



WESTERN VIEWS

November-December, 1999

Official Publication of the West Michigan Golf Course Superintendents Association

President's Message

Welcome to the next Millennium. It looks to be an exciting year coming up, starting with those that will travel to the National Conference in New Orleans. We have again contributed money to the hospitality room and hope to see you there. Look for the room location and opening times in this issue. We would also like to thank the vendors who donated funds for the hospitality room.

The M.T.F. also will be happening about the time you receive this newsletter.

It looks like it will be another good conference. We would like to thank Kathy Antaya and the other people around the state that contributed large amounts of time and effort in planning this year's conference.

The new directors of the West Michigan Board are in place and committee assignments have been made. Look for these in this issue. We have a nice meeting schedule finalized for 2000. That is also published in this issue. A big one to be sure and attend, if you don't

make it to the national or state conferences, is the spring roundtable. John Fulling and Dan Litogot are putting some time into that meeting and it should be a good one.

As you can see, many people have been busy behind the scenes already this year to ensure you have educational opportunities. It's also a great chance to get to know many people in your profession. See you at a meeting and have a great year.

Sincerely, Al Bathum, President

2000 Tentative Monthly Meetings and Locations

January 11	The Highlands Golf Club Winter Meeting
March 13	Watermark Country Club Roundtable Meeting
April 18	Heritage Glen Golf Club
May 16	St. Ives Golf Club
June 13	Pilgrims Run Golf Club
July 18	Quail Ridge Golf Club Chapter Championship
Sept. 18	Egypt Valley Country Club Golf Day
October 9	Muskegon Country Club Annual Meeting and Elections

2000 Committee Assignments

Education

Fulling, Litogot

Scholarship and Charities

Fulling, Thuemmel, Holmes

Monthly Meeting

Bathum (Dates), Richter (Notices),
Litogot (Activities)

Fall Party

Paterson, Hopkins, Thuemmel

Golf Day

Paterson, Hopkins, Holmes

Hospitality Room

Fulling, Bathum

GAM

Hopkins, Holmes

GCSAA

Bathum, Hopkins

MTF

Antaya, Fulling

Newsletter

Bathum, Richter

Bylaws & Policy

Bathum, Boyle

Finance & Membership Notification

Richter

Editor's Note: Write me if you have any corrections or if you are interested in doing an article for us at:

Western Views
8121 Cowan Lake Drive
Rockford, Michigan 49341

Welcome New Member

Please welcome this new member to our organization!

Donnie A. Farris
Kent Country Club

Communication: The Cornerstone of Professional Relationships

Reprinted from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America

Introduction

Few vocations demand such a wide range of knowledge to ensure professional success as does that of the golf course superintendent. Employers take it for granted that you know the technical side of turf management. Increasingly, though, employers expect you to also be proficient in:

- Communication
- Financial management
- Environmental compliance.
- Stewardship of natural resources
- Long range planning
- Personnel management

Of all these, communication may be the single most important contributor to employment longevity and enjoyment. In many cases, your employer and other constituents (golfers, members, committee members, etc.) are not especially knowledgeable about golf course management. It is up to you to keep them informed about your cultural and agronomic practices - why you are doing what you are doing and when you will be doing it.

Synonymous with communication is building relationships. You build trust and confidence when you share information and listen to input from your employer and other key parties. Clear and continuous communication ensures that expectations are verbalized, progress is discussed, challenges are addressed and, as the saying goes, "everyone is on the same page."

The benefits of good professional relationships and accomplished communications include:

- Greater job security
 - Better compensation
 - Heightened job satisfaction

These are tangible benefits that can be realized if you take the time and make the effort to open lines of communication with your employer and management team, especially your president, general manager, board of directors, green chairman, members and golfers. To be effective, communication must be proactive, continuous and clear and driven by a genuine desire to build rapport, as well as deliver information.

Communication is the Foundation of Good Professional Relationships

Like personal relationships, professional relationships are built on communication. In the case of professional relationships, it is your responsibility to take the initiative and start the dialogue.

Communicating comes naturally for some people; for others, it's a bit more difficult. In many cases, other tasks are given priority so communication and relationship building fall by the wayside. If you are fortunate enough to be a "people person" you probably have had - and probably will continue to have - a very successful career. If you prefer to avoid people and communication, you might want to consider practicing your people skills and getting more comfortable with that aspect of your job. Aside from being a good manager or turf, communication is the single most important skill you can possess to advance in all

areas of your career.

