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The basic concept of project management is older than mankind itself. If you believe that God created the world then the extracts from The Bible would indicate that a seriously considered project management programme was used. The seven day project was carefully ordered, no point in creating man before everything else was in place, create man before woman so a "complaints department" was established before the complainants arrived. Even "critical path" analysis was used to determine what could be created on the same day without leading to conflict or confusion. Because the elements favoured creation no time was lost, and as a result time allocated for contingencies was not needed. The project was completed one day ahead of schedule allowing the bonus of a rest day. In its simplest form therefore, Project Management can be described as a "one-off" job which consists of a series of tasks, all of which must be completed before the project is finished. However the sequence in which they are completed has to be clearly defined. Some tasks may take place at the same time as others some cannot be started until one or more of the other tasks have been completed. The impact of not planning or managing a project correctly can vary from slight inconvenience to customers, or additional costs to you, to total financial or project disaster.

The problem is that project management is so much a part of everyday life, that no one seems to be fully aware of the point at which good planning is calculated rather than left to natural instinct. Most mornings a person will shower before putting on their clothes, there is no real need to write a plan defining the progression of events. Those who have just enjoyed a 'heavy' night are allowed to contest this philosophy. It is also understood that if you are constructing the channel tunnel one major plan with many integrated projects needs highly organised management.

It is those areas in between which need assessment. Too often a simple project such as creating several winter greens or re-organising the 17th are left to "natural ability" or experience. A slight delay or an inferior green are not catastrophic events, always assuming that The Open does not start this week, however, they still show a lack of professionalism in the job. This can be overcome by good project planning and management.

For further information on project management, health & safety and any other training issues, please contact Austin Breakell on (01254) 679955 or Jean John on (01282) 831973.

Austin Breakwell gives some helpful hints at managing projects and looks at the very first example of the art.
Neil Thomas examines the current situation surrounding the GTC and confirms BIGGA's willingness to make a positive contribution towards its review...

WHERE NOW?

We have attempted to keep readers informed of developments in relation to the GTC and in the last issue of Greenkeeper International we reported on the establishment of an independent review. A meeting of the GTC planned for 25th February was subsequently postponed and our Chairman made representations that this meeting be held as soon as possible to enable GTC members to discuss the setting up of the independent review.

A meeting was subsequently set for 19th March when it was understood that the findings of the review would be discussed having been circulated to the GTC members for consideration prior to that meeting. This seemed to be a wholly unrealistic timescale given that the review was only implemented as of 25th February and this was confirmed in a letter from the GTC of 5th March when it was decided that due to the tight timescale for the preparation of the report the meeting would now be moved to 15th April.

It is difficult to deal with facts in an increasingly confounded situation but it can be revealed that the review is being carried out by LANTRA, the National Land-based Training Organisation. LANTRA is being commissioned to examine and make recommendations in respect of:-

1. GTC's role in overseeing greenkeeper training and its cost effectiveness
2. GTC's capability to handle modern apprenticeships
3. Monitoring and reporting mechanisms
4. Financial auditing and checking procedures
5. Roles of Committee members and staff
6. Decision making procedures
7. Procedures for communication between funding partners, colleges, assessors, internal verifiers and, where applicable, clubs and their students.

BIGGA remains deeply concerned that this review has moved ahead without formal approval by the GTC and without that Committee being given the opportunity to comment on the LANTRA brief. BIGGA would certainly wish to see the brief widened to include an examination of the college system and its effectiveness in relation to the workings of the GTC.

BIGGA also considers that the GTC's Constitution needs review to enable a future structure to be established which would include an effective input from Greenkeepers and experts in the field probably through the establishment of a technical panel.

So much to talk about then but, as yet no opportunity to talk!

We have genuine concerns about the scale of this review and the anticipated time it will take. The timescale seems very short and raises questions over the thoroughness of the consultations which will take place. Experience of such a review would indicate a timescale in the region of four to six months but this one seems to be six weeks from start to finish and has started without any reference to the Committee who will ultimately have to accept or reject it! Time will indeed tell.

