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# Turf Times

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The newsletter from the Northern Michigan Turf Managers Association

## Communicating Better at Work

by Frank Grazian, & Don Bagin



Employees often show concern about the quality and quantity of communication at work.

Some claim that management gives only lip service to open communication but does little to really communicate with them.

Others contend their organizations believe that posting notices on bulletin boards and sending out memos provide adequate communication.

Still others say they receive vague instructions that are difficult to follow. In effective communication often results in poor cooperation and coordination, lower productivity, undercurrents of tension, gossip and rumors, and increased turnover and absenteeism.

Experience shows there are many ways managers can improve internal communication. Here are some things they should do:

- Understand that communication is a two-way street. It involves giving information and getting feedback from employees. It isn't finished when information is given.
- Put more emphasis on face-to-face communication with employees. Don't rely mainly on bulletin boards, memos and other written communication.
- Ask themselves, each time they give an instruction, if the message is clear. Most vagueness is caused by failing to be specific. Example: Don't just tell an employee to "show more interest" in his or her work. If an employee spends too much time chatting with others, be specific about it.
- View information as "service to" employees and not "power over" them.
- Listen to employees; show respect for them when they speak. They'll feel part of the team and will tend to be more dedicated and productive. One way: Ask questions to show interest and clarify points.
- Don't just talk open-door policy. Practice it by walking around and talking to employees. Allow people to disagree and to come up with new ideas.
- Conduct one-on-one meetings. Ask each employee to tell the manager how the manager can help the employee to do a better job. Then share those things employees can do to help the manager do a better job.
- Prepare publications frequently. Emphasize current issues that employees care about; don't substitute quarterly "prettier" publications for substantive, up-to-date ones.
- Concentrate on building credibility with employees. Managers who lack credibility and fail to create a climate of trust and openness aren't believed - no matter how hard they try to communicate.

### Editors Note

Scott Pulaski of Treetops Resort will be taking over as editor of the news letter beginning with the July/August edition of the Turf Times. Please assist him by contributing to your newsletter! Every member of this association has something worth hearing about in the Turf Times - so get to it! Thanks.

Peter M. Hohn



## Life at 3/16" "slow grass is better than fast dirt"

*You've heeded the warnings and raised your putting green cutting height to 3/16" just like all the experts have told you. Just when you're proud and confident of your accomplishments, the golfers start complaining that the greens are too slow. "Cut 'em lower" they cry, "turn off the water", "they need more verti-cutting", and the ever popular "I don't care what you do, but they better be rolling 10' for the big tournament!". Don't they remember all the disease and turf loss that occurred when you tried to keep them fast all summer?*

Mowing at 3/16" is a prudent practice for creeping bent-grass/*Poa annua* greens during the summer. There is no doubt that the increase mowing height improves turfgrass stress tolerance during the summer, and yes, the greens are going to be a little slower. Instead of caving-in to demands to lower the mowing height there are several things you can do to improve ball roll and keep the turf healthy 3/16".

1. Keep'em sharp - Greens suffer just as much from a poor quality cut as they do from an excessively low mowing height. Your mechanic should check the cutting units daily when they come in from mowing, and make any necessary adjustments. Weekly or bi-weekly back lapping along with checking the bedknife will help keep the cutting units sharp at all times.

2. Proper Irrigation - Irrigation management is far and away the most important practice for maintaining healthy turf at any cutting height. With creeping bentgrass/*Poa annua* greens, the goal is to keep the soil uniformly moist, but not wet. If you are on a leaching program to control salinity, go ahead and give the greens a good long soaking when necessary (4 to 6 hours) and then turn off the automatic system and go to hand watering for as long as possible. Overly wet greens are slow, bumpy, and disease prone.

3. Double Mowing - Consider double mowing your greens once a week. This is a good practice to improve surface smoothness without having to lower the cutting height. If you are short on labor, you can use a triplex mower in one direction and hand mow in the opposite direction, or even double mow with the triplex units.

4. Light Topdressing - If the turf is healthy and the temperatures are not too high, it is perfectly fine to apply light sand topdressing to smooth the surface. Many superintendents refer to this as "dusting the greens" with approximately 0.1 to 0.3 cu. yds of sand per 1000 sq. ft. every two to four weeks. Topdressing should be suspended at the first sign of turf stress or if temperatures are expected about 90 degrees F.

5. Grooming - Groomer attachments are great tools to improve the quality of cut and smooth the greens, especially at increased mowing heights. The groomers can be on a frequency of two to three times per week as long as the turf is actively growing. This is another practice that should be suspended at the first sign of turf stress.

6. Rolling - Putting green rollers have proven to be very effective tools to maintain surface smoothness and slightly increase speed without negatively impacting turf health. The rollers should only be used two to three times per week to avoid abrasion injury.

