

President's Corner

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Why Golf and IT are Similar!

Spring is finally here (although someone might want to mention that to the weather man) and golf season will soon begin. Woo-hoo! At TUG, we celebrate the season (and our iSeries community) with our annual golf tournament. Our 16th tournament will be held on June 18th at Nobleton Lakes. If you have attended in the past, you know it is a great day to have some fun, network with fellow iSeries professionals and perhaps win some nice prizes!

I am an avid golfer but am faced with a bit of a problem this year. To put it bluntly, my game sucks! My problem lies in the fact that now that I am in my third year, I can no longer use the excuse of being a “beginner golfer” to explain my high scores. I am hoping that over the winter, my golf skills went through an osmosis and somehow developed into some level of efficiency. What are the chances?

What is confusing is that I have been told I have a nice, professional swing! So why can't the golf ball realize this and cooperate? This very frustrating fact made me think about the many ways that IT and golf are really very similar.

With golf, you know exactly the outcome you want and on occasion you actually achieve it. Yet you often find yourself spending an entire day on the simple task of putting a ball in a hole, with nothing to show for it – except an overwhelming feeling of frustration. How many times have you been faced with a “simple” programming problem where after hours of coding and testing, the solution was just beyond your reach, leaving you with that same frustrated feeling? Yet, write a good piece of code (or sink a 20 foot putt) and it will leave you smiling for days.

Face it, golfers and IT professionals are suckers for punishment – and we keep coming back for more.

Both IT and golf are head games – with IT, you are controlled by a computer and with golf, that little white golf ball keeps you firmly in its grip. IT professionals are at the mercy of the whims of our users; golfers are at the mercy of the environment. And the most frustrating part, no matter how good you are at solving problems (at the game), you will never completely conquer the computer (the course).

And what about the new equipment that comes out every year – promising an increase in performance? This performance boost usually only lasts until you add more software (or pick a tougher course). The only given with new equipment is that huge outlay of cash and the prospect of buying new again the following year! The reality is that expensive golf equipment will not improve your game if you don't have the proper skill set. And expensive computer equipment is not always the answer to your problems; perhaps better procedures or skills are the answer.

How you approach a problem (and your success ratio) is very similar in IT as it is at the golf course. Imagine you are on the tee blocks for a par 5 with a long narrow fairway and a huge pond directly in front of you. A rookie golfer will focus only on the pond, convinced that their ball will be going directly into it. And sure enough, that is exactly what happens. The focus should be on the target and where you want to end up. In IT the same thing happens – you are faced with a big problem but you can't get over the hurdles that are directly in front of you. Focus on the solution and then tackle the hurdles one by one, always keeping your eye on the goal.



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Nice, slow and steady, well-thought-out shots down the middle of the fairway wins the game. Wild, quick shots take you off track into bushes, ponds and that dreaded environmental hazard – fescue (just by the sound of that word, you know it has got to be evil). With programming, wild, quick solutions often end with disastrous results leaving you further behind, trying to get out of the mess (fescue) you have created.

Finally, how often have you felt like throwing your computer out the window and your golf clubs into the lake? And what about the strain on personal relationships? Can you honestly say you have never said “But honey, I'm SO close... Only a couple more hours at the computer (on the course) and I'll get it!”

But no matter how many similarities I can find, there is one very big difference between the two – and that is that a bad day at the golf course is STILL better than a good day at the office! So on June 18th, you'll find me at Nobleton Lakes – but don't look in the fairways, try looking in the fescue and the woods! Why don't you plan on joining us – after all, golf and IT are so much alike! By the way, if anyone can think of some good excuses that I can use to explain my lack of ability for this third year of my golf career, I would be interested in hearing them!

