



TURFGRASS MATTERS

March 2014

The “Vendor’s” Perspective

“The real value of the GIS is this concentrated and dedicated face to face networking time”

Each year as we transition between seasons in the golf industry, as we move from one tradeshow into the next, there are certain activities that remind us just how quickly time passes. The annual Golf Industry Show, or GIS, is the most significant of those key ‘off-season’ events for me. Depending on your geography, the timing of this event may or may not mark the beginning of the next golfing season; in the mid-Atlantic it is really up to Mother Nature. Weather aside, the timing of this show is such that most people have mentally transitioned into the new calendar year, and with most other tradeshows behind us, it really

marks the beginning of a new season for vendors supporting the industry.

Aside from the fact that the weather is always nicer at the show than it is in the mid-Atlantic in February, the real value of this time away from the normal routine is that we have an opportunity to see many customers and industry associates in a concentrated period of time. It is valuable time to spend reconnecting with old friends while also developing new relationships. Considering the various modes of communication we have in this ever-changing age of electronics, one might conclude that this show has diminished in value for vendors as technology has altered how we gather and share information. My feeling is that the value of the GIS for vendors has actually risen in this age of digital communication, but not because of it. Before we go back into our routines of emails, texts, e-blasts, Facebook posting and tweeting, we have an opportunity to kick the season off right with some good old fashioned face-to-face networking. When I boil it all down, the real value of the GIS is this concentrated and dedicated face-to-face networking time.

On the tradeshow floor, hundreds of distributors and manu-

facturers eagerly await customers and prospects to stop by their booth so that we can show off what’s new and exciting for the upcoming season. While new product helps attract customers into the booth and we hope that our products become the “talk of the show”, our goal is to engage in conversations with customers. However, if a vendor relies solely on the new product lures, then the GIS may not provide an acceptable return on investment as the number of interactions may be too few.

In order to maximize the value of the GIS, anyone can mitigate the risk of having too few interactions while at the GIS. Value is a relative term and I am certain that some individuals achieve greater value from the GIS than others. Between the tradeshow, association meetings, lunch meetings, and various other events it doesn’t take long to fill up one’s schedule with opportunities to network with customers and

industry associates. The formula is simple – the harder one works preparing for, and then executing a plan for the GIS, the greater the overall value of the show. All it takes is setting some appointments ahead of time and then good time management during the show to ensure several quality customer interactions. We want to know what you expect from us before, during, and after the show, so please allow us the opportunity to understand this ahead of time so that we can prepare to meet those expectations. For any vendor, the GIS is just like most things in life, the more we put into it, the more we get out of it.

So, scheduled appointment or not, whenever you’re passing through a vendor’s booth at the GIS or any other tradeshow for that matter, please allow us the opportunity to understand how we may be able to help you be more productive and successful in the

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upcoming season. We recognize that you are very busy at the GIS with all of the seminars and various events, so the tradeshow may not be a priority for you, but please understand that we are there to network with you. The value of face-to-face communication is something that will never be replaced with any technology. So, please dedicate some time to chat with us in person before returning home to the inevitable bombardment of digital communications from vendors.

As Kevin has done an excellent job stating what the significance of our industry’s premiere event means to the vendor contingent, I will echo his sentiments and add some perspective from the “soft goods” side of the show.

We all, whether competing or complimenting each other with our products, strive to be the leaders in innovation and highlight these accomplishments in front of what is likely to be the largest group of decision makers together in one setting.

Preparation is certainly a key factor to maximize the ROI (return on investment), however even considering that attendance was down considerably from the last show in Orlando, traffic at times can seem overwhelming. We all hope to interact with our individual customers, particularly when you are part of a company with several regional reps. However, there are times that we are engaged with a customer from a counterpart’s territory and miss a chance to meet with those we have a direct relationship with.

This should not be viewed as a deterring factor, but rather an opportunity to gather a different perspective. Again, pertaining to the soft goods side, the same products may serve a slightly different purpose and are likely being utilized at different times of the year based on region. From the broadest view, joining these conversations promotes the networking and interaction that benefits each of us so greatly. Additionally, it offers an opportunity to reflect on the success or possible shortcomings one may have encountered with a product, opening the door for discussions surrounding potential solutions.

Many times, technical staff, R&D and leadership personnel are present and can participate in these conversations first hand, allowing them to either offer advice or gather information to take back to implement measures to improve on an existing product. This is also a great time for those who attend education to take what has been presented and follow up directly with the manufacturer regarding research results and proposed uses.

One final area that I considered to be greatly beneficial that may be overlooked, are the activities surrounding the tradeshow itself. I had the opportunity to participate in the Golf Classic that was held the weekend leading into the show. I am humbled and grateful that the MAAGCS took me on as their affiliate

representative for the tournament. There are few times throughout a given season when you are able to interact with members in such a relaxed environment and the last thing on anyone’s mind is worrying about their golf course (except, of course the host facility superintendent).

Granted, we owe it to our employers to maximize business opportunities from both sides of the table, but to interact on a personal level, whether its listening to someone talk about going to Disney and sharing the experience with their family or getting the group together to watch the “big game” and exchange a little tactful banter, is something that goes well beyond the next “what’s new” conversation and will be reminisced for a long time to come.

I look forward to a great season for everyone once all the tradeshow hoopla has passed and we go back to doing what drives us to keep improving in a very demanding, yet very rewarding industry.

Hopefully, we can recreate and build on these memories in San Antonio in 2015!

Kevin Monaco & Sam Camuso



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