Improving your relationship with your employer and your job standing is dependent on how indispensable and approachable you make yourself. Effective communication is the best way to show that you have expertise.

Communication Lets You Take Control

Communication is at a premium in the golf industry. There are no silver bullets for job stability, but skillful communication and effective relationship building come close.

As a golf course superintendent, much of what you deal with is not within your control. Weather, employees, golfers, turf diseases, insects and wildlife are just a few of the things that can unexpectedly affect your day - perhaps your career. If you are an effective communicator, you already have the lines of communication open. You have an established storehouse of trust and confidence. When something does go wrong, you've got a means of letting your employer know about it and a reserve of confidence to draw from.

If you are perceived as competent and if you have built trust through your professional relationships, you will generally weather the storm.

Types of Communication

Communication takes place in many different ways, but it can be divided into two general categories: formal communication and informal communication.

Formal Communication

Formal communication is generally driven by your employer and consists of the written and oral reports your employer expects on a regular basis. Among other things, formal communication includes written reports, regularly scheduled one-on-one meetings and weekly staff meetings. This category of communication is very important. It is essential that these presentations be thoroughly planned, error free and easy to follow.

Formal communication is an excellent way to:

- Deliver specific information
- Convey competency
- Contribute to an efficient and effective operation
- Build relationships

If executed well, formal communication helps build your image as a competent professional.

Informal Communication

Informal communication is less easy to define, but is just as important to your career as formal communication. Informal communication is where the majority of professional relationship building takes place. When done with regularity and enthusiasm, informal communication is an excellent way to gain visibility, establish trust and confidence and build professional relationships.

The possibilities are almost endless but following are a few

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Communication, Continued from page 2

tried-and-true examples:

- Introduce yourself to golfers on the course and in the clubhouse
- Get to know committee members
- Be near the clubhouse when important groups finish play
- Invite new members to your maintenance facility
- Post course information for players on bulletin boards
- Be visible on the golf course
- Write a regular column for your facility's newsletter
- Play golf with your employer
- Attend tournaments

How To Win Supporters and Influence Employers

36 Tips for Building Successful Professional Relationships

(These tips cover a range of employment situations and may not be applicable to everyone.)

Employers

1. Play golf with your employer, golfers, and other managers at your facility. Point out improvements, problems and planned solutions and general turf management practices that your playing partner(s) may not be aware of. Ask for and listen to their input.

2. Golf with your employer at other facilities; he/she usually becomes your biggest supporter after seeing other courses. If your course is better managed, you look like a star. If your course is not as well managed (you should know that before going there with your employer), use your visit to illustrate similar improvements you would like to make on your course.

3. Be sure your employer, green committee members and/or board receives copies of *Golf Management* magazine and *Leader Board*, the GCSAA newsletter targeted to golf course decision makers.

4. Attend green committee and/or board meetings. Develop an agenda for green committee meetings, publish meeting minutes and distribute promptly.

5. Provide committee members or board members with an attractive binder. Encourage them to place long range plans, progress reports and meeting minutes in the binder. Distribute timely articles, reports, *Leader Board*, etc. to be inserted into the binder.

6. Send appropriate agronomic and golf management articles to your employer and attach a handwritten note with a few brief thoughts related to the article. Stay up-to-date on turf management research. Share what you learn with your employer and explain what the findings mean or how it could affect your course.

7. Hold employer meetings in the maintenance facility. Host periodic tours of the golf course and maintenance facility. Be sure to highlight turfgrass research areas and discuss the value of maintenance equipment.

8. Hold an annual orientation for green committee members.

9. Invite new board or committee members to tour the course and the maintenance facility with you. Take him/her to lunch.

10. Invite your employer to GCSAA-related events such as educational seminars, chapter meetings and the annual conference and show.

11. Write thank-you notes to your employer and other managers at your facility when appropriate. For example, send a note after attending conference and show or education seminars paid for by your employer.

12. If you are emotionally upset about an issue, wait 24 hours before discussing it with your employer. You will be much calmer and more rational after a cooling-off period.

