

The **GMIC Bulletin** is published quarterly and provides insights into the latest news about the institute, graduates, and the industry and golf management in general. In this issue, you will find information that will provide best practice pointers, updates on our alumni and a few facts and figures. The GMIC Bulletin is a golf community newsletter – if you would like to contribute, please contact the editor.

The new year brings a new look to our popular web site **www.golf-management.org**. Our web site is just one more way that the GMIC is Bringing the Business of Golf To You.

 **President's Insights**
By Grant Fraser, MEd, MBA



Let me start by saying how much we appreciated your positive feedback on the first issue of GMIC's Bulletin. Here are two sample responses from Bruce Hedley "I think this is a very useful communication tool and I applaud you for it." or this rave review from Ian Chan "Newsletter looks

terrific! Great idea!... ."

In this issue of the GMIC Bulletin we feature three articles that can be summed up as recognizing excellence. In the area of Customer Service, Heather Wyllie shares her thoughts on exceptional customer service that "starts from the top". Our second feature is an article written by Matthew Yustin who was recognized by the CPGA as Merchandiser of the Year in 2007. Finally, the GMIC caught up with Keith Bartlett, the Superintendent at St. George's G&CC, who shares his advice and opinions on what it takes to succeed in turf management.

As we face the challenges of a slowing economy, cost increases, skills shortages and a more demanding membership or public, the GMIC is pleased to share the advice and practices of three industry leaders to help you succeed in the business of golf.

The year began with GMIC recognizing excellence when we presented Warren Crosbie with an Honorary Diploma in Golf Operations Management. Crosbie has been a Head Professional, mentor, teacher, lecturer or as I said at the presentation "a great asset to the golf industry." Warren Crosbie joins Dick Grimm and Mac Frost as the only three who have received the Institute's honorary recognition.

Let me also encourage you to visit our new look web site www.golf-management.org. We are archiving past issues of the Bulletin so that our web site becomes a resource in addition to your source for GMIC course offerings and registration.

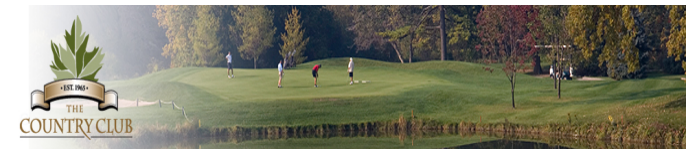
March brought a renewal of an important partnership with Niagara College. Niagara and the GMIC have a unique partnership that provides students in the College's Business Administration-Professional Golf Management program with access to leading golf experts and other learning resources. Neil Chartrand, Dean of Business and Entrepreneurship, had this to say, "We're pleased to partner with GMIC to ensure we

produce the knowledgeable, highly skilled graduates who will help drive this burgeoning industry." Responding for the GMIC, I was also very pleased to continue with Niagara to train future leaders in Canadian golf.

From all of us at the GMIC, the very best for a most successful 2008 season!

 **Mark Your Calendars – 2008 GMIC Golf Tournament**

Mark your calendar for October 2, 2008. The 5th annual GMIC Golf Tournament & Auction will take place at ClubLink's Country Club in Woodbridge, Ontario.



 **Niagara College Students Receive GMIC Scholarships**



Grant Fraser, Mike Santoro, Helen Armstrong, Troy Campbell, Reid Colbourne, Dave Mills, Chad Brosseau,

Two second year students of the Professional Golf Management program at Niagara College receive the annual Golf Management Institute of Canada Student Excellence Scholarship.

Congratulations to Chad Brosseau and Troy Campbell.

Alumni Profile



"The GMIC program is an excellent program for anyone in the golf industry trying to take it to the next level. I enjoyed the fact that I could keep working and have a balanced schedule of two courses every two months.

I am a proud graduate of the GMIC program (2007). The GMIC program helped me complete my educational requirements to become a Class 'A' CPGA Golf Professional. Since then I have moved to the Bahamas and I am currently working as a Golf Professional at the Lyford Cay Club. I do feel that I have boosted my career in the right direction and I have taken charge with what I want in life. The GMIC program gave me the tools to be successful and has kept me on top of what is happening in our industry. '

Mike Simms, C.P.G.A.
CPGA Golf Professional - Lyford Cay Club, Bahamas

Industry Profile – Keith Bartlett – St. George's G&CC



When **Keith Bartlett** assumed the role of Superintendent at St. George's it was like returning home as he grew up nearby in Rexdale, in northwest Toronto. By way of background, Keith Bartlett has a BSc degree from the University of Guelph, holds 2 industry certification designations and has over 20 years experience in turf management. A number of industry and management topics were covered when he spoke to the GMIC.

