Brin Bendon, well known to many who attend BIGGA Management training courses, starts a new series aimed at improving your off-course skills.

Procrastination

"Procrastination is opportunity's natural assassin."

Victor Kiam

These are many reasons why people procrastinate: perhaps to escape an unpleasant or overwhelming task by doing easier, less urgent tasks first or to excuse poor work. They might try to get someone else to do the job for fear that they won't be able to do the job or because they don't know how to start. Or they argue that there won't be time to do the job perfectly. These are some of the 'escapes' people use: indulging in something they like doing such as reading, socialising or daydreaming; indulging in negative feelings like anxiety, fear or worry and running away from the job or using perfectionism as an excuse, and blaming others for interruptions.

Attitudes to adopt

So if you are serious about improving your time management, here are some attitudes to adopt:

- Admit you have been wasting time.
- Decide work isn't necessarily unpleasant - adopt a positive attitude.
- Separate your feelings about the job from your decision on what to do about it.
- Recognise and acknowledge the futility of procrastination.
- Decide to face unpleasant tasks square on.
- Think through previous jobs - and recognise that fears of failure are usually unfounded. Use this to boost your confidence.

Taking control of your time.

The Pareto Principle

Western Pareto, the Italian philosopher and economist, was the author of something that we now refer to as the 80/20 Rule, namely:

- most of our effectiveness (say 80%) will come from a relatively small number of key activities (say 20%).
- poor time management often means that we can spend a great deal of our time (80%) on things which contribute very little to our overall effectiveness (20%). We may be busy, but not particularly productive or effective.
- so to be effective we need to:
  1. define clear goals and tasks
  2. prioritise tasks in terms of urgency and importance i.e. must do now, should do soon, like to do later.
  3. delegate or ask for help if you are up against tight deadlines
  4. make a start.

"Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion" Parkinson's Law - Professor C Northcote Parkinson

Techniques to help you work smart, not hard

- decide to do the most unpleasant job of the day first.
- break the job down into small tasks.
- start anywhere, if starting is a problem.
- commit yourself by telling someone you’re going to do the job.
- set your own deadlines.
- reward yourself at stages through the job.
- remove or avoid your escapes and distracters, e.g. socialising.
- schedule start times for jobs.
- stick to high priority jobs.
- consider the consequences of procrastination.
- do one job at a time. breaking off and having to come back to it wastes time.
- ask what’s the best use of my time now?
- regularly review your progress and take corrective action when necessary.

30 ways to make more time

Preparation and organisation

1. become aware of time.
2. place a clock where everyone can see it.
3. prepare a daily to-do list.
4. prioritise tasks in terms of importance and urgency.
5. delegate tasks.
6. be assertive.
7. say ‘no’ to jobs that aren’t yours.
8. set realistic deadlines.
9. give yourself private time.
10. keep your desk or workspace tidy.

Dealing with interruptions

11. work out who needs access to you at all times and insist that others make appointments.
12. get your secretary (if you have one) or a deputy to deal with the rest.
13. ask people why they’ve come to see you.
14. stand up when they come in.
15. be gracious with people and ruthless with time.
16. suggest you arrange a meeting later when it suits you.
17. make the meeting in the other person’s office.
18. perch on the edge of the desk.
19. save small talk for the pub.

Meetings

20. be conscious of wasting other people’s time. If you have to attend, do have to be present for the whole meeting or for just part of it?
21. plan the meeting - have a clear objective. Start and end on time.
22. don’t allow meetings to be interrupted or side-tracked.

Dealing with the telephone

23. use telephone technology to field your calls and have a call back system.
24. make your calls in blocks. (It’s a good idea to make them just before lunch and just before people are about to finish work for the day. It focuses their minds and prevents rambling telephone calls and pass-timing.)
25. write down the points raised in the call.
26. be especially aware of time passing on the phone. Use an egg timer to time your calls and complete them within 3 minutes.

office systems

27. finish one job before you go on to the next.
28. spend 5 minutes in the morning planning the day.
29. have an administrator screen mail and handle each piece of paper only once.

And finally...

30. there is no such thing as dead time if you are serious about managing your time. so make use of committed time such as when you are in your car or on a train. these are opportunities that afford you the time to think. embrace these ideas and make them into habits and you will be able to achieve much more with less.

Brin Bendon is the Managing Director of Vector Training Ltd., an approved training provider for BIGGA and many other corporate and public sector clients. Brin is well known to many Greenkeepers in his role as one of the lead tutors on the BIGGA’s Management Development Programmes. Vector Training can be contacted via telephone on 01904 642462 or by email: enquiries@vector-training.demon.co.uk.
"Haven't the time to search for that specific second hand fine turf machine you require, then try us now at"

We import quality second hand John Deere fine turf machinery from the largest dealers in the US"

Phone through specific details and let us track down the second hand machine of your requirements. All machines have been fully reconditioned and are ready to go.

Other machines supplied include: RANSOMES, JACOBSEN & TORO

Just a few examples

- Turf Gators 6x4 (diesel) rear hitch, electric lift bed
  from £3,900 ex VAT

- Turf Gators & 4x2 Gators (petrol) rear hitch, electric lift bed
  from £3,200 ex VAT

- F1145 utility mowers with 72" out front rotary deck
  from £8,250 ex VAT

- 2653A utility mowers with 30" 5 reel blades, 80% wear remaining
  from £7,800 ex VAT

- 2653A utility mowers with 30" 8 reel blades, 80% wear remaining
  from £9,900 ex VAT

- 1200A Bunker rakes with front blade and rear rake
  from £3,400 ex VAT

"Unbeatable prices! Let the strength of the pound work for you!"

