

GCSAA Outreach Strategies

Chapter Executives Workshop

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GCSAA Education Conference
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Jeff Bollig – GCSAA Director of Communications

1. GCSAA staff member since June 1996
2. Spent previous 10 years in media/public relations positions in college athletics.
3. Pleasure to be here to share some ideas with you and gain feedback on how GCSAA can help you to be successful.

Encourage you to ask question at any time during the presentation

Jeff Bollig
GCSAA Director of Communications

11 ½ years on GCSAA staff

- Media/Public Relations
- Allied Association Relations
- Program support
- Chapter Strategic Planning
- Videos
- Conference Sessions
- Member Education
- Marketing/Branding

**11 years in collegiate athletics -
communications & championship management**

- Wichita State University
- University of Kansas
- Big Eight Conference

Freelance Television Production/Author

The Value of Marketing (Outreach)

- Individuals and organizations engage in marketing activities as part of an overall plan to transfer information to an external audience(s).
- Marketing can be defined as any activity that adds **VALUE** to the entity, its products or services:
 - Media/P.R.; Advertising; Sales Promotion; Coupons; Discounting; Point of Purchase Displays; Special Events; Identity, etc.

Companies and individuals of all sizes invest resources to create awareness and understanding. From IBM, Coca-Cola and Nike to the corner drug store or the local babysitting service.

Media/Public Relations is a key aspect of any marketing program, especially because it can be done with a relatively small financial investment compared to other activities. It also offers advantages that do not come advertising, sales promotion, coupons, etc.

- **VALUE** is recognized in the marketplace by various measures:
 - Market Share
 - Sales
 - Reputation
 - Compensation
 - Membership
 - Stock Value
- For the golf course superintendent, **VALUE** is manifested in:
 - Compensation
 - Benefits
 - Title/Duties
 - Work Environment
 - Respect
 - Inclusion
 - Awareness
 - Understanding

Marketing is more than just about stroking one's ego or chest thumping. There are tangible benefits from engaging in the various activities.

-Membership: GCSAA or any other organization attracts members because they see value in it.

-Inclusion: Key groups such as environmental, business, social include individuals because they see the value in their participation. Superintendents on water boards, on ad hoc groups to preserve wetlands, on volunteer committees to assist communities with athletic fields.

The bottom line is a media/public relations program can add value to the golf course superintendent and the profession.

- For the GCSAA/Chapters, **VALUE** is manifested in:
 - Membership metrics (numbers, retention rates, etc.)
 - Ability to attract industry support (advertising, sponsorship, trade show exhibitors, etc.)
 - Ability to attract partners for initiatives
 - Employers willingness to support members with resources to engage membership
- Studies have shown that a successful campaigns can have tangible benefits (**VALUE**) to organizations and individuals:
 - Dairy Council – “Got Milk”
 - PGA Tour – “These Guys Are Good”
 - Nike – “Just Do It”
 - Tiger Woods – “I Am”

The entire scope of marketing activities is often not available to use because of a lack of resources or expertise.

Media/Public Relations is often the strategy of choice because the financial requirements are not always great and it allows for a message of greater depth:

1. Milk – Counter health concerns with ad campaign and huge media interview push
2. NBA – position athletes as being involved in the community
3. PGA Tour – Heighten profile of pros and the tour overall to create greater interest for television and tour sponsorship (leading to higher fees)
4. Tobacco – Countered with campaign to offset attacks of legal community
5. Nike – Ad campaign paired with heavy media effort
6. Dole – Media placement to counter 1976 image on GOP ticket with Ford. Tone down sharp tongue and use humor.

GCSAA's Outreach Strategy

- Fundamental change made by GCSAA leadership in 1994.
 - Move from a turfgrass organization to a golf organization that specializes in golf course management.
 - Resources directed towards outreach that would add value to the association and its members.

Prior to 1994, the ability to reach varied audiences was hampered by how GCSAA positioned itself. Primary focus was on the turf trade.

By changing its profile, GCSAA now could expand its audiences to more than just the turf trade. Employers and consumer (golfers) were now fair game, and efforts to reach legislators, environmentalists, allied golf organizations and others were increased.