13. During meetings with your employer, write down all of the important points discussed. It shows professionalism and serves as a reminder for later reference.

Golfers

14. Learn and use the names of active golfers at your course.

15. Place comment cards in the pro shop, golf cars or restaurant. Design them with your name and title clearly visible so golfers know you are asking for course-related input. Include a line for the golfer's name so you can send a letter thanking him/her for the input and addressing the concern or compliment.

16. Post a long-term calendar with regular maintenance activities clearly noted in a prominent spot for all golfers to see. Let golfers know what you are doing on the course, when you will be doing it, and how it will affect play.

17. Post daily updates in a visible location to communicate current course conditions. Use photographs to better illustrate what you are describing.

18. Document changes on the course using before and after photos to remind people "what you've done for them lately."

19. Contribute to your facility's newsletter by writing a regular column. Sign it and use your photograph. Be sure to discuss what's happening on the course and why it's happening. This lets your golfers know *why* a green was slower, *why* a tree was cut down around the ninth tee box and *why* water was standing on the fifth fairway.

20. Publish monthly lawncare tips in your facility's newsletter.

21. Present a workshop for your golfers on home turf care.

22. Post the current "Par for the Course" schedule.

23. Maintain high quality visibility on the golf course. Eat lunch in the clubhouse daily. Maintain a high profile in the clubhouse. Talk to golfers to get first-hand input. Post your name and title in the clubhouse or restaurant and print your name on the scorecard. Note your title on your turf utility vehicle so it can be seen by golfers.

24. Write every new club member a welcome letter and invite each to lunch. Offer to play golf with your golfers and keep a sign-up sheet in the clubhouse.

25. Write a letter of congratulations to the new club champion every year.

26. Attend member meetings and annual meetings; present a "State of the Union" slide show at the annual meeting describing activities that have resulted in improved golf course conditions or budget reduction. Attend tournaments and other events at your course. Take your spouse (if applicable) to appropriate functions.

27. Conduct a seminar for your golfers or members focusing on course etiquette. The seminar could include proper repair of

Continued, page 4

Get Your Seed Tested at the Michigan Department of Agriculture's Seed Testing Laboratory.

Dr. John N. Rogers, III and John A. Hardy, Department of Crop and Soil Sciences, M.S.U.

The View From M.S.U.

The turfgrass industry has grown tremendously in the 1990s, with new construction and renovation in almost every facet. In many areas, technology has expanded to support this growth and our management schemes have more options than ever. One exception to this rule may be with seed quality, as seed industry regulations and intense competition have cut deeply into this industry's profit margins. More recently, there have been stories of seed lots contaminated with weed seed with little to no notification from the seed label. Obviously, this is frustrating and quite costly, leaving you wondering where to turn. Our suggestion is to remember the basics and consider seed testing. The importance of a seed test can be equated to that of a soil test. A soil test at the beginning of any project saves both headaches and dollars down the road. The same goes for seed testing, because it too is inexpensive when compared to all the corrective measures that must be taken when a contaminated bag of seed has been planted.

The purpose of this article is to make you aware of an independent service in Michigan to take your seed to before (and after) you make the seed application. This is the Michigan Department of Agriculture Seed Testing Laboratory, a state owned

and run lab, on the south side of the Michigan State University campus. This lab, and the full-time staff of five people is fully equipped to analyze turfgrass seed to detect and identify most contamination issues. They have the ability to perform both purity and germination tests. Steve McGuire, who is assisted by David Johnston, heads the lab. Both are certified seed testing analysts. Interested persons should contact the lab to 517-337-5084 for prices, turnaround times and special test requests. For the next two years the lab will be located at the MSU Field Research Lab (while renovations are being made to their existing building), but will still be open for business.

There are several reasons for independently testing seed. One of the most important tests for contaminants is for common and noxious weeds, which, if present in turf seed lots, can post a long-term and expensive management problem. Also, the seed test can establish germination percentages. This can be helpful if there are questions on seed age. Finally, you should always save 0.5 lb. of seed from each lot as insurance. This will provide a point of restitution should there be any issues.

Please consider using this important service in the future.

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Communication, *Continued from page 3*

divots and ball marks, raking a bunker, golf car rules, a discussion of alternative and metal golf spikes and other topics.

