



*Long-range planning prevents costly rebuilding.*

# Working Nine to Five?

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**I**S A GOLF course superintendent a businessman? Well, he doesn't go to the office each day in a three-piece suit with briefcase in hand, but he *is* a businessman. Areas such as public relations, budget preparation, equipment depreciation, labor justification, personnel management, maintenance facility upkeep, and long-range planning are all parts of business management, but they're seldom given enough emphasis in golf course management education or in the superintendent's job description.

Learning how to relate to the board and green committee is a critical part of the golf course superintendent's job. It is important to realize that, as businessmen, they relate best to business terms (e.g., miles versus hours on equipment). When communications are geared toward intended ears, budget proposals and project selling have a much higher

batting average. The golf course superintendent, who gives the maintenance program continuity through myriad changes in the green committee, must constantly reinforce the distinction between the needs of the club versus the desires of individual golfers when dealing with the committee.

Public relations is a facet of golf course management that many golf course managers overlook, but when it comes down to the real issues of the golf course superintendent's profession, good public relations may be the most important factor leading to success and credibility. Many turf managers who are excellent agronomists lack effective communication and public relations skills. Consequently, they usually are not as successful as those who have developed skills through education and practice. Effective communication is

not easy, but these skills can be dramatically improved when they are developed through proper channels. Continuing education is one of the best means of improving public relations specialties such as personnel management, communication skills, public speaking, and business management. As the superintendent profession continues to upgrade itself educationally, technically, and scientifically, it will put a premium on the superintendent's ability to handle public relations. This includes communications with the membership as well as with those employees who may lack formal education. Budget preparation and presentation could also streamline golf course management. Golf course budgets oftentimes are the dumping ground for odd and end budgetary expenditures, such as golf cart, swimming pool, and tennis court mainte-

nance. Some clubs may show large bottom-line budgetary figures, but the money really available for actual golf course maintenance (equipment maintenance and repair, fertilizers, chemicals, and labor) is relatively small. These four particular line items must be presented to the board so it realizes their importance and so that budget dollars can be appropriated to develop the needed maintenance programs. If these four items are not properly funded, then the overall maintenance of the golf course will not be up to the level anticipated or wanted by the golfers.

**WHEN BUDGETS** are presented to the board, it is important not only to show figures for each line item, but also to include an explanation and justification for each one. Businessmen want to see where money is going and why. Golf course budgets are upgraded more successfully through proper preparation and presentation than through any other single factor. Sometimes superintendents who are unable to obtain adequate budgets have become disgusted and left their jobs. When the replacement arrives, the budget is often raised significantly. This is often caused by the preparation and presentation of the budget by the new superintendent rather than because of the board's lack of confidence in the former superintendent. Thus, budget preparation is simply another important facet of the public relations efforts of the superintendent, one that can make the difference between success and failure.

Equipment depreciation and replacement is one of the more difficult sections of the budget to sell to the board. When a new piece of equipment is bought, it should be depreciated so that planned equipment replacement will always be an integral part of the club's finances. If capital equipment is depreciated at the time of purchase, then projections to replace larger capital items such as backhoes, fairway mowers, and dump trucks can be made years in advance. Unfortunately, most golf courses do not depreciate their capital equipment, and sudden breakdowns often force significant expenditures when the budget cannot really afford it. Then, other operational budget monies are often reduced or deleted to make up for the unanticipated capital expenditure.

Planned equipment replacement also reduces the significant cost of repair parts, down time, and labor needed to keep old, worn-out equipment operational for another year or two. Using

dilapidated equipment is often more expensive in the long run than buying new equipment. Clubs often spend \$12,000 to \$15,000 more a year in equipment maintenance and repair than they should. With scheduled replacement, this excess could be channeled into a separate line item capital replacement budget. A yearly capital expenditure item of 10 percent to 15 percent of the maintenance budget can keep equipment upgraded and save the club money over time. Again, make sure the capital budget is a separate line item and not part of the operating budget.

As mentioned above, boards and green committees are composed of businessmen who relate to business terms. Hours on a mower, for example, has no meaning to the average golfer. However, converting hours to *equivalent* mileage on automobiles allows everyone to relate to the wear on that mower. Don't try to convince the committee to approve a new mower by saying, "That greens mower is 10 years old and has almost 5,000 hours on it!" Plenty of automobiles are still in great condition after 10 years. But how many 10-year-old automobiles have an equivalent wear of 273,600 miles? That's the attention getter!

**LET'S LOOK** closer at the conversion factors from hours to miles on the wear of a piece of equipment to better relate to the overall life expectancy of that machine.

