



You're *NOT* a professional if...

By Monroe S. Miller

The word *professional* is used a lot these days and bandied around pretty loosely. Some argue it is grossly misused; they could be right.

I've asked about it quite a bit and nobody will give me a straight answer to what this code word *professional* means. Some reading and research at the library revealed little in the definition department.

This much I did learn—it is used a lot by women in personal ads! You know—expensive dating services that say they are *professionals!* Again, there is no definition of the term.

Years ago *professional* referred to a self-regulated occupation like a lawyer or doctor. Today it has broader application and includes jobs like engineers and architects. And then there are groups that overuse it a lot—my personal favorite is PGA professional. Spelled out—professional golfers association professional—it leads one to think of words like overkill and redundancy, I'm afraid. Is there such a thing as a PGA Amateur? Or a PGA Unprofessional?

In our business, one of the earliest uses (and one of the clearest) of the word *professional* is found in the minutes book of the Royal and Ancient for May 4, 1864: "Major Boothy moved, that Tom Morris of Prestwick, formerly of St. Andrews, be brought here as a professional Golfer, at a salary of Fifty pounds a year, on the understanding that he shall have entire charge of the Golf Course under the Green Committee." Let's face it—we use the word a lot in our careers. We're professionals. Or at least some of us are.

It does get confusing, though. How do you judge the ads for professional welders? Professional plumbers? Are garbage truck drivers professionals? Another one I like is on a fertilizers bag which says "For use by professional turf managers only." What, for the sake of green grass, does that

mean? It seems in some instances that if you do a job full time, you are a professional. That is dumb.

The word in today's lexicon is not only broader and more amorphous, it has become pretentious, self-serving and even mean spirited. In the end, the definition best suited for me is this: tell me what you do and I'll tell you if you are a professional.

A couple of other things have become obvious to me. Mostly, if you have to ask "am I a professional?", you aren't. And the definition may best be given by what a professional is not.

So, to help clarify this pressing midsummer issue in the world of golf turf management, here's my list of what a professional golf course superintendent is not.

You AREN'T a professional:

- if you have mice in your office.
- if you use the word "dirt" instead of soil.
- if you have a tattoo on either of your arms.
- if the upholstery of your truck is patched with duct tape.
- if baling wire figures prominently in any equipment repairs you make.
- if you put up with being called the "greenskeeper".
- if you wear blue jeans to a board of directors' meeting in the clubhouse, and consider creased jeans to be dress pants.
- if you openly, unapologetically and frequently violate our code of ethics. Or, if you don't even know that we have a code of ethical conduct.
- just because you play golf occasionally. Or well.
- if you drop the "g" on -ing words (like mowin', cuttin', waterin', trimmin', fertilizin', fixin', sprayin', etc.)
- if you use the word "ain't".
- if you belch outloud (unless it's on purpose).

- if you are arrogant.
- if you wear a "Miller Lite" or "Harley Davidson" tee shirt to work.
- if you spit a lot in public.
- if you wear cowboy boots with a coat and tie.
- if you dropped out of high school.
- if you refer to your wife as "the old lady".
- if you consider a gourmet meal to be fried chicken, over-cooked string beans and mashed potatoes, with green jello for dessert.
- if your castle is a double-wide house trailer!
- if your shop yard looks like a junk yard.
- if you have your ear(s) pierced.
- if your favorite place for lunch is Hooters.
- if you've got crud under your fingernails most of the time.
- just because you attended one of the "name" schools for two years (or more).
- if you think the job can be done in an eight-hour day.
- if you are always blaming someone else (or the weather or the environment) for your problems on the course.
- if you gossip about a colleague or criticize a peer behind his back.
- if you try to hire individuals from another superintendent's staff without his knowledge.
- if you think the primary purpose of the WGCSA is to set up monthly golf outings around the state for free and you always bring "guests".
- if you refer to women on your staff as "broads".
- if your idea of leadership, activism and problem solving is whining. Whiners are non-constructive, inefficient, weak and insecure.
- if your idea of IPM is spraying greens every week, regardless of the weather.
- just because you can spell "professional", without looking it up. ♣