28. Sponsor a golf outing early in the season. Point out wild-life and improvements made over the winter, show how to repair a ball mark, how to rake a bunker, etc.

29. Host an open house at your maintenance facility. Get you employees involved. In cold weather climates, offer coffee and hot chocolate in the maintenance facility during the winter. This invites golfers into the maintenance facility to see everything you do during the winter.

Community

30. Take advantage of all opportunities to establish yourself as a resource in the community. Introducing yourself to local media and speaking to local civic and school groups is a valuable way to promote your course and your profession. Keep your employer updated on these activities and pass along your positive experiences.

31. Prior to the start of new construction projects or prior to unique maintenance practices, write a letter to residents around the course notifying them of the upcoming work. Include the start date and anticipated completion.

General

32. Keep GCSAA's Green Tips, Media Sourcebook, Media Relations Guidebook, Environmental Media Relations Guide-

book and Emergency Communications Guidebook on file for easy reference. Mail or hand out appropriate sections when questions arise.

33. Have first-class signage to direct individuals to the maintenance facility. Inside your facility, display nameplates on the superintendent's office door or desk and the names of the assistants, mechanic, foreman, and others on a bulletin board.

34. Consider the name of your maintenance facility. If you currently call it a "barn" or "shed", change it to something indicative of its importance, such as turf maintenance center, environmental resource center, course management facility, turf and training resource facility, etc.

35. Promote your maintenance capabilities by stenciling the year you purchased a piece of equipment on its front. Every time golfers and your employer see the equipment, it reinforces how well you have taken care of that investment. When it is time to purchase a replacement, obtaining approval should be easier.

36. If you make a mistake, admit it and apologize. If you turn the sprinkler on and get someone wet, follow up with a letter of apology. It lets them know you care.

"Relationships are where it all comes together or comes apart. Nothing else can be made to happen if relationships do not exist." -Phillip B. Crosby, *Quality Assurance Consultant and Best-selling Author*

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**THE MICHIGAN ROOM
WILL BE AT THE
NEW ORLEANS MARRIOTT
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HEADQUARTERS**

**THE DATES AND TIMES
FOR THE ROOM WILL BE:**

**WEDNESDAY
FEBRUARY 16
8:00 - 11:00 PM**

**THURSDAY
FEBRUARY 17
6:00 - 10:00 PM**

**FRIDAY
FEBRUARY 18
6:00 - 10:00 PM**

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!



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Native Americans' skeletons turned up in work at Detroit GC

Lynn Henning

Construction workers installing a new irrigation system at Detroit Golf Club in late November made a chilling discovery: a pair of human skeletons that had been buried only 18 inches beneath the surface.

The remains were identified as those of two Native American males who probably died about 300 years ago, near the time Detroit was settled. Dr. G. Michael Pratt, an archaeologist for Heidelberg College in Tiffin, Ohio, assisted a pathological team in making the identification after Detroit homicide detectives released the skeletons for archaeological study.

The skeletons were found in an in-play area not far from the putting green between the 18th holes of the South and North courses. Detroit Golf Club is a 36-hole facility that boasts two Donald Ross-designed 18-hole layouts.

A new irrigation system is being installed throughout the club's two courses, including areas of rough that were previously not watered. The extension of piping led to the unearthing of the relics.

A medical examination showed that one

of the males was perhaps 50 years of age, and the other about 35. Several artifacts found with the bones also helped trace the men's ancestry. A crescent-shaped brass gorget was the kind of item common in trade during the early 18th century, as would have been a silver ball-and-cone earring that was also uncovered.

Pathologists also identified remnants of cloth that were found with the bones, some soft tissue that had remained preserved, and some black hair strands that were wholly consistent with the men of Native American ancestry.

Pratt and others from the investigative team believe the men were from the Wyandotte tribe that lived in the region.

"Basically, they think they found a couple of Native Americans who got killed along the trail about the time Detroit was discovered," said John O'Donnell, Detroit Golf Club's general manager.

The club is west of Woodward Avenue, a key metropolitan Detroit thoroughfare that in an older era was a main trail traveled by Native Americans. The Wayne County

Medical Examiner was to meet with Wyandotte Tribe officials to forward the remains for burial.

"We're going to mark the spot appropriately, and with all the dignity commensurate with what we found," O'Donnell said.

Classifieds

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