at this.

Mentoring can come in just about all facets of our lives. If you have a chance, think about mentoring someone not only to give back to your profession but also to give back to your community. My wife has a saying she uses on me occasionally when she helps someone out and that is, “I give 10 percent but I get back 90 percent in return.”

I’ve found that it works that way almost every time. It truly is a gift.

Mark Woodward is president of **Mark Woodward and Associates**, principal of **DaMarCo Golf**, CEO of **MasterStep Golf Group** and a contributing editor for *Golfdom*.