

Message from Past President Jim Smith, Jr.

It's hard to believe I've been a 'Past President' for almost 10 years – the saying 'time flies' really is true, especially as we get older! When President Rogers called and asked me to be the lead-off man for a new section of the newsletter called 'Past Presidents Corner', I was honored. I asked John "what should I write about"? He basically said "the floor is yours"..... and anyone who knows me well knows that can be dangerous! Do I offer anecdotes? Stories about the Section and some of its more colorful members? Reminisce about the 'good old days'? All might be worthy topics but if I'm going to have a chance to get on a soapbox I thought I'd share something that has benefitted me greatly in my career; the people I work with; and, hopefully, YOU!

There are no secrets to being a successful golf professional – nobody can convince me there is a template to achieve the highest heights in the industry. In fact, I'd argue there is no such thing as 'achieving success' because success is a process, not a destination. Many of you have been subjected to my 'Purple Cow' analogy, the one that says that we're all just a bunch of cows that look alike..... and those who figure out how to be 'purple' are the ones who will rise to the top. The question is, how do you become 'purple'?

The one thing I've seen consistently in the best golf professionals I've been around is a constant (almost obsessive) desire to improve. They are never satisfied with the status quo – to them, staying the same is akin to getting worse. But how to improve? Books? Seminars? There are hundreds of ways to get better but, in my opinion, one rises above all others – FEEDBACK. Let me repeat that – FEEDBACK. Making the solicitation of feedback part of your DNA, your business model, and your culture is the single best way to achieve improvement.

There is a fantastic book the staff and I read several years ago called 'The Ultimate Question, 2.0 – Net Promoter System'. It's a very simple way to solicit and gather feedback and is used by some of the best companies in the world. We took what was in the book and developed an internal system at The Cricket Club we call 'PCCQ'. I send a personal email to three random people EVERY day (could be a member, guest, vendor, employee, etc.) with the question 'On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being 'no way' and 10 being 'absolutely', would you recommend the club to friends and family'? A follow-up question is also included – 'Can you offer a reason for your rating'? I won't get into the details of the system – you can buy the book to learn more about them (it's worth it). But I can tell you that every rating, and every comment, is delivered unfiltered to the entire golf staff every 2 weeks, plus a select group of club leaders. I want all of them to see the compliments and the criticisms first-hand. 'PCCQ' is our way of standardizing a feedback loop and adds to the other mechanisms we use to gather information about how we are doing. People who receive the email love being asked their opinion and, as importantly, they recognize their being asked demonstrates our sincere interest in improving. Staff and leadership loves seeing all the comments as it provides us opportunities to address items (large and small) to incrementally make our operation better, plus the positive comments reinforce that a job well done is being noticed.

The bottom line is that the 'success process' requires an honest assessment of what we do well and where we can improve. If you're not willing to subject yourself to criticism; if you're not willing to ask for feedback; if you're not willing to share the good AND the bad with your staff; and if you don't create systems to gather feedback as part of your culture, you're reducing your chances for increased

opportunities, job security, money, and work/life balance. And once you get that feedback, you better be ready to act on it:

"Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the fastest lion or it will be killed. Every morning a lion wakes up. It knows it must outrun the slowest gazelle or it will starve to death. It doesn't matter whether you're a lion or gazelle. When the sun comes up, you'd better be running."

Please accept my best wishes for a happy, healthy, and successful season!

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