

Manager Versus Strawboss

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Which one spearheads your course operations? There is a big difference! Mr. Webster spells out the difference and I quote "A manager is one who is entrusted with the resources and expenditures of a business or situation, one who prudently plans and executes."

A strawboss, as described by Webster, is first a colloquialism; second it is described in two parts—straw and boss. Straw, meaning a reed or stem, worthless, a sham. Boss, meaning one who employs or superintends workmen—to boss over with dominance and authoritative powers.

Let us first explore the management image as it pertains to the course superintendent.

We all recognize that golf today is big business growing rapidly each year. Golfers are becoming more demanding, expecting better groomed courses and more conveniences. Carts and other sophisticated paraphernalia add to the overall cost of course maintenance. Golf has grown from a social sport for the more affluent into a family form of recreation with a big business flavor. The maintenance area's budgeting labor programs in many instances have not kept abreast of the changes. Trying to catch up in these areas is both a challenge to the younger superintendent, and expensive for the average budget of many clubs.

Labor is becoming better educated in regard to their personal demands, less educated as to their employee-employer relationships, responsibilities, duties, etc.

Modern machinery has become more sophisticated and complex. If trained personnel are not available to operate this expensive machinery, it becomes a difficult and expensive management problem.

Many courses today have unionized personnel, this is fine. It protects the employee from a wage and benefit point. However, it does little to educate personnel as to their abilities and responsibilities in more efficient operation of course machinery, one of our more stressed areas of operation.

Semi-skilled labor is very difficult to locate, in some areas it is impossible to find. This is true even with today's high unemployment rate. Skilled labor is non-existent unless hijacked from other areas by fringe benefits and wages.

Seasonal help or part-time help, except college students during summer, is a thing of the past. The farm boy of yesterday is non-existent. He was once our mainstay of practical experience and knowledge. The farm boy was a highly disciplined young man, well trained by his father from early boyhood through manhood. He was trained to handle machinery. He knew soil, fertilizing, seeding, cutting, etc. He was a better than average mechanic, a carpenter, painter, etc. He was an agricultural student during his school years. He was a natural for golf course work.

Today we are faced with 40-hour work weeks. Long weekend holidays means more time for recreation, and this means more golf. This means more maintenance, more labor needs, more equipment needs, with less overall help. Due to vandalism, theft and damage to property, we are exploring the possibilities of trailer housing for one or more course workers and their families housed on the property to act as custodians and guards. The housing will also act as a fringe benefit. Through this medium we hope to attract responsible and loyal personnel.

Hiring and training of personnel; administering to their requirements and requests on a fair and equitable basis; rewarding when necessary and admonishing when necessary; all of this requires a very patient and knowledgeable course manager. Labor is probably the most critical area facing the superintendent today. Without necessary numbers and quality of manpower, one cannot efficiently operate and maintain today's modern golf courses without encountering excessive costs, even with an alert and resourceful manager.

Our present day superintendent has done a remarkable job of hiring and training the course personnel of today. However, he is in need of help. Our schools, associations, etc., are doing a splendid job of training future superintendents, but more time and thought should be given to training course maintenance personnel.

If I may offer a suggestion, I would urge our manufacturers, distributors and schools to explore the possibilities of setting up sectional training facilities for grounds personnel. A few manufacturers have and are still doing some mechanical training on a limited basis. More needs to be done, however, it is presently too

expensive for the average golf club to cover travel expenses and all other requirements. In conjunction with our turf programs at various schools, a mechanical program might be set up for students. Manufacturers could share the expenses by donating machinery and trained teachers. Better trained groundsmen could save clubs many manhours, machinery breakdowns, extensive repairs, replacement parts and time could all be saved.

Let us try to develop a course maintenance man. A man with a trade, not just a day-to-day means of making a living. We could start in the high schools of our areas and work with youngsters who want to use their hands and imagination. After all, it doesn't take a college degree to become a successful golf course employee. High school boys who do not wish to continue on to college are our best prospects.

If our courses are to make progress in the future and meet player demands, then our grounds maintenance personnel must be better trained, better paid. Only then will we be able to complete the cycle of performance for a quality golf course at a minimal cost. Each course, like each player, has a personality of its own. Golf, after all, is a very humbling and

selfish game. It inflates and deflates your ego; golf courses are no different.

From observation I have developed a saying: "Show me a maintenance area in disarray and confusion and I will show you a poorly conditioned golf course."

Your maintenance area is the starting point or hub of your operation. An orderly, well-stocked repair parts area saves time, money, and equipment. Machinery under cover is a sign of resourceful management. Lockers, (lunch) eating facilities, rest rooms in sanitary condition; these are the morale builders for employees.

At a recent Baltimore Turf Conference, I was enlightened and impressed by several young superintendents. They presented a panel discussion and slides depicting improved maintenance areas. It shows they are on the ball as far as good management is concerned. No doubt more clubs should become involved in maintenance area improvement.

There are many other suggestions I might make, but to summarize simply, may I say, "Yesterday the strawboss, today the superintendent, tomorrow the resourceful course manager."

Ideas and Gadgets

By **Alexander M. Radko**, Eastern Director and National Research Director, USGA Green Section

"Prepare your golfers for winter greens well in advance of the time they are put into play by cutting out the winter green and dying it a vivid green," so says Paul Couture, Superintendent at

the Plandome Country Club, Plandome, N.Y. "Golfers get used to the plan and accept it more readily when they see the area and the preparation that goes into the winter green."

Artificial coloring makes the "alternate" or "winter" green area stand out and may prepare golfers to better accept the alternate green.