Q. How did you get into the business?

A. I knew some people in the golf program at Guelph and liked what I heard. My science degree included a lot of turf management topics so I had the educational requirements to enter the field. During my final 3 years at university I had summer employment at Toronto's Board of Trade and at Riverside CC in New Brunswick so I had some practical work experience. I had an interest in golf so that, combined with my education background and summer work, gave me an entry into turf management.

Q. What advice would you give to someone looking at turf management?

A. You need the educational requirements of a professional turf program. Next you need the right attitude. You've got to realize this isn't a 9-5 job but requires long hours. The best advice that I'd give someone is to go work for an industry leader. In my case and many others, it was Gord Witteveen at the Board of Trade. Gord was a great teacher and he had a big influence on my career. Go work for an industry leader, a great teacher, stick with them and be prepared to learn.

Q. What does it take to succeed as a superintendent?

A. As a starter surround yourself with really good staff. Choose staff who want to grow in their position and assume more responsibility. I'm a big believer in coaching and teaching. We have internal staff training sessions and senior staff members

are encouraged to participate in industry shows, either provincial or national depending on the position. We also support staff pursuit of golf industry professional designations. My experience at Thornhill taught me that if you invest in your staff it pays off with loyalty and staff stability.

Probably shaping attitude comes next. We stress staff attention to detail and taking ownership of their work as keys to both their success and ours. The challenge is to produce a great product- the golf course. And you've got to do this on a consistent basis. One of the ways we attempt that is through our staff golf course manual. It's a little booklet packed with a lot of information. It lays out our expectations on how the job is to be done, each and every day.

Success in this business requires a commitment to keep learning. The industry turf management certification programs that I've taken require a continuing education component which I see as my opportunity to learn and grow.

Finally, you must be a problem solver. Yes, you must think outside the box and be innovative. Sometimes that requires learning from other disciplines such as the landscaping profession.

Q. What are the issues facing today's superintendent?

A. I could name three big ones that most of us face. These are pesticide use, water issues and recruiting and retaining staff. Seems to me that we're adapting to the pesticide rules and regulations but environmental issues will continue to challenge our profession.

The water issues include water availability, quality, its efficient use and the cost. This is a big issue that many of us are dealing with now or will have to deal with in the future.

Recruiting and retaining staff is another big issue. The challenge is to stay competitive with salaries so we can attract and retain staff. Toronto's cost-of-living makes this especially difficult for many of us. The key to me is to keep your core staff by paying competitive wages, investing in their training and by providing a positive work environment.

Q. How do you deal with member expectations?

A. Members have very high expectations but often the staff has even higher ones. We're our own worst critics. Here's the tough part of the job. Each spring we have to deal with the "Augusta syndrome". Members have just come back from Florida and turn on the TV to the Masters. They've played on or are looking at beautiful, lush courses and wonder, "why not at our course?" It's the same with the US Open. Those courses have been prepared for 5 years with big budgets and members ask, "why not here?"

We have to work at tempering expectations. The reality is we have limited budgets and we have to prepare the course for heavy daily play. That's often over 200 rounds on many days. It means we lower the rough and keep the greens a little slower to deal with pace of play. Looking for golf balls and 3 or 4 putting doesn't add up to an enjoyable experience. High expectations come at a steep cost that many members refuse to pay or club budgets can't accommodate.

I'm a believer in developing a long range plan for the course. Members should know well in advance of any proposed

changes and let them know the costs that are associated with any improvements.

Having realistic standards and developing effective member communications are important steps in managing member expectations.

Q. St George's is your second Stanley Thompson course. What do you like and admire about his work?

A. Thompson's bunkers certainly stand out. His positioning of the bunkers and the surrounding mounding set up the bunkers visually. That's especially true for the green side bunkers that show the greens really well.

I like the variety of holes that he built. There are long and short par 4's. Same for the par 3's. One par 3 you have a 5 iron in your hand and the next you've got a wedge.

The greens are often tricky with subtle breaks that make them difficult to read.

Stanley Thompson built some classic courses that are both interesting and challenging to this day.

 **Merchandiser of the Year Matthew Yustin on his Shop**
By CPGA Member Matthew Yustin

Have you ever been to someone's home for dinner or a party and felt really comfortable and "at home"? I bet you had a great time? That's what I strive for in my professional shop! I want my members to feel comfortable to come in for a chat about their game, health and family because I believe that a warm and inviting environment is one of the most important components in merchandising.

How do we at Lambton accomplish this? We try to make our shop feel like home! We have an eclectic mix of antiques and reproduction furniture in warm pine to display our apparel. We have lots of flower arrangements, baskets, antique suitcases and chests along with a Windsor bench and leather and wicker chairs for seating. Our walls are painted in a warm taupe with bright white trim and all windows are all left untreated to allow the natural sunlight to come in. We have lots of lighting, including table lamps for warmth and many golf prints framed in warm wood tones hung around the shop.

