

Organization in Maintenance

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"**T**omorrow we are going to get organized." Last year on our program we had a topic called, "Tomorrow is the Day You Should Have Planned Yesterday." Now 'yesterday and tomorrow' was one year ago, and I hope there is really no need to continue urging you to do something about the confusion with which you start each year, each month, each day and possibly each hour. The fact, however, that most of us are born procrastinators necessitates the repetition of topics such as this to keep our incentive keen.

Overorganization takes a lot of the excitement out of life and rigid inflexible organization leads to impotent, bogged-down bureaucracy. A lack of organization leads to utter confusion, waste and failure. Somewhere in between is the middle ground of efficient operation.

It has been pointed out that how fast you are going is not nearly so important as the direction you are heading. So it is with organization on the golf course. If your overall goal is not clearly defined and the steps toward it organized in proper sequence, you are likely to spend all your time and effort getting nowhere.

The original topic assigned me was "Programming the Maintenance." I felt that this title was ahead of its time and that it should be reserved for a meeting date around the year 2000. So far, the only thing on a golf course that can be programmed is an automatic water system. By the year 2000, we may be able to program nearly everything including the weather in our smog-proof golf dome.

Programming is a rather inflexible, idealistic term which I believe is something to be looked forward to as the ultimate goal of organization. Programming is the final stage of organization and planning is the beginning and the backbone.

Your operation is either organized or it is spontaneous. There are a lot of degrees of organization between the two poles of programming and spontaneous operation, but you have to be well above the mid-point to be successful. Proper planning means the difference between success and failure.

The military has a good system of organization from which we could all learn. The main

reason the military system does not work as well as it should all the time is due to misunderstanding and misuse of the system. The Standard Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) and the Standard Operational Procedure (SOP) of the military could prove to be most functional and practical for every superintendent.

In getting organized, you must first have a list of the things you have to work with. Most of us call that an inventory. An inventory doesn't help much, though, if you don't have a special place for each item, because just knowing you have it won't help unless you know where it is. There are a lot of ideas in use along these lines, and some superintendents have not only painted the outline of hand tools on the wall in their special place, but also outlined or designated special spots for tractors and heavy equipment.

In addition to your organization of tools and equipment, you also need to organize and have a special place for everything in your maintenance center. Believe me, it is a pain to get organized, but once done, it saves more time and money than you would imagine.

To be more specific with a few items to illustrate the necessity of organization: Seed needs a cool, dry storage place away from chemicals to retain its viability. Chemicals need a *safe* storage place which is clean and dry. Fertilizer cakes up when exposed to moisture, and even if it doesn't, the sack gets wet and breaks when you try to move it. I have seen literally tons of fertilizer ruined by poor storage facilities. Improper handling and use of grease and oil can cause those small dead spots of grass. Greasy hands make everything you touch greasy, which in turn collects greasy dirt, and so on until everything is one greasy mess. You might also remember that grease deteriorates rubber tires and other rubber products, and dirty grease causes undue wear of moving parts. Now before you name me "Mr. Clean," think about this seriously and see if you don't agree that a cleaner shop is worth the cost of a few clean rags, some solvent, some absorbent and soap.

It must be hard to become concerned about organization and cleanliness when next week

you will be back at the old rotting barn with the dirt floor that has been the club maintenance center all these years. Well, I believe you can sell almost any idea if you put it in terms of dollars and cents saved, or even some rather good intangible gains. Maybe you could sell the idea of a better maintenance area if you gave some thought to how much it might save in time and money, what it would do for employee morale (including your own), and what it would do for the club image and property value. My father always told me that, "The only one who need not worry about this public image is the man who has everything he is ever going to want." The club should be really concerned about this because when you leave, they may find it difficult to replace you with the kind of man they want and need if their facilities are poor and they are unwilling to improve them.

Before writing this paper, I asked several superintendents to give me some ideas on programming maintenance. Their reaction was, "It can't be done." This was another reason for changing the title to Organization in Maintenance.

When asked for some thoughts on programming, I feel sure the first thoughts that flashed across the superintendent's brain were something like this: "Only three of my nine men showed up this morning and the weather was perfect. Yesterday I was going to aerate greens and it rained all day — everyone came to work then."

Your thoughts right now might be that organization won't help get your men to work and it won't change the weather. It may not, but it will help you make the best of a poor situation. When it rained, did you have an alternate work plan or some odd jobs lined up that could be done? When the mower broke down did the operator sit around until it was fixed or did he go on to another job, or better still, help with the repair work. If the broken

part on the mower was common, or a frequently replaced part, you should have had spares in stock so that down time was minimal. Also, you should immediately replace the used part in stock.

You need not have a huge parts inventory but if you run to the store every time you need a few nuts and bolts, you are certainly wasting a lot of time and money which would be better spent on the parts themselves. The items could usually be delivered before you need them along with a larger order of something else.

If your operation is organized, you need not be wondering what is going on there right now while you are here, nearly so much as if you left the man under you in charge with a few well chosen words such as, "Try to find something for the men to keep them busy until I get back," or "I'm sure you can figure out something to do." With organization, your second man will have no doubt about what is to be done or how to do it. This is where the military's standard operational procedure idea comes in, it clearly points out the essential details of the job to be done.

Today, even the military is having trouble with discipline at all levels and here I am talking to you about military organization for your golf course crew. Your discipline is not enforceable and your crew may very well be comprised of rejects. Not just military rejects, but rejects from almost anything. Organization under such circumstances seems almost hopeless but that is why we are also spending time on this program talking about motivation and management.

As a golf course superintendent you will wear many hats. Being a turf expert is only a part of the job; sometimes a small part. The golf course superintendent of today must continually seek to improve his management skills and leadership abilities. He must be a businessman and he can't afford to be unorganized. Let's stop saying, "Tomorrow we are going to get organized." Do it today!

Former recipient of the Green Section Award Tom Mascaro congratulates the Graffis brothers.