I suspect that the reader will be left with a feeling of incredulity. Yet all this is unnecessary. Accepting that such a review is appropriate after six years of the GTC operating on its current basis, this review should surely have been conducted from within the GTC with its findings circulated to the constituent member bodies. Instead, through the awkward actions of one of those constituent member bodies, this matter has now reached the public domain.

Suddenly there are many "experts" on greenkeeper education and training ready to go to press and much jockeying for position within any restructured GTC which may emerge from the findings of this review. GTC affairs become matter for public debate with and adherence to democratic procedures than is evident at the present time.
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Bruce Stanley looks at the best methods of keeping in touch with one another when you're spread across the length and breadth of the golf course

Most Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers have a need to keep in close contact with the members of their team. Knowing where staff are working on the golf course, how they are progressing and when they have completed a specific task are important elements in safe and efficient greenkeeping operations.

The ability to communicate instantly across the whole of a golf course not only eliminates wasted time but also enables problems to be dealt with quickly and new jobs to be allocated without one or both parties needing to return to the machinery sheds.

However, for many greenkeepers and Course Managers, keeping in touch with staff still involves driving around the golf course until you find the person with whom you want to speak. This is fine if you know where everyone is and you can be sure of finding them, but is not always a simple task on an area of 100 acres or more.

Today, with the continuing advances in mobile communication systems, there is no major reason why one should not be able to contact immediately another person working anywhere on a golf course.

Mention mobile communications and most people's thoughts turn to the mobile telephone. The companies who provide mobile phone services boast about their excellent nationwide networks, quoting coverage figures in excess of 98% of the UK population. But there are still problems.

Mobile phones rely on repeater aerials to transmit signals across the countryside. Yet, each aerial has a limited range and it is not uncommon to lose contact suddenly and completely, particularly in lightly populated, more rural parts of the country. Mobile phones are fine if you happen to live or work near a major road, city or town, but step onto a golf course in the middle of the countryside and you may find the signal becomes very weak or disappears completely.

Then there are the running costs. Although mobile phone ownership is relatively inexpensive compared with five years ago, the basic annual charge made by a mobile service provider will rarely be less than £180. Exceed any "free" or "inclusive" talk time provided as part of the basic monthly contract, and the cost of communication quickly starts to escalate.

Although excellent in a one-to-one situation or when travelling extensively around the country, the mobile phone is not the most cost-effective solution when needing to keep in touch with several people at the same time within a clearly defined area.

Nor, for that matter, is a pager. Although inexpensive to own, they provide no voice to voice contact so
are of little use where instantaneous reaction or response is wanted. The pager is best employed as a simple means of alerting or "calling in" another person, for example, in a hospital or within a factory or warehouse complex.

By far the best and most economical solution for anyone working in a golf course environment is the two-way, or professional, radio. Apart from the initial purchase cost, the only regular outgoing is the annual licence issued by the Department of Trade and Industry, a legal requirement for anyone using a two-way radio.

The cost of the licence varies according to the range of the equipment, the total number of handsets in use and how many operating frequencies have been allocated by the DTI.

For a golf course with eight handsets operating on a single frequency within a three km (1.8 mile) radius, the total annual licence cost would be £100 - with no additional costs such as call charges or connection fees.

According to Sue Preater, branch manager of Swindon-based telecommunications specialist, Lincom Communications, golf courses should avoid the simplest and cheapest forms of two-way radio, commonly known as "walkie-talkies".

"Such equipment normally costs up to £180 for each handset and is fine for domestic situations, weekend scout camps and residential homes," she explained. "However, they are not sufficiently robust or powerful for everyday professional use. Because they have pre-programmed frequencies, they will need to be returned manually in the event of interference from another user trying to communicate on the same frequency."

The recommended entry-level two-way radio for everyday professional use is the single channel unit which has been allocated its own dedicated operating frequency by the DTI. Easy to use with a basic push button and talk operation, the radio provides instant two-way communication between handset and handset or handset and base unit, and vice versa. The purchase price of such radios is in the region of £250.

As many users have found, one of the major benefits of two-way radio can also lead to problems due to the exceptional portability of the handsets. It is not uncommon for radios to go "missing" just when they are needed.

To ensure that staff can always contact the office, and vice versa, it is well worthwhile investing in a mains-powered local base station as part of the system, at a cost of around £450. On hilly or undulating terrain, it may be necessary also to install an external mast antenna to enable the base station to communicate across the complete course.