Now that you have your potential buyers entering a warm and inviting professional shop, it's time to become a "host or hostess". What I mean by that is to greet your customer or member face to face. (That means that it's time to get out from behind the counter!) You need to be on the floor ready, able and knowledgeable about your products to make a sale! There is a great book entitled, "Be Our Guest, Perfecting the Art of Customer Service" by the Disney Institute. I have incorporated many of the philosophies into my training manual for my professional and retail staff at Lambton.

Choice is another area that will help make your members comfortable. Lots of different colors, styles, price points and sizes allow that there is something for everyone! Everything in our permanent markdown sections are always priced at \$29.95. Our basic embroidered polo shirts are \$45.00. At \$59.00 you can purchase an embroidered, fashion polo or a pair of shorts. Prices go up from there. We take small, fashion deliveries (approximately 36 pieces per delivery) every week

so there is always a new line in the shop but basics are checked weekly to make sure we always have sizing in stock. If something has been sitting in the shop for 4 weeks, it's time for it to be marked down. We start at 20% and go up to 60% before it goes into the permanent markdown section.

So now you have greeted your "guests" in a warm and inviting professional shop, offered them a wide variety of choices, hopefully sold them a new wardrobe and set of golf clubs and spent a little time getting to know them. The only thing left to do is thank them for stopping in and follow up with a letter of thanks and a discount card towards their next purchase in your shop! Hopefully, everyone involved had a great time!

CGPA – December 2007.

 **Facts & Figures**



According to a 2006 Ipsos Reid poll:

- The majority of golfers are male from ages 18-64 [61% of all golfers] but participation rate among women continues to climb from 9.7% in 2001 to 12.3% in 2006.
- Junior golfers slipped from 432K to 379K during the same period 2001 -2006 largely due to a drop off of junior boys.
- Core golfers [8 or more rounds per year] has grown from 1.85 million in 2001 to 2.73 million in 2006.
- Ontario has the largest golfing population [2.31 million] followed by Quebec [1.14 million], British Columbia [1.12 million] and Alberta [.754 million]

According to a survey of 300 golfers by the RCGA the 3 toughest golf courses in Canada are the National Golf Club in Woodbridge, Ont. followed by the Royal Montreal Golf Club [Blue Course], Ile Bizard, Que. and in third spot the Highlands Links in Cape Breton, N.S.

* Source the RCGA 2006 Golf Participation in Canada Report

 **Tips From The Trenches**



A Strategic Approach to Exceptional Customer Service

By Heather Wyllie - Wyllie & Associates

Customer service starts from the Top! Here are 10 strategic approaches to achieving exceptional customer service results.

1. At your annual employee orientation, have your golf success for the organization. When the Senior Leader takes the time to do this, the impact of their actions provides immediate return on investment. Employees are engaged, aligned and motivated to perform individually and as a team from day one!
2. Establish Standards for golf/dining service expectations for every position within your operation. Many of the standards should be consistent throughout your operation. There are key differentiators within your operational roles that impact the golf/dining experience. Research what

these service expectations are for every area of your operation. Establish standards to support these service expectations. You can deliver an exceptional golfer experience consistently every day when these standards are established and adhered to!

3. Provide a safe environment for your golfers and employees. Ensure that your property is operating in a safe, legally compliant manner. Managing health and safety with a preventative approach protects your operation from insurance claims, accident costs, penalties and fines. Your employees and your golfers will feel confident that your business goes to great lengths to protect them from harms way; providing you with positive contributions to your bottom line and exceptional proactive customer service.
 4. Develop job descriptions for every position including the following components:
 - a. Purpose of the role
 - b. Expectations of the role:
 - i. Golfer experience (conditions, service levels, etc.)
 - ii. Employee experience (engagement, motivation, compliance, regulations)
 - iii. Operational expectations (rounds, covers, financial performance etc.)
- Providing every employee with the “purpose” of their role defines precisely the impact and significant contribution that their role has on the overall vision of the company and ultimately your golfer experience. Defining the expectations of the role provides your employees with the knowledge and structure that your business requires in order for your employees to perform their jobs effectively. Create a performance measuring tool utilizing these expectations against individual employee performance to continuously invest in developing your people and improving your business in all operational areas.
5. When financial performance is vulnerable, employee training is usually the first line items to be eliminated from a budget. We do a disservice to our operations in more ways than one when this happens. Our golfers are the reason we are here, they are your bread and butter. Our front line employees are golfer facing at all times; they represent your product/brand. Employees have to be trained and trained well. They need to have the knowledge, skills and tools to deliver an exceptional golfer experience consistently. The only way to empower your employees to perform well and deliver your exceptional product consistently every day is to train them. Training keeps employees confident, progressive and engaged. Without training, you cannot expect exceptional customer service. When you do not deliver exceptional customer service your business is compromised. Investing in training for your employees throughout the year will benefit your organization immensely. Happy customers become loyal customers. Loyal customers return more frequently, spend more frequently and refer more frequently. Employee training is a win-win for everyone!
 6. Invest in demographic research. Know who your customers are, (age, gender, race, body size, shoe size, height, level of golf experience, income etc.) Knowing your customers allows you to make educated decisions on what products they will take delight in purchasing; (beer, wine, food, merchandise, events etc.) These statistics can

