



PDI-Some More Discussion

By Al Jansen, Golf Course Superintendent, Baraboo Country Club

So, what **exactly** is this thing called the Professional Development Initiative (PDI)? Is it a means by which one can identify the GCSAA member as an educated professional turfgrass manager? Is it a means by which the GCSAA intends to market their members and their new set of standards? Or is it simply a way to differentiate between association-active members and those who do not involve themselves in the same way as others do?

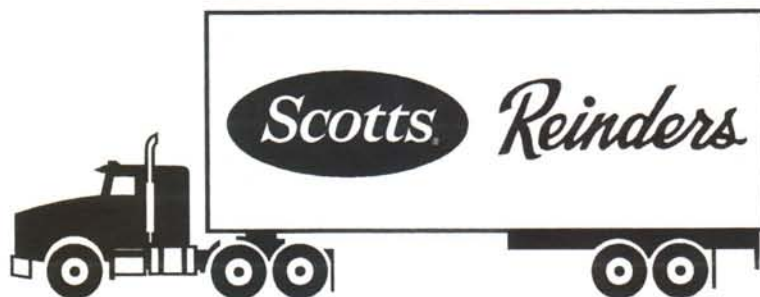
Let's take a look at the questions: It has been stated that in order to have the necessary attributes to identify the members of the GCSAA, we must first qualify who can be entered into the Class A denomination and then determine what extracurricular activities should be the standard for those qualified in order to maintain that denomination. The question has also been raised whether these qualified members should also prove their competency in pesticide activities on an ongoing basis.

Unfortunately, the only way the GCSAA has come up

with to accomplish their mission to identify the skills and competencies of their membership is to **mandate** participation and set minimum standards. What the GCSAA seems to have a problem with is making these determinations without the aid of the PDI. In other words, the GCSAA cannot make a clear identification of their members without setting parameters and mandating ongoing participation. The GCSAA cannot develop a method which might help them with this task and seems to believe that even if they did, there would not be enough viable information to extend to the industry as to the education, qualifications and competencies of their members which may separate them from non-members and/or other superintendents.

The next question suggests that the GCSAA needs this initiative in order to offer to owners and operators of golf courses, the benefits of having or hiring a GCSAA member. In fact, the GCSAA has used this premise of marketability to sell their members on the

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whole idea behind the PDI. The fact of the matter is that if the GCSAA took the time to get to know the current educational levels, the current qualifications and experience levels and the current competencies of their membership, without the implementation of the PDI, there would be plenty of attributes, on the whole, that can be successfully marketed to the industry without the necessity of mandating participation by the membership.

A good example of this premise was when Mr. Mark Esoda, MSRG member, attended the recent Wisconsin GCSA's annual election meeting to discuss the benefits and answer questions on the PDI. During that meeting, the question was raised, and asked by a show of hands, who in the room had a valid pesticide applicators license. In a State where, without the presence of restricted-use pesticides, an applicator's license **is not** required by law, nearly all hands were raised and it is my assumption that those few who did not raise their hands were, in fact, industry representatives and not superintendents or assistant superintendents.

When asked why the GCSAA, in their marketing efforts, could not use this type of involvement by members who are not required to provide any proficiency in

pesticide handling at all, Mr. Esoda could not answer. In other words, he did not know why the association could not market what members are currently doing without the aid of the PDI.

When looking at the final question, it would seem that the only substantial reason the GCSAA wishes to enact the new requirements of the PDI is to differentiate between their own members **and not** to differentiate between their member superintendents and non-GCSAA superintendents. And if the later is true, which is the whole purpose of the PDI, the GCSAA, by passing the initiative, sets the policy to disassociate from the industry of golf course management, those superintendents who are not members.

The GCSAA, in passing the Professional Development Initiative, will have successfully alienated the majority of superintendents from around the country and around the world and offered them, as a benefit of a GCSAA membership, joining a self-imposed, elite class, whose only significant contribution to the industry of golf course management, through the PDI, will be the ability to show how much difference there is among their own members. ♣

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