When asked their preference for speed or smoothness, most golfers agree that surface smoothness is most important. Smooth greens with reasonable speed can be achieved without having to lower the mowing height by paying close attention to the previously mentioned practices. And if the golfers persist in their desire for lighting fast greens during the summer remind them that "slow grass is better than fast dirt"

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### GCSAA Scholars Competition

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The GCSAA Scholars Competition was developed to recognize outstanding students planning careers in golf course management. Applicants shall be evaluated based on academic skill, potential to become a leading professional, employment history, extracurricular activities and the recommendation of a previous superintendent and a current academic advisor.

If you are interested in the competition, please call Kay at 517-327-5474 for an application or you can access the GCSAA home page directly for an application at [www.gcsaa.org](http://www.gcsaa.org). The deadline for applications is June 1, 1998.



# GCSAA board approves certification program changes

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The Fall 1997 meeting of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's (GCSAA) Board of Directors has resulted in changes to the association's certification program.

GCSAA's certification program, implemented in 1971, is designed to elevate professional standards, enhance individual performance and distinguish those who have demonstrated knowledge essential to the practice of golf course management. Certified Golf Course Superintendent (CGCS) designation indicates the highest standards of professional excellence and must be retained through continual training and education.

The following recommendations were made by the certification committee and approved by the board:

## **Effective immediately:**

*Eligibility.* Criteria must be met as it relates to the November 1996 change in GCSAA's Standing Rules for Membership for the director of golf, director of golf course maintenance operations and construction superintendent. Individuals holding these positions at the time of application must have three years of experience as a golf course superintendent prior to assuming their current position. The construction superintendent also must have primary responsibility for the grow-in of the constructed golf course.

*Exam improprieties.* If a candidate engages in any form of impropriety during the certification process, the documents in question cannot be scored and the results cannot be accepted. Furthermore, the candidate must appeal to the certification committee for reentry to the GCSAA certification program.

## **Effective July 1, 1998:**

*CEUs and PDUs.* Change the terminology of tested CEUs and untested CEUs to Continuing Education Units (CEUs) and Professional Development Units (PDUs), respectively. This was done to simplify and clarify to members what is required for certification application or renewal of certification and to better reflect the description of the categories being awarded credit toward renewal.

*Audubon participation.* Certified Golf Course Superintendents (CGCSs) will be awarded .5 PDUs for participation in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Schools upon completion of an established checklist of activities that have been agreed to with the sponsoring school.

*Attestor visitation and procedures.* To continue to strengthen the GCSAA certification attesting process by ensuring a valid, equitable attesting evaluation for every certification applicant, the current scoring of "pass," "pass with recommendation" or "fail" by each certification attestor will now be combined and tallied by GCSAA to determine a final score. An 85 percent cumulative score will be required for passing.

The committee also made plans for development of an attestor training video scheduled for production this spring. Plans are for the video to be distributed through GCSAA's more than 100 affiliated chapters with some form of documented training required to be an eligible attestor.

The GCSAA certification committee focuses its efforts on reviewing and upgrading the certification program in order to further the professionalism and education of the golf course superintendent. The committee consists of: Ken Mangum, CGCS (chairman); R. Terry Buchen, CGCS, MG; Mark Kienert, CGCS; Lee McLemore, CGCS; and J. Mark Black, CGCS.

Since 1926, GCSAA has been the leading professional association for the men and women who manage and maintain golf facilities in the United States and worldwide. From its headquarters in Lawrence, Kan., the association provides education information and representation to more than 18,000 individual members from more than 50 countries. GCSAA's mission is to serve its members, advance their profession and enrich the quality of golf and its environment.

