

# My First Business Trip

By NATE USELDING

Assistant Superintendent, Dellwood Hills Golf Club

I was headed to Orlando for my first business trip. The big leagues were calling and I was going to the Golf Industry Show. You see, I am a first timer and attending this year was a big deal to me. Before leaving, I pictured the Minnesota Green Expo but on a much larger scale with more ritz, glamour and people. This was it. I was here to learn from the best, take in new ideas and apply them to our golf course. I thought I had everything planned out and ready to go, but I wasn't ready for what I experienced in Orlando.

## The First Day

My first day was Tuesday and I was taking a seminar on operations management. This class was appealing because I am looking for new ideas on running our operation more efficiently after recently moving into our new maintenance facility. I got lost driving to the Conference Center and arrived 15 minutes late. I found my seat in the front row and began to look around. I couldn't believe that there were about 75 people in the room and it was full. I liked this, a smaller class size with people participating and interacting. The instructor, Bruce Williams, really kept me interested with all the stories he told. I took home some good information and had an idea for an action plan on our course.

At lunch, I headed outside to enjoy the warm weather before going back to class. I walked out the doors and the first person I saw was a buddy from college. Go figure, I travel 1,300 miles and see someone who now lives an hour away from me. I didn't think seeing anyone I knew would be possible, especially here.

## In Your Face Day

Wednesday was an eye opener because my class was on conflict resolution. Today, I positioned myself up front by choice and looking back, I set myself up for what happened. This class was in your face, hands on dealing with conflict. The instructor, Bob Sexton, gave me the business right off the bat. I looked like

fresh blood to him and within minutes of the class starting, he wanted to know all my vitals. I performed like a puppet and he had his way with me. I felt about two feet tall when I sat down but that is why I took the class. Handling conflict isn't a strong point of mine and I wanted to learn the right way of dealing with it. The class settled down in the afternoon session and

*"This class was in-your-face, hands-on dealing with conflict. The instructor, Bob Sexton, gave me the business right off the bat."*

I took home some key points on handling member conflict.

## Jack Nicklaus' Day

The day I was waiting for, Thursday. I wanted to see Jack Nicklaus receive the Old Tom Morris award, so I arrived early and attended the Innovative Superintendent sessions. This was in a rather large banquet room and I got a great seat right up front so I could see Jack and maybe get a couple pictures. I was pretty excited on where my seat was until my boss, Eric Peterson, told me Jack would be appearing in the room next door. I'm sure I wasn't the only one in the room thinking he was up next. So, we made our way next door into another huge banquet room, only this one had a stage with lights and big screen televisions. I should've known Jack wouldn't come out on a makeshift stage that was in the other room. We found our spot near the back of the room and listened to the opening session. When Jack finally came out it was quite comical. He couldn't read his handwriting for his speech and got a bit flustered. Jack handled it well and gave a great speech.

## The Trade Show

After the opening session, the trade show floor opened for the first time and Eric and I were off to the races. I wanted

to follow Eric around and see how he covered the floor. His mission for Thursday: complete the solutions challenge. You had to correctly solve a problem at 17 different booths and collect a stamp to complete the challenge. We started at the far end by the clubhouse solution center and made our way around to the other side. The game was great, there was chaos everywhere and it wasn't all about the larger exhibitors. I'm glad I followed someone with experience around on the trade show floor; otherwise I would have been lost.

The trade show was unbelievable. I was in awe the first day with the size and the amount of companies presenting their ideas.

Some ideas were practical and some not but you had to go around and see them all. I quickly learned how fast your legs tired from walking around on the concrete. The trick was entering any booth because the padding under their carpet was like a party for your feet. How could you not stop and look around while giving your legs a rest?

## Friday

On Friday, we walked the floor in reverse and saw a whole different aspect of the show. This time we hit all the big name booths we avoided on Thursday and I met many different salesmen in the process. I also took advantage of the 30-minute career workshops offered during the day. These presentations focused on assistants and building their foundation for becoming a superintendent.

You couldn't physically be in two places at once and, as a first timer, I wanted to see and experience everything. You really need to plan out your day because it is easy to get sidetracked with so much going on. After attending this show, it opened my eyes to all the opportunities in our industry that are at our fingertips.

Now it is up to me to take this information home and use it at our club. It was also very helpful to have my boss show me around because it will allow me to feel more confident in the years to come. Thanks, Eric, for a great trip.