



Brent Racer, assistant superintendent at Nicklaus GC at Lionsgate in Overland Park, Kan., learned techniques for “managing up” at a chapter workshop.
Photo by Howard Richman



Ask questions to reduce stress

My day used to go something like the following:

- Get to work early to write the day’s schedule and post it on the job board. Superintendent reviews schedule only to change his mind and decide to add greens topdressing to schedule before the 1 p.m. shotgun event later that day.
- Angrily change schedule and post on job board. Receive sick call from one employee who drives two other crew members to work, letting me know that they all will not be at work today.
- Rework schedule and post on job board and hope the day goes smoothly.

This type of morning was very frustrating and added stress early in the day. After a couple of years of fighting this battle, I was fortunate enough to attend a local GCSAA chapter meeting involving a session on “managing up.” The main lesson I learned from this class was that I needed to take a more active role in getting information to and from those who managed me.

I have become more active in getting information by making lists of tasks that need to be done on the course and to have conversations with the superintendent about those tasks. I talk to the superintendent in his office early in the day (around 10 a.m.) and ask him questions about the following day’s schedule. I will ask questions like, “I saw that the greens are looking puffy and could use a topdressing soon. What do you think?” Or I ask, “On Tuesdays, we typically have an outside event but the schedule does not have one on it. Do you

know if there is one tomorrow?” This allows me to get the information I need while involving the superintendent in my decision-making process. I have found that the more I ask these questions, the more confident the superintendent is in my decisions.

After agreeing on a plan of attack with the superintendent, I make the schedule for the following day before going home. Preparing a day ahead gives me time to think over decisions that have been made and prepare for unexpected changes such as rain or frost that may happen the next morning. I also find that my evenings away from the course are better because I am not worried about what needs to be done in the morning.

Managing up has allowed me to enjoy my job by reducing stress early in the day. Because the superintendent is more confident in my decisions, my stress level has gone way down — a direct result of asking questions and involving the superintendent in my decision-making process. I am also ready for changes because I know how my managers think.

GCM

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NEWS & notes

Golf course superintendents often state that they chose their profession because it allows them to spend large parts of their work day outdoors.

That’s a healthy preference, several recent studies say. Researchers studying the circumstances that bring about optimal mental refreshment say that taking in the sights and sounds of nature appears to be especially beneficial for our minds. A *Wall Street Journal* article summarized a report from one researcher (Michael Posner, University of Oregon) that said taking a break from work with a stroll in the park would aid concentration and repetitive tasks better than downing coffee, and another from Marc Berman at Rotman Research Institute in Toronto that said interacting with nature can be therapeutic for people with disorders including depression and anxiety.