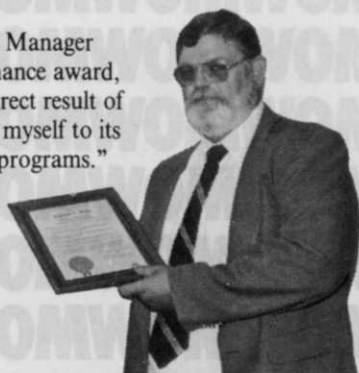


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Randy Willis, CGM  
Grounds Supervisor  
NW Missouri State University



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## Respect, once earned, must be maintained

by Greg Christovich

Several times in my career, I have found myself feeling as though I was not getting the proper respect for my position. My insecurity about how my peers, subordinates and superiors viewed my position made me feel uncertain about my abilities, and the tendency was to withdraw from visibility—"drop out of sight"—to avoid any further pain.

Many professional superintendents go through the same thing, whether they've been on the job for years, or they've just arrived at a new position. What most managers don't realize is that their perceived lack of respect is caused by their failure to nurture and develop that respect for the long term.

So how does a successful manager earn a high level of respect from others throughout his or her career? It's not easy, but here are some things that I learned,

some the hard way:

### 1) Don't ever start believing that you've "arrived."

When you finally land that first superintendent's job, or when you've gotten a "prestige" job that's finally paying you what you're worth, don't stop doing the things that got you there. Keep your sleeves rolled up and stay aggressive. The manager who gets comfortable gets complacent, and it shows in his/her work.

I once worked with a superintendent who was having morale problems with his staff. As it turned out, the superintendent was coming to work at 7:30 and was missing some quality time with his crew. Complacency led to a loss of respect.

### 2) Know that you can't please everybody all the time.

 But maintain an openness and respectful attitude toward all, even those you don't agree with.

Perhaps the greatest advice I ever got was from Johnny Burns, superintendent at

Charlotte (N.C.) Country Club. One day a member walked up to us and noisily complained about the condition of the greens. Mr. Burns told him "thank you" for his concern and feedback, and the member left with a feeling that he was important and respected. Most importantly, he respected the superintendent for taking the time to listen. Johnny's advice to me later? "When someone complains, you first must satisfy their need for acknowledgement, then you have to be like a duck in the rain: let it roll off your back."

Don't hide from the loudmouth types, but don't let what they say break you down. You can't please everybody.

### 3) Get to know your peer group,

 and stay in touch with them.

At most clubs, the superintendent is on a parallel management level with the golf director or professional, tennis professional, executive chef and controller. The super should know that he or she is part of this management team and that a spirit of cooperation can further mutual respect.

The super who does not have regular contact with the rest of the team becomes "invisible," and mutual respect

*continued on page 79*

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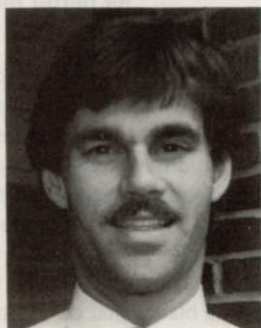
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is not possible.

Lastly, I think each of us needs to know that management of any kind has its thankless moments, and these times should not be misinterpreted as a lack of respect.

The more we continue to feed and care for our own image (the way we do our golf courses), the more respect we'll earn and keep for ourselves in the eyes of others.



—The author is general manager of Selva Marina Country Club in Atlantic Beach, Fla.

## Lab services critical to growth of golf, claims turf diagnostician

■ Proper laboratory testing and consulting can prevent the need for early renovation, according to Steve McWilliams, president of Turf Diagnostics & Design, Olathe, Kans.

"Good testing pays off in many ways," says McWilliams. "For example, if a developer builds a golf course that plays well the first season due in part to proper green physics, there's a big payoff in selling housing, attracting new members and building repeat business for the course."

However, if renovation is ultimately needed, quality lab work is especially critical at that time also, says Chuck Dixon, TD&D's president of technical operations.

"An on-site quality control testing program should be implemented to ensure that the construction materials delivered to the site conform to the design specification," says Dixon.

"Following these fundamental procedures creates a classic win-win situation for everyone."

Firms like TD&D can run a variety of tests on sand, turf and soil that can pinpoint a problem and correct it in just a matter of hours, Dixon notes.

In some instances, consulting firms will send a representative to the course to take a look at everything and take the appropriate samples. In other instances, all that is needed is for the superintendent to send the appropriate sample to a testing lab.

"Many clients mail us a sample, we test it and overnight the results back to them," says Dixon. "Time is (sometimes) of the essence, and we are prepared to respond quickly."

TD&D and companies like it can also consult on the optimal mixes for greens, sandtraps and fairways, using the experience they've gained in the past in soil science and lab testing.

So if your course is considering any renovations, the best place to start is with a good laboratory that will test existing materials for you and provide consulting