- Produced TV show “Par for the Course” 1996 – 2000; Engage Golf Channel 2001- Present.
- Created expanded media/public relations staff and developed additional programs
- Engaged public relations agency
- Created alliances with organizations/media:
 - Golf 20/20
 - EPA
 - Golf Digest
 - Environmental Institute for Golf
 - National Parks and Recreation Association
 - Play Golf America
 - Boardroom Magazine
 - First Tee
 - PGA Tour
 - AJGA

Media/Public Relations was expanded considerably and efforts were made to align the profession and the association with those high profile affiliations.

Others were being engaged to help communicate the message of GCSAA and the golf course superintendent

- Public Relations agency was engaged simultaneously with MSRSG (late 1990s) to analyze presence in marketplace:
 - Finding: Superintendents are in better positions, both professionally and socially, than ever. The main driver behind the new found influence is the golfer.
 - Message No. 1: The superintendent is seen as the key to the economic vitality of the golf facility and is a key to the golfer's enjoyment.
 - Message No. 2: GCSAA is one of golf's leading organizations.

After implementing various programs, the time had arrived to engage a full service public relations firm to get a pulse of where we were and what we need to do in the future

Research was conducted among those in the golf industry and avid golfers to ascertain their opinions of the golf course superintendent.

From the research, messages were developed that placed the golf course superintendent in a leadership position

- 1. Position the VALUE to the employer**
- 2. Position the VALUE to the golfer**

Communicate the VALUE of GCSAA as a means to increase membership, increase value of it magazine for advertisers, increase the value of the GCSAA C&S and increase the value of the profession.

Next Steps

- Increased communications were necessary to educate the marketplace: employers and influential golfers
- Increase building relationships to help position the association and its members
- If PDI passes, moved focus from the profession to professional: value of GCSAA, GCSAA members, Class A and CGCS
- Focus on mixture of paid advertising, editorial or “free” media and relationships to create awareness and understanding of the profession, association, industry, game.

A change in strategy from advertising to media relations was implemented to create understanding and offset a decrease in available funds.

The current strategy is to leverage media and industry relationships to gain exposure in the media without having to “purchase” space. This allows GCSAA and the superintendent to have a presence without the expense of “buying” exposure.

While this free editorial does not give total control over the message, it does generally afford GCSAA the ability to communicate a much richer message than a brief advertising message on television or in print.

Our Messaging Strategy

Paid Media Elements

Television: The Golf Channel

- 600, 30-second commercial spots; 10 -12 live GCSAA member interviews from tournament locations; 2, 3-5 minute segments from the Golf Industry Show;
- Course set up features in 15 LPGA events; Weekly feature in Sprint Pre Game Show discussing course conditioning/set up that might affect strategy, including an interview when relevant.
- Special programming – What's in the Bag Episode (30-minute TBD).
- Exploration of "Environmental" programming.

Internet: The Golf Channel

- Weekly e-push to Golf Channel newsletter subscribers [600,000] on Thursday of each week. Thursday and Friday home page presence of rotating message on Golf Channel home page and the Golf Channel events page on the Web.

Magazine: Employer Publications

- Mix of two page spread and one page advertisements in employer focused publications including Golf Business, Golf Inc., Club & Resort Business, Boardroom, Club Management, and National Parks and Recreation.

Sponsorship: LPGA Agronomist

- Media exposure for GCSAA and its members through commercials, features, on course signage, pro-am spots, LPGA.com exposure, LPGA news release exposure and other future negotiable items.
- Public Service Announcement with LPGA professional.

Cooperative Chapter Outreach

- Develop a cooperative arrangement with chapters to engage in an outreach program to support GCSAA and chapter goals.
- Tentatively set to launch in second quarter with \$30,000 in grants.
- Develop case studies and best management practices.

Ongoing Outreach Efforts

Employer Events:

- Presence at events for employers/owners through exhibition, presentation and/or special meetings (PGA Merchandise Show; Crittenden Conferences; NGCOA multi-course owners conference; National Parks and Recreation Association Conference; Golf Industry Show; NGCOA Conference; CMAA Conference; Employer Task Group; GCSAA quarterly board meetings; various management companies including TPC network, American Golf, Troon, Kemper Sports, Club Corp., etc.

Editorial Placement:

- Articles placed in various publications on a regular basis including employer focused such as Golf Inc., Boardroom, Club & Resort Golf Business; Allied association such as Club Management, Golf Business, PGA Magazine, etc.; State/Regional golf publications; Content for a variety of Internet golf-related sites, XM Radio interviews.

