

Perseverance Pays Off

How do you turn critics of your golf course into supporters? When Peter Leuzinger, CGCS, was hired by Ivanhoe Club, Ivanhoe, Ill., to achieve certification as an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary, one of the biggest challenges he faced was criticism. Here are a few ways Leuzinger turned his public relations problems into positive results.

- Obtained a resource advisory committee of local residents, outside consultants, internal staff and golfers.
- Explained the project in great detail, setting expectations that the golf course would be unsightly at first.
- Responded to individual complainers, one-on-one. Embraced the philosophy that if someone has a problem, he'll solve it.
- Helped golfers and community members learn to appreciate the wildness and diversity of a natural habitat that can coexist with a world-class golf course.
- Established an open-door policy, inviting the nearby residential community to experience the nature preserve and wildlife sanctuary.
- Conducted educational sessions for school children.
- Invited golfers and visitors to participate in a wildlife inventory by reporting sightings to members of the resource committee.
- Stayed positive and persistent.

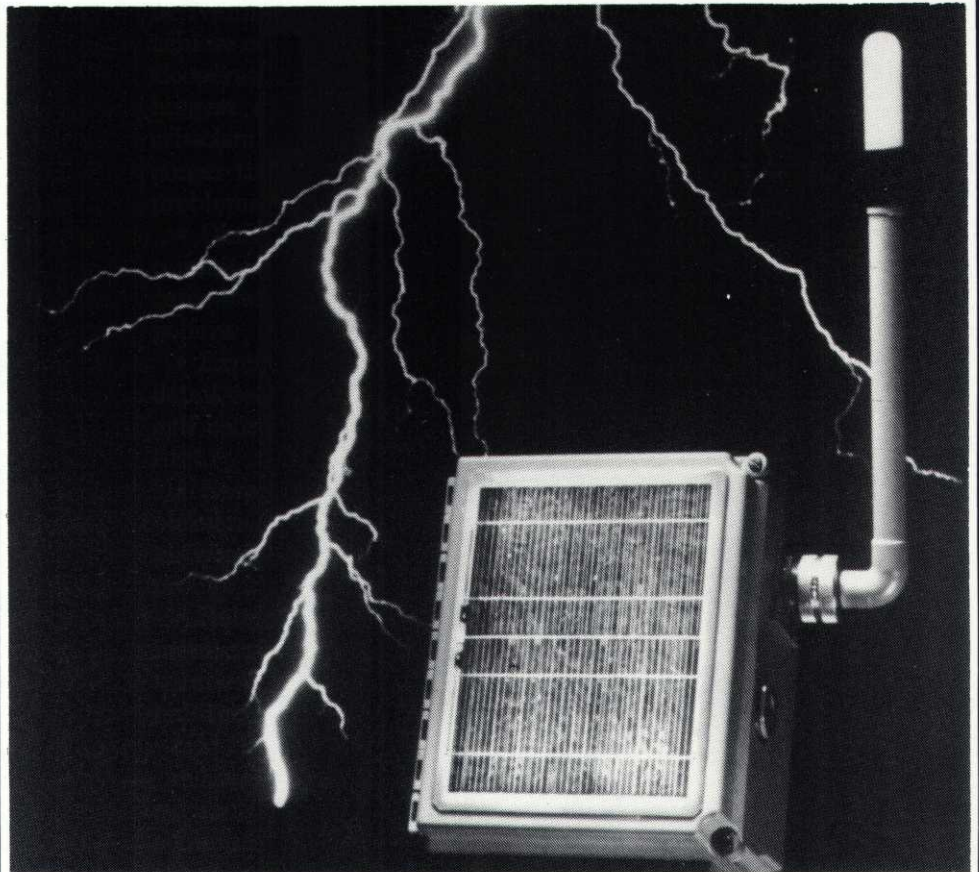
Key to his success was tenacity (and a thick skin!)

Benefits: The club benefited in many ways besides the obvious environmental advantages. Membership has increased. In fact, the membership committee uses the course's environmental stewardship as a tool to recruit new members. Positive media interest has increased and resulted in numerous articles and stories. Relationships with regulatory agencies have improved.

— *Leaderboard*

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