Three kings

The ‘Golf Club Management Partnership’ recently celebrated its first anniversary. Sandy Jones charts the progress made so far and looks ahead to the future.

The Golf Club Management Partnership (GCMP) has been set up by the PGA, BIGGA and the GCMA to provide a co-ordinated approach to the management of golf clubs.

We chose a particularly appropriate time to join forces, as golf clubs feel the effects of the economic situation and adapt to changing attitudes to kniuse activities.

In every golf club there are three providers of services to the golfer – the manager, the professional and the course manager and his team, and it makes sense to work together and ensure that these services are provided at the highest level.

This has proved essential as golf club committees consider ways to cut costs in order to survive the recession when in fact they should be looking to add value. There is a temptation to simply chop out areas of the operation, often because committees may not fully understand how the club is run.

The difficulty is that often those people providing the services don’t communicate to the committees clearly or clearly at all, and this can result in a context where the professional and maintenance team are fighting for survival; it is understandable that a manager would see a professional who gains access across the club as a threat.

We believe that our role is to communicate on behalf of all three parties – and the next mission is to ensure committees appreciate their qualities.

In the USA, the reaction to the current financial crisis has been to cut staff numbers, but we have aimed to put the message across to the clubs that they should take advantage of the abilities of their team to offer better value to the members. It takes time and money to develop the skills needed to run a golf club, and this should not just be thrown away.

Of course we understand that there may need to be some reductions in staff numbers, but we hope to persuade clubs to look at increasing efficiency first.

Now that the bodies involved in the partnership understand each other better, we can take our message to the club owners and to managers throughout the UK to bring together the English Golf Union (EGU) over the next 12 months.

We are also aiming to create models to show how clubs can operate more efficiently, considering the whole operation rather than just staff costs. The club must engage with its manager, professional and greenkeeping team – as they are the first point of contact with members and visitors – to ensure that the golfer’s needs are met, on the course, in the pro shop and in the clubhouse.

Our unified approach is already benefiting clubs – after the severe winter we produced some recommendations to help tackle claims relating to health and safety in bad weather which have been welcomed by professionals for managers dealing with those situations.

We have also set up a network to tackle credit card scams affecting pro shops, getting the word around clubs across the UK, and this has led to the arrest of offenders.

The internet will become increasingly important in the communications process, and we are already looking at the latest technological developments for the delivery of education programmes.

The GCMP has also looked at ways to promote golf. For example, the economic impact of the Ryder Cup was more than £100m.

Going forward, we are keen to foster closer relationships between golf clubs – for example the partnership encourages clubs to get involved in the wider community, and to the government, to put us in a better position to lobby for support.

This is one area where the Americans are ahead of us, producing statistics on the industry and creating a website to promote golf. We already know that golf makes an important contribution to the economy, for example the economic impact of the Ryder Cup was more than £100m.

Another goal will be to communicate the significance of golf to the wider community, and to the government, to put us in a better position to lobby for support.

Managers and professionals’ parties are one such example – it is understandable that a manager would see a professional who gains management skills as a threat, but they can be much more effective as allies. Clubs work best if all parties use their skills together, rather than in isolation.

The golf club and the club owner is the ultimate winner if we can understand each other better and appreciate how we can provide an improved service to members and guests. This can be a golden economic opportunity to be embraced.

Sandy Jones is chief executive of the PGA. Interview conducted by Jane Carley.

High profile sales helped the company to grow quickly in the early days and raise their profile in the Scottish groundcare industry.

In 1999, Double A set up in Eden Valley Business Park, Cupar and offered a full range of quality products. A rebuilt and purpose built building and a year later they increased their range with the addition of Aebi and Campey, and in 2007 they branched into a new business as distributors for the Tru-Turf range of greens rollers.

In 2001, the company moved to their new £1.1 million purpose-built building and three years later they increased their range of specialist equipment with the addition of Aebi and Giano Ferrar.

In 2003 they were appointed Scottish Distributors for Lastec Dair, John Deere Groundcare Equipment; Lastec Articulator Mowers; Timewell Urnchoppers; Asbi Tractor and Mowers; Giano Ferrari Mowers; Campey Turfcare Equipment; Tru-Turf Rollers (UK Distributor); Segal Electric Utility Vehicles; Multicar Vehicles; Yamaha Golf Cars; IPU Groundcare Products; Redexim – Chariotse Equipment; John Deere Groundcare Equipment; Goupil Electric Utility Vehicles; Goupil Articulator Mower; Lastec Articulator Mower; Aebi Articulator Mower; Redexim – Chariotse Equipment.

The series aimed at celebrating the great work done by dealerships up and down the country.