Brand Management/Identity:

- Style guide, color palette, messaging, integration

Media Relations/Services:

- News releases, Tournament Fact Sheets, interviews, information packets, news conferences, leadership survey, media kits, on site media assistance, member/chapter media planning/execution, pitching story ideas etc.

Public Relations:

- Special Olympics Sponsorship, Golf 20/20, awards programs, AJGA Care for the Course Campaign, Play Golf America, GCSAA/Golf Digest Environmental Leaders in Golf program, Women in Golfweek, Take Your Daughter to Course Week, PGA Tour relationship, Patriot Golf Day, Women in Golf Week.

Member/Chapter Assistance:

- Strategic planning sessions.
- Articles for reprint, news releases, editorial content.
- Conference education, GCM Career Track, information packets, Online communications resources (gcsaa.org).
- Media lists, Relationship building.

Making Progress

National Golf Foundation “Golfer and Employer Perceptions & Attitudes” survey findings 2006 vs. 2002 vs. 1996:

- 64 percent of golfers identified golf course superintendent as key to their enjoyment of the game (top selection)
- 94 percent of golfers identified the superintendent as key to the economic vitality of the facility (top selection)
- In 2006, 89 percent of golfers rated GCSAA as a good or excellent organization. In 2002, the figure was 52 percent.
- In 2006, 48 percent of golfers identified GCSAA as the professional organization for the men and women who manage and maintain golf courses. That rose from 9 percent in 1996 and 18 percent in 2002.

In 1996, GCSAA engaged the NGF to conduct a “Golfer’s Attitude and Perception” study to measure GCSAA’s recognition in the marketplace. That same study of avid golfers was duplicated in late 2002.

The results were impressive in showing the profile of the superintendent and the association had improved over a six year period.

- Only negative, the percentage of avids who know the name of their superintendent: 1996 – 54 percent; 2003 – 63 percent; 2006 – 55 percent.
- In 2006, 99 percent of employers identified the golf course superintendent as key to the economic success of the golf course (top selection).
- 85 percent identified GCSAA as a leading golf organization (trailing only USGA).
- 81 percent identified GCSAA as the organization that represents the men and women who manage and maintain golf courses.
- 97 percent of employers have a good or excellent opinion of GCSAA
- 84 percent of employers believe it is important for their superintendents to be a member of his/her professional organization.

Chapter/Member Outreach Efforts

- A successful national outreach campaign must be complemented by a “grassroots” effort on the local/regional level
 - All Politics Are Local” and “All Public Relations are Local”
- Media coverage is a function of access and relevant information
 - Media will find a source and it will find information. If the subject is golf course conditioning, then you should be the source.

Chapters must create the structure:

- Leadership and membership buy-in that media/public relations activities are vital
- Participate in a media training for officers and offer similar seminars for members
- Develop and maintain an up-to-date media contact list
- Identify and position those members who work well with the media and can speak on behalf of the chapter
- Develop and maintain an up-to-date membership list, complete with all information

**Media/P.R.activities that chapters
can engage to increase awareness
& understanding:**

- Distribute to media membership directories, monthly newsletters and news releases
- Develop and update a Web site
- Leverage relations with state golf associations to communicate with its members (magazines, directories, posters)
- Pursue regular contributions to local and regional golf publications
- Establish a presence at professional golf events in your region.

- Pursue a regular presence in local mass media such as a column in a newspaper, a spot on a radio show or a segment on television
- Create events to educate golfers such as ball mark repair week, lawn care tips, professional golf events education, open house at maintenance facility, Play Golf America activities.
- Create events to educate and build relationships with media such as media days, speaking opportunities, golf and/or lunch at the facility
- Pitch stories to the media and be a source for it.

Logo Uniformity

- Concept of GCSAA logo was examined when the Class A positioning campaign was examined.
 - Round logos hard to read
 - Wording lost when size is reduced
 - Hard to establish identity
- Created new GCSAA logo as a means to create identity
 - Adopted at 2007 Spring BOD meeting as GCSAA's "official" logo.
 - Feeling of the Board/Staff that it made sense for chapters to adopt, but that it would not push it.
 - Feedback was immediate and strong and chapters begun to adopt it in some form or fashion.

Logo Uniformity Implications

- Value is seen in leveraging GCSAA's outreach investment for the chapter benefit.
- Grants are being made available to assist chapters in the transition (\$1,000).

Questions?