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ALL THINGS CONSIDERED

The Winner in the Long Run

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A PLANT MANAGER for a large company painstakingly completed a long-range plan for future growth. He carefully determined regular maintenance requirements and how they would maximize profits. The plan was presented to his superiors; they approved and immediately placed it in operation. But the following year and every succeeding year, someone else changed the plan, refocused direction, or instituted an entirely different long-range plan. My question is, Do you think this company is still in business with this type of philosophy, or has it filed for Chapter 11?

While this example may not occur often in the business world, it is a common practice in the operation of golf courses. The problem is caused by the constantly changing green committees and green committee chairmen.

The chairman is a vital link between the golf course superintendent and his operations at the club. The frequent changing of this position requires constant re-education. Sometimes philosophical differences occur that in the worst case may lead to outright termination for the golf course superintendent.

We have all seen or heard of horror stories of this kind. Golf course mainte-

nance operations are big business. They should be treated in exactly that manner.

What can be done at a club if this revolving-door policy is in effect? The answer could lie in one of the following:

1. A new green committee chairman should serve as an active green committee member for at least two to three years before he becomes chairman. In this manner, he is acquainted with the golf course superintendent's operations and the club's long-range program. He is less likely to institute changes or personal preferences that could affect the golf course. The constant re-education program of chairmen is one of the major problems facing superintendents today.

2. The chairman should not have to be a board member. A board liaison can be an active participant in every green committee, yet he does not have to be the chairman. In this way the club can assure continuity of effort even though the board of directors is ever changing.

3. Provide longer terms for the chairman. If the superintendent and chairman operate well as a team, work within budgetary requirements, and maintain the golf course to the satisfaction of the members, then changing chairmen is

wasteful. A minimum of a three- to five-year term is suggested, unless this key working relationship begins to deteriorate. At this point, it has to be determined if the maintenance operation is being mismanaged or if it is simply a personality conflict between the chairman and superintendent. If the former, the superintendent may be dismissed. The latter requires a change of green committee chairman.

4. Invite the green chairman and golf course superintendent to the monthly board meetings. While this team certainly does not need to attend to other matters concerning the club, they should always be in attendance at every meeting for the discussion of pertinent golf course matters. This is particularly critical if the green chairman is changed on a regular basis and technical questions need to be answered. As any business has its regular meetings for discussing past, present, and future strategies, so should the operation of the golf course maintenance program.

Replace that revolving door with a standard model that is built solidly, yet has some flexibility. The golf course and golf course maintenance operation will be the winner in the long run.