



Changing Times

By **Jeremiah Hoffmann**, PGA Professional, Rolling Meadows Golf Course

Editor's note: We are joined by Jeremiah Hoffmann the PGA Golf Professional at Rolling Meadows Golf Course who will offer a perspective from the other side of the golf shop counter.

As much as superintendents wish members and customers will come to us with questions and comments, reality proves it is the guy or gal behind the golf shop counter who gets cornered by that member. We can use Jeremiah's perspectives to better our relationship with the clubhouse staff and golfers!

When David took over as editor of "The Grass Roots," I offered to write an article if he ever needed one. Little did I know he would cash in on that offer! At the time I had lots of ideas on what to write about, yet they all escape me now. David's advice was simple enough: "Write about what you think superintendents should know." That sounds simple, but it proved to be difficult to put on paper. After a lot of bad ideas, I finally settled on two reminders: Communication is always very important and people will always fight change. These have been very important to us as a staff at Rolling Meadows this year. We are reorganizing the management of our golf course. In theory it seems like that wouldn't be an earth moving ordeal. When it starts to become a reality, things change fast. Employees, members, regulars, family members and people off the street all have an opinion on how to do things. Unfortunately, they don't all agree. This is where the communication becomes so important. We are constantly discussing options and what the best way is to move forward. For whatever reason, golf clubs are a lot like high schools; rumors start, spread and grow in a matter of hours. Constant communication between supers, golf pros and GMs is imperative.

The other reminder we've gotten this year is the fight people will put up against change, even when it has a chance to be very positive. Golfers get very used to a routine at their favorite facility. Rattle that cage and they will voice their opinion. That's not to say you shouldn't make changes you feel will improve your facility, just proceed with caution. Do your research and be prepared to answer every question in the book. Sit down with your management team and play the "devil's advocate." Try and approach it from every angle, because the more scenarios you've thought of before hand, the easier it will be to address them when they actually come up!

I'm sure I won't win a Nobel Peace Prize for the concepts covered, but hopefully they are some friendly, helpful reminders. Even if you don't intend to make major changes at your club, take a little extra time to talk to your golf pro. The more we know and understand what you are doing, the more we can become your advocate with the customer. And you never know, we might even tell you what we are up to! 🌿

Why is Change Difficult?

- Fear of the unknown.
- Comfort and investment with status quo.
- Tradition.
- Don't see the need to change.

Why Does Change Fail?

- Delegating to outsiders to sell the change.
- Leadership does not walk the talk.
- Leaders do not realize that people react differently to change.
- Leaders treating change as a event rather than a mental, physical and most of all emotional process.

Keys to Success

- Plan your communications.
- Communicate why and how.
- Ask advice from veteran employees and customers.
- Expect some chaos, allow for mistakes.
- Look for opportunities to sell the change to customers and employees.

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