

On keeping your job

True or false: if you can keep your golf course green and playable, you will also keep your job.

False.

So says Stanley Zontek, and Stanley Zontek should know. In 15 years as a director for the USGA Green Section, he has visited nearly 3,000 golf course superintendents.



"Today, growing grass is way down on the list of reasons I see superintendents lose their jobs," Zontek told Ohio superintendents last month.

At the top of the list, he says, are personal conflicts between supers and their bosses and the inability to get along with people. Club politics ranks next. Grass-growing and complacency round out Zontek's list.

"Growing fine, playable turf is almost assumed any more," Zontek says. "The only job security you have is your knowledge of the profession, how well you do your job, and your reputation and image."

Among young superintendents, there is also a tendency to "over-sell yourself," which sometimes creates problems.

"You try to slay the dragon right away," Zontek observes. "You want to plant 250 trees the first year, but you don't tend to the details of moving the holes and cleaning up the garbage in the parking lot. Build your reputation first, then you can proceed to tear up the course."

The modern golf course superintendent's job is built around professionalism and communication, Zontek notes. Methods for implementing both might be suggestion boxes for members, bulletin boards with news and notes from the superintendent, and involving club members in test plot administration.

Zontek's other attributes of a competent superintendent are attention to small details, enthusiasm and avoiding club politics.

So you want job security? Learn to get along with people—especially your boss.

Jerry Roche, editor

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