For those who are regularly on the move, there are also units available for fitting permanently into vehicles, supplied complete with an integral speaker, palm microphone and antenna. Prices range from £250 to £300 plus, depending on the range of features.

With a basic single channel two-way radio, all communications take place across one dedicated frequency allocated by the DTI. As a result everyone on the course equipped with a radio pre-set to the operating frequency can listen in to conversations between other users.

To overcome this, manufacturers offer two-way radios which operate on a single frequency split into 16 or more channels. By allocating different channels to different users, individual handsets can be called up separately. Cost of these radios range from around £270 for a simple unit with manual channel tuning to £450 plus for models with keypad dialing and an LCD display.

The additional circuitry within these more sophisticated radios means that users have available to them an added range of facilities including a voice-activated hands-free capability when used in conjunction with optional headsets.

There are also power level adjusters to give longer battery life and, with keypad models, the ability to store commonly-used contact numbers and display the name of incoming callers. A useful safety feature is the lone worker alert which automatically puts the radio into emergency mode if the worker does not respond to a preset warning signal. Other users on the same frequency will then be alerted.

Although the DTI requires an operating licence for each frequency it allocates, it is possible to set up multi-channel radios to allow private conversations between individual handsets or a handset and base unit, as if talking on a different frequency.

This is achieved by the supplier pre-tuning the two items of equipment to a dedicated channel which cannot be accessed by any another user, giving similar security to using a completely separate frequency.

Such a feature can be useful where, for example, the course manager needs regular communication with another manager within a hotel and golf complex or during a tournament when totally separate communications may be required with the organisers' office and the greenstaff.

Two-way radios with keypads can also be programmed to allow three or more users to communicate simultaneously.

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The prospect of visiting Orlando during the dreary month of February was always appealing, but to be invited as guests of Toro and as the Excellence in Greenkeeping Award winner was the icing on the cake.

My itinerary was split between attending educational seminars, attending the GCSAA show and some free time which I had pre-booked to include the Disney Parks and Universal Studios. This would conclude the first week of my trip, whereupon I would then fly up to Minneapolis and spend three days or so with Toro at their Headquarters.

The GCSAA Show lasts one full week with the seminars taking place from Monday to Thursday and the show itself from Friday until Sunday. The convention centre which hosted the show was over one million square feet in area and over a mile long in length. Yes it’s depressingly true, everything does seem bigger over there!

The seminars I attended were either one day or two day’s in length so they were fairly intense. I found the American Superintendents to be far more receptive to audience participation which helped break up the long hours spent in class. This benefited all attendees in that they learned as much from one another as from the lecturer. The longer sessions seemed to suit this format better and I for one feel this is something we should possibly consider for our annual conference. Come Friday, I was looking forward to visiting Toro and off I went on the Sunday. I received my three day Itinerary which included a visit to the Toro Headquarters, the manufacturing plant and the production plant which was located about a three hour drive away, this was interspersed, as far as I could tell, with the eating of copious amounts of food – they really do know how to look after you!

My first visit was to the Toro Headquarters. This is where the research and development takes place, all administrative work is carried out and equipment testing is performed. This building is home to 1200 employees and has had some heavy investment (about seven million dollars) over the last couple of years.

While touring the design section of the building, it was explained to me how the new machines we use are developed. Ideas for new pieces of equipment are firstly designed on computer with the aid of technology and equipment testing is performed. This building is home to 1200 employees and has had some heavy investment (about seven million dollars) over the last couple of years.

The thought of leaving Orlando with temperatures regularly exceeding 25°C was not appealing, especially when Minneapolis was minus 20°, but I was still looking forward to visiting Toro and off I went on the Sunday. I received my three day itinerary which included a visit to the Toro Headquarters, the manufacturing plant and the production plant which was located about a three hour drive away, this was interspersed, as far as I could tell, with the eating of copious amounts of food – they really do know how to look after you!

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QQuest for perfect spelling

Being involved in the Computer business as we are, it is always a pleasure to see people spreading the gospel in terms of trying to convince doubters that computers are not just for kids or rocket scientists.