be used when planning your annual activities/events, both golf and non-golf. You can cater to your clientele better when you know who they are and understand what makes them tick. This is a silent comfort to your golfer and a passive but effective approach to customer service. Knowing your customers and catering specifically to them will increase your rounds/covers/average check, when you are offering products/events that specifically target this market.

7. Understanding the golf, retail and food and beverage market provides you with the knowledge that is required to accurately develop your pricing strategy for every product that you sell. Your golfers will take comfort in knowing that they are receiving value for their money. Keeping current with industry trends, knowing your competition, and researching the best products empowers you with a competitive advantage. You need to know and understand the business. You need to know who the best is and what makes them the best in order to be the best!
8. Celebrate your successes always! It takes a team to make an experience. Recognize and congratulate individual performance and team milestones daily. Keeping your employees engaged and motivated and showing them how much you appreciate them is critical to the success of your operation. Happy employees will successfully deliver your brand promise, exceeding customer expectations. They are the front line impact to driving your financial performance. They are the golfer facing talent that makes your business successful. Finding top talent is increasingly difficult. You have the ability to create a culture in your work environment that is contagious. Treating your employees with respect and admiration will provide you with an operation where your competition wants to emulate your success and where customer service is never compromised.
9. Learn from your mistakes! We are not perfect, despite our assertive efforts so it is imperative that you have a golfer recovery program. When things go wrong, and we all know they do, ensure that every member of your team knows how to right the wrong. Celebrate golfer complaints; they are the strongest tool that we have to continuously get better. Immediate golfer recovery shows exceptional customer service. If you can immediately turn a negative situation into a positive one, you are acting in a manner that supports customer loyalty and best in class service. Document and communicate how to improve your process to prevent the same issue from happening again.
10. If you are not currently celebrating with your entire team at the end of the year/season. You should! It takes a team to deliver exceptional golfer experience. At your year end celebration have your same top Leader share the results of your employees hard work. Congratulate and sincerely thank every employee for their contribution to your business. Because of them, great golfer/dining experiences were provided consistently throughout the year. Because of them, you have all been successful.

Your employees are your greatest asset. They represent who you are. These ten suggestions provide you with strategies to approach customer service strategically. We could have listed the top 10 customer service DO's: smile, greet golfer within 30 seconds, immaculate golf course conditions etc... , but these basic approaches to customer

service are just that, basic. They are not enough to make you successful. Everyone is doing the basics. You need to be better than basic and you can with these simple direct and indirect approaches to customer service. By implementing these in your operation, you have the ability to increase your employee engagement, reduce your employee turnover, enhance your customer service levels and ultimately strengthen your brand. Meeting expectations is not enough in today's market. Every golfer that visits your property expects to feel special, no matter what the occasion for the visit might be. They chose you! Show them why they will never regret it! Show them why they should keep coming back to you!

Heather Wyllie
Wyllie & Associates
Golf Course Leadership Consulting Group

Network Corner

Are you a GMIC graduate? Want us to profile what you are doing in the golf industry. Simply email us at publisher@golf-management.org.

If your golf operation is looking for talented and knowledgeable managers, let us know and we will get it out to the network.

The following links are also a great source of networking information:

Canadian Golf Superintendents Association
(CGSA) www.cgsa.com

Canadian Professional Golfers' Association
(CPGA) www.cpga.com

Canadian Society of Club Managers
(CSCM) www.cscm.org

Golf Association of Ontario
(GAO) www.gao.ca

Golf Course Superintendents Association of America
(GCSAA) www.gcsaa.org

National Golf Course Owners Association
(NGCOA Canada) www.ngcoa.ca

Upcoming Online Courses

Golf Club Governance

Jun 17 – Jul 22

Finance For Non-Financial Managers in the Golf Industry

Jun 19 – Aug 07

Strategic Management in Golf Operations

Aug 19 – Oct 07

Entrepreneurship in the Golf Industry

Aug 21 – Oct 09

To register, visit www.golf-management.org

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Contact the Editor

If you would like to submit ideas or comment on the GMIC e-bulletin, email the Editor, Terry Ruffell, at truffell@sympatico.ca or call Terry at 705-835-0216.

Future issues of the GMIC e-bulletin will have advertising opportunities and you can contact Terry Ruffell at the above phone # or email address.

Contact GMIC

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