



# CHIPS & PUTTS

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## Communication Skills for Effective Interaction

By: Robert A. Milligan  
Cornell University Turfgrass Team

"You aren't listening." "You make me mad when you \_\_\_\_!" "You don't give me any feedback."

How many times have you heard these statements from family, co-workers and employees? Usually when we hear and use these or similar statements there are strong feelings and high levels of stress. Can we learn anything to more effectively handle such difficult questions? The answer is "Yes". Each of these statements is addressed below.

### Effective Listening

When I discuss listening in my workshops, I ask the participants what they are doing when someone else is talking. The first answer is usually "thinking about something else." This we can avoid by focusing on what is being said. More challenging is the next response of "thinking about how we are going to respond." We all do this, but it is not effective listening. We need to have the patience and focus to only listen until whomever we are talking to has finished, and only then think about how to respond.

A very powerful tool in listening is to practice active or empathetic listening. In active listening the listener listens for both content and emotional aspects and provides feedback on both. This means listening for the content and also the underlying feelings that may or may not be stated explicitly. This listening tool has additional attributes that it can be used to focus on joint problem solving and it fosters open communication and personal development.

### "I Statements"

The problem with "You make me mad...!" is twofold. First, the recipient of the statement will often be offended and become defensive. This is certainly not conducive to good

communications. Second, the feeling of anger results from an action of the person, not the person himself or herself. An "I" statement, however, is a much superior method for giving criticism, explaining a problem, making a suggestion, or expressing an opinion.

An "I" statement has two parts:

**First part:** Describe your feelings without blaming others.

**Second part:** Describe how you would like things to change.

For example, when you are disappointed and frustrated that an employee cannot remember simple instructions, you would state, "When what I think are simple instructions are not followed, I feel disappointed and frustrated. I want you to listen more carefully, write things down if necessary, and ask questions if anything is not clear."

Note that the first part of this statement used an "I" message where you state how you feel using the word "I" so that the other person does not feel offended by what you say. It doesn't blame "YOU"- the other person. Table one compares "YOU" and "I" messages.

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### In this issue.....

- Why Do I Need a Secretary
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- Superintendent Profile



## President's Message.....

I recently got back from the Conference and Trade show in Dallas. I must say, Dallas was not what it is cracked up to be. First the weather was cold and raining for the first 4 days; second it was so spread out it made it difficult to get around, and lastly the traffic was horrible. I guess my opinion of Dallas isn't very high, but the GCSAA employees worked hard at making it as enjoyable as possible.

Some Board news.... We are looking for two replacements for the Board of Directors. Gary Phillips resigned and Tony Grieco got a job as a sales representative. Our by-laws state that we are only able to have one sales person on the BOD. I talked to the GCSAA about developing another position on the executive committee for Tony. He has been such an asset I do not want to see him off the Board. I will continue to investigate other options. In the meantime, anyone who may be interested in any of these positions, please feel free to contact me at 570/894/8055.

Let's hope for some warm weather, and I hope to see you at the first meeting in April!

Gene Huelster

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## From the Editor's Desk.....

Well the new season of *Chips & Putts* is here. As spoken about in previous editions, 2001 will prove to be more insightful, informative, timely and interesting. Our lead was chosen for several reasons. Foremost was the fact that COMMUNICATION should be something that we all keep on our mind. Every aspect of our daily lives relies on good communication to all the people around us.

With the new season of *Chips & Putts* upon us, the golf season is right around the corner. Within the next month, golf courses throughout our region will open. That's why I included the article about hiring a secretary for some much needed administrative help. During this off-season, I hired an administrative assistant, and it has proved to be invaluable to the department. If you have any questions about it, give me a call.

Also in this edition is a profile of Vince Matics, CGCS; the new superintendent at the CC of Scranton. I would like to be the first to officially welcome Vince back to the area. Hope to see you at the meetings, and look forward to your input in the years to come. Being Vince's neighbor I have met with him a couple of times. I can assure you that he is/will be a great asset to the PTGA.

In closing I'd like to borrow Vince Matics' philosophy of "**servicing the membership, while having fun**" as the motto for the *Chips & Putts* staff in 2001.

See you all at the meetings!

Darrin Batisky



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(Continued from page 1)

"You" Messages (blames others)	"I" Messages (first part)
You really make me mad.	I'm feeling upset about this.
You sure are disorganized.	I feel ineffective when things are not organized.
You're always interrupting.	I feel frustrated when I am interrupted.

**Table 1, Comparisons of "YOU" and "I" statements****Feedback**

In studies where employees have been asked about their performance, the most common response is, "I must be doing well because I haven't heard that I'm doing anything wrong." This response implicitly suggests that feedback is very limited and that the expectation is that feedback will be negative. Both are mostly true and neither is conducive to good communication and high productivity.

First, feedback should be common and should be based on performance. Remember, in his book, *Everyone's a COACH*, Don Shula states, "Good performance should be treated differently than poor performance." When we give feedback, it should respond to:

- Positive consequence
- A need for redirection; performance stopped and redirected using training
- A negative consequence; requires a reprimand, a punishment, a demotion, a removal from activity

The following are ideas for improving our feedback-giving activities:

- Ken Blanchard says, "Catch your employees doing something right."
- Give four compliments for every constructive criticism.
- From Jane Magruder Watkins of Transformational Management, "Practice Appreciative Inquiry: the process of asking questions about what is going well, rather than what is going poorly."
- Use the **PIN** technique to find positive aspects of performance even when you must say "no":
  - focus on **P**ositive
  - focus on what is **I**nteresting and innovative
  - focus on what is **N**egative.

