

There's No Better Time To Network

By NATE USELDING

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Recently, a couple of local superintendents got together in a round table discussion at North Oaks Country Club and invited their assistants to come along. The superintendents gathered in one room talking about winter preparation while we talked about our future aspirations. Walking into this meeting, I was a bit nervous not knowing anyone but after the meeting I felt more comfortable with my fellow peers.

What a great opportunity for assistants to get together and discuss issues pertaining to them. Most assistants know of, or who, superintendents are but how many different assistants do they know? If we are the next generation of superintendents, isn't knowing our fellow peers essential? Networking is a key to our success and the cliché saying stands true, it's not what you know but who you know as well. Whom do we, as assistants, network with to help us in our career? First, we start with whom we already know and those key players are our former employers and professors.

Do we get exposed to enough people with whom we could count on in a time of need? Of course we do, only if we take advantage of the opportunities when they present themselves. Being proactive in situations where you don't know anyone, it is as simple as saying, "Hi, my name is Nate Uselding." We cannot be shy, especially within our own organization.

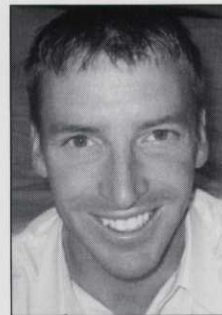
Sometimes, as assistants, we forget to continue talking to our former employers or professors and these are people we can count on for professional insight. We already built a solid relationship with them over the years and that is most important with networking and building relationships. If you continue to keep in contact with them, more opportunities or help you may receive. You can always turn to your current superintendent for help but what if you need to look elsewhere?

Can you count on a former employer whom you haven't spoken to for three years? Like the old saying goes "what have you done for me lately" might be your answer. Not only should we look within our industry to network but there are a couple other people who play a big role. Members, general managers, golf pro's, salesmen and relatives can help us out, sometimes when we least expect it.

Two years ago, I moved from Wisconsin to Minnesota and started my networking. The first person I contacted was a member at Edina Country Club who connected me with the superintendent there. He introduced me to the MGCSA website where all my questions were answered. This past summer, I thanked Mike Kelly for his help with my transition to Minnesota. Taking the time and thanking someone shows you are appreciative for their time in helping you out and helps build your relationship.

How can we get people to remember us after we meet them? First, have an introduction setting yourself apart from the rest. Prepare and practice an introduction selling yourself in less than a minute. You want to keep the other person interested but not take over the whole conversation. Tell them something interesting they will remember you by because you want to separate yourself from the rest.

Hand out your business card next; this allows you to accurately exchange personal information with someone. When you pass them out, ask for theirs too and follow up with them by e-mail, thanking them for their time. If you don't have a business card, it is a good idea to get one. You can easily design and print your own cards at a reasonable price by purchasing them at Office Max. You should include the club's name and address, your name and title along with your business phone, cell phone and your e-mail address. This gives others three different ways to contact you.



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