

Talent Scouting for Committee Members

by EARL D. HOTALING, Director, California Golf Club, San Francisco

Appointive positions are never easy to fill, especially when there is no pay and lots of work. And nowhere in a golf club is the problem so difficult as in appointing a Green and Grounds Committee. The members who want to participate are seldom qualified, and those who are qualified have usually kept their talents fairly well concealed. It takes a strong President to deny the status of the Committee to his friends, and to institute the talent search necessary to find members who will accept the task, and then perform to their capabilities.

Sometimes it takes a crisis, as it did in our case, to forego the current conception of such a committee, and organize one that can accomplish the task of modifying and maintaining a club's most valuable asset—its greens, fairways, traps, lakes and grounds.

Our crisis was simple. We had four new holes to build, a new well to drill and an automated sprinkler system to install. We retained a noted golf course architect and he suggested a contractor—the rest was up to us. We felt confident there was talent enough in

the club to accomplish the job. The problem was to find that talent and organize it for efficient results.

First, we delineated the functions and responsibilities of the committee. We then went on a talent search to fill each position. After some research it became apparent that there were six primary functions to be performed:

1. Agronomy — the course had to be maintained and the new holes brought in as quickly as possible.
2. Equipment and Personnel — we needed new equipment and our old had to be brought up to standard. We would need additional personnel.
3. Wells and Water Distribution — sufficient water had to be furnished to coordinate the programming of the automated sprinkler system.

A par-3 water hole, this is the new Third Green at California Golf Club, as seen from the forward tee.



4. Drainage and Sprinkler Coverage — changing topography would require new drainage and sprinkler head coverage would be the key to effective watering.
5. Budgets and Contracts — nearly half a million dollars had to be contracted and scrupulously accounted for.
6. Aesthetics — the new holes should be as beautiful as they were to be functional. Trees, shrubs and flowers would be most important.

This then pointed to a six-man committee, with each man responsible for a sphere of influence, plus a chairman who could act as the general administrator.

Thus, the talent search began. First, a profile was set up of the ideal man for each of the functions. Second, we searched the files on our member's backgrounds to see who would most likely fit the profile. We were amazed at the amount of talent that can be unearthed with such a search.

For instance, when we looked for the agronomist, we found we had a member who was a graduate agronomist and perhaps the foremost authority in the United States in his chosen field.

We uncovered a retired highway engineer to take care of drainage.

A retired mining engineer with experience in hydraulics was the ideal man to oversee the drilling of our new well and water distribution

system.

A machinery distributor who had helped build two golf courses in the past took over personnel and equipment.

The Vice-President of one of our banks, with excellent experience in working with contractors, became responsible for budgets.

Each of these men was approached on the basis of our need for his services — and the need for enough of his time to fulfill the duties required of him. Without exception they accepted.

With each man assigned his sphere of influence, the problem of where to place authority had to be solved. After serious consideration it was agreed that the authority must rest with the chairman. In this way, everyone knew where to report and where the final decisions must come from. This precluded the confusion that otherwise would have resulted.

In the final analysis, job classification is as important to a committee as it is to a business. Finding talent to fill such job classifications is really easier in a club than it is in industry. Every club has a reservoir of successful men from various professions—and there is no competition from other clubs as there is from other businesses. Best of all, salary is not a consideration. A chairman can always adjust, even double, a committee member's salary—for double nothing is still a mighty small remuneration for the efforts and dedication of a good committee member.

Had we to do it all over again, we certainly would do it the same way.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Earl D. Hotaling is a member and Director of California Golf Club of San Francisco as well as Chairman of the Board of the Kaemper & Barrett International Trade Corporation of San Francisco.