--- Adapted for Cornell University Turfgrass Times; Volume Nine, Number One

(The author is the co-author of: *Human Resource Management for the Golf Course Superintendent*. And a GCSAA seminar instructor of: *Managing People for Peak Performance and Job Satisfaction*.)



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## Why Do I Need a Secretary?

By: Tony Goodley, CGCS

(Taken from: The Green Sheet, Central PA GCSA Newsletter, Volume 8 Issue 8)



This was a question asked by not only the Director of Golf but the General Manager as well. My answer was, "Because I need one!" I explained:

The demands of the golf course superintendent from a clerical standpoint, as well as every-day course maintenance, have become astronomical. The golf course condition requirements (thanks to TV and greens committee chairman) are enough to keep the Roloids people in business from golf course superintendents alone. We get so bogged down with paperwork that sometimes our duties on the course suffer, or we end up taking the paperwork home and then our domestic duties become neglected.

If the above reasons weren't enough to justify the position, I was willing to eliminate one of the course part time positions to make room in my budget for a secretary. All of this was to be done on a trial basis with upper management to make the final decision.

As it turned out, my secretary became invaluable, allowing the mechanic to do his job without having to answer the phone, take messages, and track people down. She also helped out in accounting during a time when they were busy and short staffed. Her hours are 8:00 A.M. to 2:30 P.M., Monday through Friday, during the busy months of April through October/November, and three days a week during our slower months of November through March.

As Heritage Hills is also an ISO 9000 certified resort, she serves as the auditor/representative from our department and handles the additional paperwork that ISO generates.

If I were in a position to have to do all the paperwork and my golf course duties as well, I think I would either seek employment elsewhere or just get out of the business. As long as I am in the business and no matter where I work, this is a position I would fight to keep.

In addition to answering the phones and delivering messages, here are some of the other things that my secretary does: orders products and parts, calls for estimates to compare prices, fills out the purchase orders, tracks these through the computer, checks incoming material to be sure it is what we ordered, distributes PO copies to the proper departments, tracks our expenses for budgetary purposes, manages and prints weekly budget status reports, prints and files the logs and forms that we use and designs new ones as needed, checks and prints our e-mail and gets a daily weather update, checks golf and related websites for pertinent information, makes sure that the training records are up to date, prints up training manuals for new hires, maintains our ISO manuals, serves as an ISO 9002 Resort Auditor and maintains all our computer records. She also greets applicants in my absence and handles the application process (not the interview). So much of what we do is computerized these days that any superintendent and/or assistant superintendent who is not computer literate really must have a secretary or office assistant, at least part time.

As for upper management's decision, let me just say that my secretary has been here for a year and a half!

*Editor's Note: Tony is the CGCS of Heritage Hills Golf Resort in York, PA*



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## Tank Mix Alert

Remember the WhALE Method...



- W** = Wettables (WP, WSP, WSB, DF, WDG, EG,...)
- A** = Agitate
- L** = Liquids (L, F,...)
- E** = Emulsifiable Concentrates (EC) 9

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*A message from your golf course superintendent and GCSAA*



## Superintendent Profile



Vince Matics, CGCS; CC of Scranton

The Country Club of Scranton has recently continued its legacy of excellence by hiring a true professional associated with the golf course industry. Their selection as golf course superintendent and predecessor to the late Bill Lansdowne, ironically began his career as a caddy, at the tender age of thirteen, with the Country Club of Scranton. His name is Vince Matics, CGCS.

This Penn State Turf Program graduate has held superintendent positions in Pennsylvania and New York. His first superintendent position landed him in the Poconos at the Tamiment Golf & Resort. Two years later, he was hired in Jamestown, NY, with a club known for its rich golfing tradition, the Moon Brook Country Club. After eight years of commitment, Vince relocated to Rochester, NY, and the Brook-Lea Country Club where he spent the last twelve rewarding years.

Mr. Matics admitted he is very excited about his return to the Country Club of Scranton. His basic and easily understandable philosophy of "serving the membership while having fun" is sure to provide a positive working environment. He credits his work ethic to the seven years he spent working with Bill Lansdowne. "Bill was a mentor, friend, and brother", and he will pride himself on keeping the playing conditions at the highest level - the level to which the membership has grown accustomed.

The original 18-holes of the Country Club of Scranton were built in 1926 and designed by Walter Travis. The course boasts a length of nearly 6,800 yards and is enjoyed by its 600 members. In the early 1990's, Dr. Michael Hurdzan had added a 9-hole track to further complement this property, which totals 385 acres. Assisting Vince with the golf course is a more than capable assistant, named Charlie Saxe. Charlie has remained dedicated to the Country Club of Scranton for 13 years and will be a definite asset to the new superintendent.

When Vince is not fulfilling his professional responsibilities on the golf course, he is a full-time father of two and devoted husband to his wife, Ann. His son, Steve, 19, is currently enrolled at the University of Rochester and is majoring in Medicine, while his daughter Juliann, 17, is a junior in high school and a member of the National Honor Society. For leisure, Vince enjoys playing golf and carries a 4-handicap, but admits his game has slipped. In conclusion, the real reason why he is attracted to golf is because of "the great people associated with this game."

-by Jeff Koch

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More things learned in Dallas, Texas at the  
GCSAA Convention:

<b>When you hear:</b>	<b>It really means:</b>
It's so dry, the trees are bribing the dogs.	Drought
Just 'cause the chicken has wings doesn't mean it can fly.	Appearances can be deceiving.
This ain't my first rodeo.	I've been round awhile.
He looks like the dogs been keeping him under the porch.	He's ugly!!
The ate supper before saying grace.	They are living in sin.
Time to paint your butt white and run with the deer.	Stop bitching and DO IT!
As full of wind as a corn- eating horse.	Prone to boasting.



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