# WHY ASK WHY ?

1. Why does it have to go from bad to worse to get better, can't we skip the middle man?
2. Why does the winner in golf have the lower score and in other sports high score wins?
3. Why does it seem hard to find employees and yet so many people find it hard to find employment?
4. Why does Monday come once a week and sometimes everyday seems like Monday?
5. Why can a doctor or an attorney become an expert in golf course agronomy and we can't perform a triple bypass or represent O.J.?
6. Why does a referee need a new pair of glasses when they are wearing contacts?
7. Why are locks suppose to keep the bad guys out and I have to go through the whole ring to find the right key?
8. Why does the budget seemingly get cut and the cost of doing business increases?
9. Why *did* the chicken cross the road ? To fill up question 9.
10. Why do golfers seem to slow down when you are in a hurry?
11. Why do you still get caught off guard when asked "paper or plastic"? Are you an environmentalist if you choose the wrong one? Next time throw them a curve and tell them to put dairy products in plastic and canned goods in paper. Hopefully you'll have that golfer behind you in line and they're in a hurry!!!
12. Why does it seem to always rain on your day off?
13. Why do telephone solicitors call during dinner, Sunday's, or off hours to get you to "switch" and yet if you need service their hours are 9 to 5 Monday through Friday and no Holidays?
14. Why does every piece of equipment break down on the morning of "The Big Event" and the pro decides to send the group out 10 minutes early because Jenny Jones is interviewing the postal employee who went berserk on the person responsible for Alabama's Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail commercials?
15. Whew, I need a breather.
16. Why do you notice you're out of toilet paper after you've sat down?
17. Why do you "try to fix it, if it ain't broke"?
18. Why do they call it underground irrigation when you have a new pond on #8 Fairway?
19. Why don't they make 12' high, florescent orange, barbed wire laden, nuclear gun toten', indestructible, attention getting, consumer friendly "No Carts" sign?
20. Why doesn't forever have a finish line?
21. Why does the turf look like it had a meeting with Dr. Jack Kervorkian in August? Could it be shaded conditions, one zillion unrepaired ballmarks, mowed tighter than a Michael Jordan haircut, and humidity and temperature pushing triple digits with no let up in sight?
22. Why are we, all of a sudden, having a discussion on a name for what we do? Superintendents, Green Keepers, Golf Course Managers, Grass Clippers, Agronomists, Turf Managers to name a few. I mean, c'mon, we've been called worse names than this!
23. Why is the grass greener on the other side of the fence?
24. Why is it Up North, Down South, out West and back East?
25. Why is it harder to drain a two foot putt than a 10 foot putt?
26. Why does Michigan State University have artificial turf on their football field?
27. Why is there freedom of speech yet you have to watch what you say?
28. Why don't they cut the fairways on the outside and the rough down the middle?
29. Why do women get paid less for doing the same job?
30. Why do birds fly south for the winter only to return up north?

Answer to #30: Because we have the best Golf Courses in the world taken care of by the best people in the business. If you are asking yourself *Why* you are in this profession, it's because you do the impossible, against the odds, only to have people return to your golf course to appreciate your efforts.

Daniel J. Bissonette, Golf Course Superintendent  
Walloon Lake Country Club

# Some Ways to Boost Morale

by Pat Gross, USGA Green Section, Western Region

*The biggest pain for me is managing employees!*

Does this statement sound familiar? A big part of the problem may be morale. Morale is a vital part of any organization, especially if budgets are tight and the work load is heavy. Giving your staff a huge pay increase would help lift their spirits, but this is often short term solution that fades away after a few months. Offering other perks and making the job more enjoyable can go just as far as to improve employee morale and job satisfaction. Here are some suggestions for things you can do to boost morale with the golf course maintenance staff.

**1. Special Lunch** - Having a barbecue or ordering pizza for the staff can be fun, especially after many weeks of hard work preparing for a special tournament or after overseeding.

**2. Humor Board** - Designate one bulletin board as a place to post cartoons, jokes, humorous photos, etc.

**3. Field Trips and Meetings** - Try to send key staff people (assistants, foremen, mechanics, irrigation technicians, spray technicians) to meetings and seminars as often as practical. Other staff members could benefit by visiting a neighboring course for a game of golf or just to see a different course and learn how they do things. If a local course is hosting a tour event, you may wish to volunteer part of your staff to help with course preparations.

**4. Bet on it** - Betting pools for the Super Bowl, World Series, or golf championships generate excitement and are perfectly legal as long as all money you collect is distributed.

**5. Photographs** - Keep a camera at work and take pictures of a job well done for posting on the employee bulletin board. This gives recognition to the individuals responsible for the work and encourages others to do the same good work. Taking a "family photograph" of the staff is another way to boost morale and let visitors know you are proud of your staff.

## 1998 Calendar

<b>June 8</b>	<b>MTF Fundraiser</b> The Dream,
<b>July 19</b>	Family Picnic Beaver Creek Resort, Grayling
<b>August 4</b>	Black Bear G.C. Vanderbilt
<b>September 15</b>	<b>NMTMA Fundraiser</b> Charlevoix C.C., Charlevoix
<b>October TBA</b>	<b>NMTMA Annual Meeting &amp; Tuck Tate Championship</b> Onekama

**Hey**, you computer junkie's call Kay Patrick or E-mail her with your E-mail address as we are accumulating them for future membership directories. You can reach Kay at (517) 327-5474 or E-mail at [mtfturf@msn.com](mailto:mtfturf@msn.com). Look forward to seeing you on the web.

### Important

Remember to let Kay know of any changes to your membership information. These changes will be needed in order to keep the membership directory up to date. Any questions/concerns call Kay Patrick at 517- 327-5474

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