

# There Is a Lot To Be Said About a “Can-Do” Attitude

Focus on the possibilities. BY KEITH A. HAPP

**Y**ou have heard it many times: “Attitude is everything.” How you approach your day, your job, and your career makes a statement. A positive, can-do attitude is often contagious and can motivate the people around you.

How do you respond when faced with challenges? For example, when you no longer have the resources to conduct a specific maintenance practice in the manner in which you prefer, do you search for a solution or simply focus on what cannot be accomplished? Do you propose compromise or even consider adjustments, allowing for the continuation of an abbreviated form of a past practice? When labor is no longer available for walk-mowing greens and tees, is a proposal developed to employ a combination of tactics to maintain these areas to the best conditions possible? Or, if certain areas of the course are exhibiting wear from current practices, do you look for solutions within the current budget or simply dismiss change because it is easier to focus on what cannot be done? Having an attitude that focuses on what cannot be attempted, rather than what is possible, becomes tiring and results in little progress toward achieving the goals put forth for improvement.

When asked to make changes or adjustments in practices or procedures used to prepare golf course turf for everyday play, do you respond, “We can’t do that!”? Have you really looked at all the options and then made an educated response to achieve a desired outcome? Without question, there are certain requests that cannot be fulfilled. For example, a crew of three is not going to be able to complete the same procedures and practices as a crew of 30. However, it may be possible, even with limited resources, to implement a strategy in a site-specific manner to prioritize course prepara-



*It may not be possible to mow all the greens by hand, but during stressful environmental conditions, walk-mowing with light-weight machines, even if only on a few greens, will make a difference over the long term.*

tion. Case in point; as long as the tools are available, mowing a stressed area with smaller, less aggressive equipment, even if just for a short time, can make a big difference with respect to turf health. The practice does not have to be conducted forever — just long enough to get over the hump or until the weather changes and less stressful conditions are presented.

A can-do attitude is a must during a sluggish golf economy, and maintaining a positive attitude is easier when golfers do their part by having reasonable expectations. Communications about course preparation should focus on what can be accomplished, even when the maintenance budget does not keep pace with golfer expectations. How management practices are described can help golfers understand that efforts to complete tasks with the highest level of attention to detail have not changed, and, where possible, playing quality will be sustained. For example, emphasize that playing quality along the center lines of the course will not be compromised, but the peripheral areas of the property will have to be managed differently. You are not stating that certain programs can’t or won’t be performed; rather, clearly state what can be accomplished. It should be a given that when the cost of maintenance increases and funding levels decrease, the scope and intensity

of work to be completed has to be adjusted.

As we approach a new year, ask, “What can we do to have a great season?” The right attitude is a great start! This means exploring as many options and alternatives to accomplish a task as possible. Although it can be challenging to brainstorm and problem-solve, it can also be stimulating, rewarding, and contagious. A can-do approach is a work in progress, and it is certainly better than saying “we can’t do that” simply because a certain method or action can’t be employed.

By definition, a can-do attitude is a willingness to tackle any task while being confident and resourceful in the face of challenges. I am constantly amazed during Turf Advisory Service visits how superintendents develop different, but equally effective ways to meet the challenges of preparing their courses on a daily basis. A common theme of their preparation is a can-do attitude. What you can do should remain the focal point versus what cannot be done. Focusing on the possibilities can transform many challenges into opportunities.

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