A car would have to travel approximately 60 miles per hour to have the same wear factor as turf equipment. Considered in this value is the high revolutions per minute, slow ground speed, and dusty operating conditions. The slow ground speed has a particularly adverse effect because the engine isn't cooled as well as an automobile traveling 60 miles per hour. This 60 miles per hour is not designed to inflate comparative numbers but simply to give a more realistic wear factor in relation to turf equipment. An automobile probably only averages 30 miles per hour when it is in operation, all driving conditions considered, but this relative wear factor would not be comparable with turf equipment operating at near full throttle and moving at a low rate of speed.

For example, a greensmower might be driven two hours a day, six days a week, 38 weeks a year, for a total of 456 hours each year. Based upon the 60-miles-per-hour figure, this mower would travel the equivalent of 27,360 miles every year. In five years it would have

traveled 136,800 miles, and in 10 years 273,600 miles. Based upon the figures, the useful life of this greensmower should be about five years; then it should be replaced or relegated to backup status.

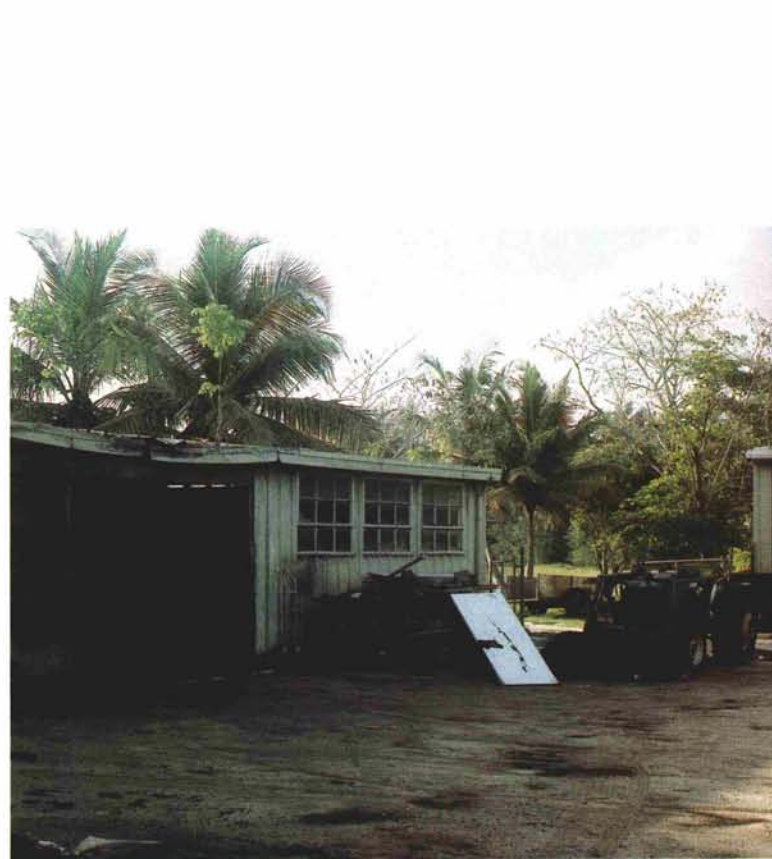
Taking a large fairway mower as another example, it might run seven hours a day, five days a week, 32 weeks a year, for a total of 1,120 hours each year. Using the 60-miles-per-hour figure, it would travel the equivalent of 67,200 miles every year, and 470,400 miles in seven years.

From these two examples, it is easy to see the impact this approach would have on the green committee compared to simply listing the number of hours each machine has been driven. Try it sometime.

Personnel management skills must receive constant attention from the superintendent, too. Just as labor expenses make up 50 percent to 70 percent of a golf course budget, it is also 60 percent to 70 percent of a golf course superintendent's job responsibility (or headache). It is often difficult to schedule the best and most efficient operation for the crew, especially when crew size and equipment availability may limit the operation.

Establishing and maintaining good crew morale is vital. Upkeep of crew





morale is difficult for many people in management positions, but more times than not, effective leadership in this responsibility can help make the difference between success and failure. It is essential to maintain full authority with the workers on your crew, while at the same time maintaining respect for them. The crew must understand that while they should feel free to discuss problems with the superintendent, it must be done on a professional basis.

*(Top, left) A clean and organized maintenance facility . . . key to efficiency.  
(Top, right) A poorly maintained and cluttered barn . . . not a good impression.  
(Above, left) Equipment past its useful life . . . expensive and inefficient.  
(Above) Budgets are a tough sell to some board members.*

Subscribing to personnel or business management magazines or monthly newsletters can be a tremendous tool in improving the superintendent's personnel management skills, providing many helpful tips and morale boosters for keeping the crew satisfied and productive.

