

COALITIONS AND ALLIANCES

COALITIONS

Coalitions are usually organized to handle a particular issue, most often the subject of a proposed law or regulation. If there are other groups that share your position on an issue, a coalition can be formed. Coalitions are useful for sharing information, for dividing up tasks and for sharing the costs of a legislative or regulatory effort.

Coalitions can also be very influential with lawmakers—they show that there is widespread interest in an issue.

ALLIANCES

Alliances are usually ongoing and serve to communicate information, as well as lobby on issues in which its members have common interest.

If you regularly have an interest in issues in common with other groups, you might want to organize an alliance. In many areas, golf course superintendent chapters and other golf-related organizations participate in “turfgrass” or “green industry” alliances.

ORGANIZING A COALITION OR ALLIANCE

- Identify and make contact with all potential allies familiar with or affected by your issue. (The coalition should be as broad as possible to show wide support for your issue.)
- Exchange name and contact information with all parties.
- Develop a clear mission and a plan of action.
- Assign individuals different tasks based on the level of resources available to each participant.
- Select a leader or co-leaders to share leadership responsibility.
- Meet on a regular basis and show your progress toward your overall goal. Minutes from each meeting should be distributed to members in a timely manner.



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WAYS TO ENSURE SUCCESS

- Establish clear, attainable goals. Accomplishment of the goal should produce a win-win situation for all members.
- Understand that not all groups will have the same involvement—maintain flexibility.
- Maintain clear communication. Make sure members feel they are “in the loop.”
- Empower members by giving each of them a specific task to perform.
- Recognize individual efforts. Every person should feel like they have made a contribution.

BENEFITS OF COALITIONS AND ALLIANCES

There are many benefits to working with coalitions and alliances. Sharing of information and resources between coalition members both eliminates duplication of efforts and saves money by combining resources. In addition, chapter members can gain professional development skills by cooperating with diverse groups of individuals.



BUILDING SUPPORT FOR YOUR ISSUES

Gaining wide support for an issue can greatly increase your chance of success with lawmakers. You can often boost the effectiveness of your campaign and capitalize on your message by building support in the media or through golfers at your course.

PUBLICITY AND USING THE MEDIA

If lawmakers aren't responsive to your concerns, you may want to look to the media for help. The media can be a powerful tool for advocating your position. Consider newspapers, television, radio and even the Internet.

Identify a "hook" for a good news story, and let your local newspaper or television reporters know. A survey, trend or event can prompt a news story about your issue. Be careful, however, because the media tend to sensationalize issues and a reporter might give the story an unfavorable spin.

- Talk radio, news radio and cable TV may also offer good opportunities—talk and call-in shows are always on the lookout for good discussion topics.
- Your local newspaper's editorial staff may be willing to publish an editorial on your issue. Ask for a meeting to help explain the issue.
- Guest editorials or letters to the editor will bring the issue to the attention of the public, and may also influence lawmakers. To avoid having your submission edited, limit the length of your piece to 400-600 words.

Get to know the media in your area and learn how to reach their reporters and news directors. Try to appoint a single spokesperson the media can consistently call for comments on issues, and who can be relied on to meet their deadline requirements.

USING YOUR CLUB MEMBERS OR REGULAR GOLFERS

The members or regular golfers at your course may include lawmakers or other people in your community who can be key players in your efforts. There may be opportunities at your golf course to get their support or help.

Some golf facilities may frown upon or prohibit approaching members or golfers at all in this regard. Be sure you have authority and the support of your management before making any contacts.

To avoid interrupting their game, or discussing your issue in front of their playing partners, ask if you can have a few minutes of their time after their game. Invite them to play a round with you in the near future, if appropriate (whether the round can be free to lawmakers depends on gift rules that apply). Or, mention that you have an issue you'd like to get their advice about, and tell them you'll write them a letter or call for an appointment at their office. You'll be able to tell how receptive they are to your suggestions. If they are not receptive, don't force the issue—they may not agree with you today but may support you on another issue in the future.

In your letters, at your meetings or during your round of golf, invite them to tour your facility or observe firsthand the effect the issue has on your work. Developing good relationships with influential members of the community has many good benefits.