Please aside, I do have one main criticism of Ken Richardson's "A second-byte" article in the February issue of Greenkeeper International and this is that he seems to be having trouble with the spelling of QQEST - not one misspelling but two!

While writing, I should like to point out that information on the QQEST Maintenance Management Software can also be found on, and a demo programme can be downloaded from, our Internet site, http://www.wessexsoftware.com.

Guy R W Coleman, Partner, Wessex Software Systems Pulborough, West Sussex

A Toro thank you

May I take this opportunity to thank all those concerned with organising my Toro sponsored trip to America. The organisation by Neil Thomas and his team at BIGGA Headquarters was second to none and all aspects of my trip ran smoothly and according to plan. I know from speaking with British Greenkeeper delegates who did not book through the association that most of them experienced problems regarding seminars they had self booked.

Toro's organisation of the factory visitations and general hospitality was also fantastic and I feel I must thank both Pete Mansfield and Darren Wenner for the part they played in making sure my stay was as interesting and enjoyable as possible, it certainly was.

Overall I had a great time and came home with a much better appreciation of what's involved in the manufacturing industry of golf course equipment and will definitely be attending next years GCSAA Show in Orlando.

Again, many thanks and hope to see you all soon.

John Coleman
Abbeystead Golf Club

Spanish help required

I am writing with regard to possible employment on Spanish golf courses. Currently I am studying the Higher National Diploma in Golf Course Management at Elmwood College. From April to October I will be taking up employment as a seasonal greenkeeper at the Kildare Hotel and Country Club, Ireland. I also intend returning to Germany in April 2000 for full time employment.

I am seeking employment from October 99 to April 2000 and will be grateful if you could put me in contact with Spanish golf courses. My Spanish is only basic and therefore it would be ideal if I could work together with English or German speaking greenkeepers.

I look forward to hearing from you in the future.

Dirk Thelen, Reesetherhers, 543A 51107, Cologne, Germany or through Elmwood College

Bettina Schrickel

Greenerkeeper International would like to apologise to Bettina Schrickel, author of the "Course Closed" feature last month, for spelling her name incorrectly in the content's page. The error was compounded by the appearance of the words (Check Spelling) beside her name which was confused with the production stage of the page. Sorry Bettina!

Rubigan warning

I am writing in response to a letter from Stephen Okula, of Tenerife, published on page 12 of your February edition headed 'McDivot', as I don't want any greenkeepers in the UK and Ireland getting themselves into bother over the advice given.

The letter to which I refer concerns the legalities of applying agricultural products in sports and amenity turf. The letter recommends applying Rubigan for the control of Take-All Patch. I have to stress that Rubigan has NO APPROVAL for either use on turf or for the control of Take-All Patch in the UK or Ireland. This means that it would be illegal to apply Rubigan to sports turf.

If a greenkeeper did apply this product, not only would he/she be in breach of the Pesticides Legislation, but also if something 'went wrong', liability would rest with the user. It is also against the Pesticides Legislation to recommend or supply a product for use in a situation where that product is not approved.

Research based pesticide manufacturers spend many millions of pounds discovering and developing pesticides for a range of uses, including use on turf grass. Products undergo rigorous tests to ensure that they are effective and present minimum risk. The data produced in product development are subjected to critical examination by Regulatory Authorities before approval is granted. Dow AgroSciences does manufacture the fungicide Rimidin which has Full Approval for the control of Fusarium Patch, Dollar Spot and Red Thread on turf grass. There is no approval for Take-All Patch.

This brings me onto a second letter that I would like to reply on page 13 of the same issue. The letter 'McDivot 3' suggests that fungicides kill useful bacteria. As part of the extensive and exciting development work on the environmental fate of Rimidin, it was demonstrated that Rimidin is safe to beneficial soil bacteria. Trials not only looked at overall populations of bacteria, but also at the activity of specific bacteria such as Nitrobacter and Nitrosomonas.

In summary, please ensure that when using a pesticide the label is read and follow it carefully. If you follow these rules you will not only be keeping yourself on the right side of the law, but you will ensure that you have a valuable tool for modern greenkeeping in the future.

Andy Cavley
Country Manager, UK & Eire Dow AgroSciences.