**P**ERSONNEL management consultants agree that the most effective motivator for the crew comes through job appreciation. We frequently reprimand a subordinate quickly when a job is not properly carried out, but do we just as quickly praise that subordinate when a job is done well? It is certainly important to ask yourself that question as a personnel manager. One cannot expect to instill pride without praise. The hardest working and most loyal employees are those who know their work is appreciated and their efforts will be rewarded. Employee appreciation is a sign of a good manager.

The appearance and upkeep of the maintenance building and equipment are also vitally important to the overall success of a golf course management program. One of the worst impressions on the green committee or club members is to see a cluttered, junky maintenance facility — sometimes referred to affectionately as The Barn. Not all maintenance buildings can be new and modernized, but they can be kept clean and neat not only to make a favorable impression but also to keep maintenance operations efficient. Green committees are also more inclined to upgrade equipment if the present equipment and facilities are maintained impressively. A clean, well-organized shop and storage area promotes an atmosphere of proper equipment use, upkeep, and service. Boards are understandably reluctant to approve money for new equipment when existing equipment is maintained very poorly.

A run-down and cluttered maintenance facility also depresses crew morale. Everyone would agree that the crew deserves a neat, clean area in which to work, to take breaks, and to have their lunch, yet this is not the situation at many golf courses. Again, it is not the degree of modernization or the age of the building that is important; it is the cleanliness and efficiency of that maintenance facility.

Justifying labor expenses in the budget can be another tough sell to the board and the green committee. Green committees have often decided they want this or that special project done without understanding that some area will have

to be neglected in order to accomplish that particular project with the current labor force. It is important to lay out the man-hours required to do all the maintenance operations on the course. These might include green, tee, fairway, and rough mowing, bunker raking and edging, aerification, topdressing, vertical mowing, and other specialized time-consuming operations such as hazard maintenance, reconstruction, or drainage projects. In trying to justify the budget, develop a line item budget figure that reflects the time required for each of these maintenance operations in relation to man-hours available. If the green committee then decides it wants a particular operation carried out, each item is broken down into man-hours available at a particular budget level. Let the committee decide where they want to cut back in the budget to add their special projects. When each facet of the maintenance program is broken down on an hourly basis, it may become evident to the green committee that the labor force is too limited to do everything they want. Labor justification based on line item man-hour projections can be one of the best means of building a golf course budget toward proper proportions based on the wishes of the membership and the demands of the course.

**A**NOTHER important function that often falls on the shoulders of the golf course superintendent is the establishment and maintenance of a long-range planning outline. As mentioned earlier, the golf course superintendent is often the source of continuity for many golf courses, and his involvement with the long-range plan allows the club to continue in the same direction regardless of changes in the board or green committee.

A new green committee often initiates course improvement projects based upon the wishes of the individual committee members. When the committee is eventually replaced, the direction of golf course improvement programs usually changes, too. These projects often take the form of tree or ornamental plantings, bunker or tee changes, or possibly other physical facility upgrading around the clubhouse grounds, pool, or tennis courts. All these areas are important, but a long-range plan should be established to guide the club in the best direction and make the best use of time and resources. This is definitely an important leadership role for the golf course superintendent, one that should

help him direct the club through a series of permanent and lasting improvements on the course.

Long-range planning provides an avenue for the club to obtain its goals in the most cost-efficient manner, and should include consultations with professionals to insure the best product. Discussions with landscape and golf course architects for bunker, tee, or tree additions is very important. A Green Section agronomist can also help with long-range plan considerations or with other matters. Consultation with reputable sources should be an integral part of every long-range plan.

The last main area of managing a golf course like a business is developing good personal traits. An individual can have all the ability and knowledge in the world, but if he is not a pleasant and personable individual, then all his ability and knowledge is diminished. Personality is not something that can be taught, but it can be modified with effort. In golf course management, just as in any other business, a successful individual is pleasant to be around and has a respected way of presenting ideas and thoughts to subordinates, peers, and superiors. Proper grooming and personal appearance are major factors in the image an individual portrays. One should conduct himself and present himself in a professional manner to suit the particular occasion. For example, if the members of the board wear coat and tie to its meetings, then the superintendent should too. Personal appearance is 90 percent of first impressions, and first impressions are often lasting impressions. Therefore, presenting and conducting oneself professionally is essential to being a good manager and a good businessman. Business management consultants agree that an individual rarely achieves higher goals and advancement if he does not already appear to be at the higher level. A business executive once said, "Success is 90 percent appearance and personality, 5 percent knowledge, 4 percent respect, and 1 percent luck." Therefore, with work and perseverance one can control 99 percent of his destiny.

Make sure you are a true credit to yourself and your profession. Following through with these suggestions can help improve your image as a golf course superintendent and, in the process, produce a better businessman as well.

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