

# Plan An Effective Public Relations Program

What are you personally doing to improve your professional image and stature under your course?

As a member of professional organizations, you attend local, regional and national turfgrass meetings and conferences, but do the course members see you striving for greater knowledge and efficiency, or do they see you flying half-way across the country to have a good time? Are they aware of the content, results and value of these meetings?

What are you personally doing to overcome these public relations problem areas? What does the average golfer know about your duties and responsibilities on the course? What are you doing to educate your golfers?

Experts in the field of public relations report that their biggest problem is a client who asks for assistance only when he is in serious trouble. A strong public relations program should be an on-going facet of your operations.

Studies show that the best time to have a strong program in operation is when everything is going smoothly, and then when things do go sour, and they eventually do to some extent, the necessary preparations have been completed. Just as you would not consider seeding a green without first preparing the area, you should not expect favorable results from a PR effort that is hurriedly organized.

Plan your program to meet the circumstances in which you find yourself. Here is a short list of points to consider:

**Know your "Mr. Authority"** – Be familiar with the person who has the "yes" and "no" authority. Make sure that he knows you, in more than just a passing way, and then keep him informed. Let him know what you are doing and why. If you overcame a problem, avoided one, or are working on one, let him know. There is no need to blow your own horn, just make your information factual and to the point. "Mr. Authority" will probably appreciate knowing more than the average member and whenever he looks good, you will look even better.

**Improve your visibility** – Most of your work requires that you remain behind the scenes, so you must make a special effort to meet more of the golfers. In a personal and friendly way, let them know who you are and what you are doing to improve their playing conditions.

Keep in mind that although some of your duties may require work clothes, your personal appearance can be very important. You can improve the interpersonal relationship with members and others, simply by your appearance alone. Looking neat and clean is important, particularly when the average golfer dresses for a fashion show.

**Improve your communications** – A

major key to the success of a public relations program is communications. Some Chapters are encouraging their members to take extra copies of their newsletters and distribute them to strategic points around the clubhouse. In other situations, the superintendent is writing a green committee newsletter or a column in the club newsletter. Although the average member may not understand the contents of a turfgrass conference program, they can certainly appreciate the technical nature of the material and the depth with which the subjects are covered. Discussing significant conference topics with members, or making the "Proceedings" available to them can go a long way.

**Answer Questions** – Golf turf is usually held up as an example of what a fine lawn should be. Why not capitalize on your expertise and provide answers to your members? Hold evening classes for the club members, or volunteer to speak at an early Spring meeting. Give the members tips on how to prepare for the growing season and what they could do to improve their own lawn. During the

## Make Your Membership More Valuable

What are *YOU* doing to improve the value of your Chapter and GCSAA membership? Have you taken an active part in the functions of these organizations? Have you volunteered to work on any of these organization's many projects and committees?

As a member of a professional organization, either locally, regionally or nationally based, there are many things that you might want to consider as an individual member to make membership more valuable to you and your fellow members. The following list is just a starting point, but it may give you some ideas from which other helpful methods will arise.

1. **When you have a problem, do you:**
  - a. Call fellow members of your organization for suggestions?
  - b. Check through back issues of your Chapter newsletters, "The Golf Superintendent," or the GCSAA Conference "Proceedings" for articles relating to your problem?
  - c. Discuss this problem at your next meeting?
  - d. Check the programs of up-coming conferences and other meetings to see if your problem will be covered either directly or indirectly?

2. **Before going to a meeting, do you:**
  - a. Plan in advance to talk about specific professional topics?
  - b. Make plans to talk with someone before, at, or after the meeting?
  - c. Anticipate how you can apply the speaker's talk to your situation?
  - d. Plan to participate in the program, either by asking or answering questions?

growing season, put a list of suggestions on the clubhouse bulletin board each month.

Another suggestion is to tell the membership what you will be doing to improve their course during the coming year. They will probably be more understanding of play interruptions if they know ahead of time, and appreciate that the course will be improved.

Are you using the local mass media? Are there local radio, television or newspaper lawn and gardening programs or sections? Why not contact the host or editor and volunteer to appear or assist them by discussing the topic of turf, with which you are so familiar?

Keep in mind that the image you possess is not gained overnight, but that it takes considerable time and effort. Be positive and constructive in your actions, and above all look, speak and act the professional you are. Having a sound public relations program will help you to establish friendships, your expertise and the members' faith in you. When you do confront a problem, be ready.

e. Plan to volunteer for an assignment to help your organization?

3. **When a fellow member telephones you with questions or problems, do you:**

a. Call him back with the information you promised?

b. Offer to help, regardless of your own problems?

c. Respond to all questions in a helpful, friendly and professional manner?

d. Remember that other members volunteered to take time to help you solve your problems?

4. **When asked to serve your organization in some manner, do you:**

a. Accept the assignment, even though you may be busy?

b. Offer assistance on projects in which you may not be directly involved?

c. Recognize the opportunities for individual and group exposure and growth value by participating in any such capacity?

Remember, your professional associations should be a dynamic part of your overall growth plan. Volunteering for a more active role can provide you with greater membership benefits, particularly when you and the members of your local organization contribute as a unit for the betterment of GCSAA.

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