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(president's message)

Strengthening the lines of communication

The value and benefits of effective communications are something I have championed throughout my career in golf course management. I'm fond of saying, "You can never over-communicate, but you can certainly under-communicate," and that expectation is something I've instilled in my staff at Olde Florida Golf Club, and it's advice I've given others in the industry when asked about how best to communicate with golfers.

An incident from early in my days at Olde Florida helped shape my current beliefs on the importance of communications for golf course superintendents. As we started our second golf season, we had been working extremely long hours, and I was beaming with pride at the improvements we had made since the club first opened. After numerous head-down, seven-day work weeks, I realized I had been remiss in communicating with the members, so I decided to do a clubhouse walkthrough. While in the locker room, a member praised the condition of the course. I was appreciative that our long hours were paying off, but before I could respond, the member added, "But I haven't seen you much lately. Have you been on vacation?" Hearing that made clear to me that working hard and doing a good job isn't always enough.

Back then, those face-to-face conversations and a spot in monthly printed newsletters were the primary ways superintendents communicated. But in this era of social media and other forms of digital communications, the methods and speed with which we can communicate has been dramatically enhanced, and I have seen the positive impact of these tools again and again in my operation.

Case in point: One morning last season, I was taking my daily walk around the golf course, and as I often do, I was taking pictures and updating my social media. Later in the grill room, a member waved me over and asked, "Darren, so the greens are rolling 12 on the Pelzmeter with a single cut and roll?" The question left the others at the table puzzled, and they asked how he had known that. "It was on his Twitter feed 20 minutes ago, along with a picture of his staff mowing 16 green," he responded. "Don't you follow him? He has all of his social media channels listed on his website, and there's a link to his blog at the bottom

of all the emails we get from the club." While the proper use of social media is definitely a complex topic, I share this story to highlight the value and benefit of sharing information through a variety of methods.

The other benefit of effective communications is that it helps your golfers understand the level of dedication you have to serve their needs. And, just as superintendents are dedicated to serving their clientele, GCSAA is dedicated to serving its nearly 18,000 members worldwide. GCSAA is also aware that, like your golfers, you as individuals have different methods you use to receive information from us. This is why GCSAA continues to evaluate, expand and enhance our communication vehicles.

In addition to *GCM*, GCSAA distributes weekly informational emails (*GCSAA This Week* and *The First Cut*), it's active on social media including Twitter (@GCSAA), Facebook (@GCSAAFB), Instagram (@GCSAA) and Snapchat (@gcsaaofficial), and has a dedicated video site, GCSAA TV (www.gcsaa.tv).

The association's most recent communications advancement is GCMOnline.com. While the association's primary website, www.gcsaa.org, remains focused on connecting GCSAA superintendents with their membership and the benefits that come with it, GCMOnline.com is dedicated to connecting superintendents with breaking news and information from the golf course management industry. Whether you're looking for the latest industry news stories or an examination of the most up-to-date turfgrass research available, we believe GCMOnline.com will be the one stop you'll want to make every day.

With the variety and frequency of our communications, GCSAA believes we are delivering the information you need in the manner you want to receive it. However, just as superintendents can incorrectly assume the information we provide golfers is effective we will not make assumptions as an association. Please reach out to me, my fellow board members or anyone on staff and tell us how we can better communicate with you.

Darren Davis, CGCS, is the golf course superintendent at Olde Florida Golf Club in Naples, Fla., and a 29-year GCSAA member.