

realized, but I would relish the turf talk with my future customers. That would make the job fun all the time. I would just walk in the offices and there would be meaningful conversations. The customer would tell me his or her problems and I would tell them mi.....

Oh yea. I don't have problems, at least not any that a customer would want to hear. They do not care that my profit margin is down and my boss's blood pressure is up. They do not care that I have to rush something to another customer causing me to miss dinner and my kid's soccer match, and really don't care that the warehouse botched my order and sent the wrong product. All they care about is that I fix it- now.

The Wacouta Bridge meant that my travel from west to east was almost complete, and my green haven called Prestwick was almost in sight. I concluded that is truly where I belong and the transition to a turf-related sales job would not be the slam dunk I thought it might at the start of the trip. Then one more thought popped into my head. When was the last time I had bought a beer, or a lunch, or even said thank you to one of my suppliers? When was the last time you did?

I am not suggesting that you owe any supplier anything, and yes I am quite aware that most of those things are turned in on an expense report. However, if you have built this relationship of mutual trust and understanding why not show that appreciation every once in a while. I have already been in binds twice this season because I did not take the time to plan ahead or just plain did not pay attention. My suppliers bailed me out and had what I needed or found it right away, no questions asked. Is it their job to do that? Well, yes but realize constantly having to do that can get really old,

fast.

I think many of us on the green side kind of take for granted the unique abilities of our suppliers. Not everybody is a good turf supplier. I imagine it is a skill set that has to be part natural, part learned and definitely honed through a period of time. They have to be super organized, even more so than us. They have to be part mother, part father, part psychologist, part negotiator. They have to be understanding and completely versed in their products successes and failures. They always have to have cheery disposition, or at least fake it well, and they always have to have their ears open. That is not always easy to do. Superintendents tend to be a grumpy bunch when push comes to shove, and on top of that the customer is always right.

We always hear in our industry how a given superintendent is a great grass grower or an outstanding superintendent. How he or she is an innovator or a motivator of people. When was the last time you heard somebody say that somebody was a fantastic sales representative? I am sure their superiors can see it, hopefully not just in numbers. I happen to think I have, or am working with a few outstanding turf suppliers, and I know I would not be as successful as I am without them.

We come to expect the thank you from them for the sale. We take for granted the customer dinner or sponsorship for the association. Their job is often thankless, so take the time every once in a while to thank them. Who knows, it could be you on that side someday, and you reap what you sow.