For details contact: Golf & Turf International
Northern office Tel: 01253 836726 Southern office Tel: 01769 550425

BANKING HAS NEVER BEEN SO EASY
THAT'S THE BEAUTY OF A NATIONAL

When it comes to staying the course, you can bank on the Allen National range keeping you on the straight and narrow. The Allen National range of triple mowers - 68, 68DL & 84 - are the only real choice for the professional on the tees and surrounds. And as for bunkers, they're no longer a hazard.

The 68DL has transport speed, electric start and full width rollers. Banking has never been so easy.

CALL 0845 60 10 815 FOR A FREE BROCHURE OR COMPLETE THE COUPON BELOW

Telephone: 01235 515400 for details of your nearest dealer for a FREE, no obligation, demonstration on the amazing ability of the National.

NAME: ____________________________
ADDRESS: _________________________
POSTCODE: ________________
John Lelean reports on the recent conference at St. Andrews which gave rise to some serious predictions about coastal erosion.

At Turnberry, fencing made from chestnut paling is staked into the top of a threatened dune to help prevent erosion.

The aptly entitled ‘On Course For Change’ conference at St. Andrews in February brought together a group of the most powerful and influential representatives ever assembled in European golf.

Course Managers mingled with secretaries, architects with constructors, head greenkeepers with environmentalists and there to keep the pot boiling was Michael Barratt of Nationwide fame, whose chairmanship ensured there were few dull moments.

His searching questions to the array of speakers during the two days was a replica of his professional performance before the BBC cameras and even Michael Meacher, the Minister of State for the Environment did not escape a friendly ‘grilling’ on government policy.

The R&A, who sponsored the event can feel justly pleased with its success, not only from their choice of subjects and speakers, but the depth of knowledge stimulated by contributions from the floor.

BIGGA’s newly elected President Sir Michael Bonallack, the current Captain of the R&A, ably set the scene on the opening day. He said the conference was set-up to identify the real facts that will affect the management and maintenance of golf courses in the light of climatic change.

It was not the time for decisions, but discussions, utilising the wealth of expertise gathered in the body of the hall.

Within minutes John Pethick, a professor of marine science at Newcastle University had the conference intrigued and stunned with his predictions of impending disaster to many of our more famous links courses as a result of climatic change.

Temperatures, he said are already showing a significant rise and this in turn is increasing the height of sea levels. Warmer, wetter winters and dryer, hotter summers have been recorded in recent years and the trend will continue.

He added that coastal courses are most at risk, particularly those links on estuaries such as St. Andrews. This theme was developed by Dr Mike Hulme from the University of East Anglia who with some impressive graphs and statistics showed how since the 1980s excessively cold spells in winter had halved and conversely the hotter summer days had increased.

Sea levels had already risen around our coasts of between 15-20 centimetres in the past 20 years, which predicted a further sea level rise over the next century of some 30 centimetres higher than it is today.

Storm surges accompanying heavy winter rain could produce high tides five times the current expected levels and even if there was an immediate reduction in the production of greenhouse gases, it will still take hundreds of years for nature to repair the damage already done.

Inland courses were also warned of the dangers facing them. Although they would not be eroded by the sea,
Coastal Erosion

On-shore wind patterns cause sand to be blown inland, and typical ‘dune’ structures are eroded. This allows the sea to advance at a faster rate than normal, as it is not impeded by the normal dune structure.

Turnberry solution

George Brown, Head Greenkeeper, at Turnberry Golf Club has employed a unique idea to slow down coastal erosion and help reduce the impact it has on his links course.

A chestnut paling fence is constructed and erected at angles, in front of the existing dune. Sand builds up along the fence to help stabilize the dune.

Worms will dig deeper in the hotter summers, but be more active in warmer wetter winters.

He also forecast an increase in the rat population, more wasps and slugs, greater mole activity and in uncultivated grassland weeds would flourish, particularly ragwort and thistle. Even the heathlands would not escape, heather will die back, heather beetles more numerous and bracken will take over the vacated ground.

The culprit he explained, was man’s method of energy production, in other words, higher levels of carbon dioxide and methane gas in the atmosphere producing the greenhouse effect.

Although some of the sceptics viewed this prediction of doom and gloom like a page from Old Moore’s Almanac, it stimulated a lively discussion after John Pethick, developing his examination of coastal erosion suggested that money spent on sand dune defences was akin to throwing cash into the sea.

He inferred that like King Canute, golf courses could not hold back the tide, no matter what defences they erected, be it rock, concrete or any of the various schemes tried at St. Andrews, Brancaster, Crail or Hayling Island.

His solution was that where links are under threat they should accept they will lose holes to the sea and re-build others where the moving sand has created new dunes.

Armoured defences were not sustainable, they merely stop the sand coming in and prevent the dunes reacting to changing sea levels. Instead he proposed the migration of holes, employing a flexibility of architecture to suite the situation.

Among links most at risk was the Old Course itself, where the Eden estuary is widening, undercutting the defences built over the past three hundred years. His prediction was that in time the par-3 11th will be washed away and probably the 12th tee.

The reaction of Sir Michael Bonallack, quoted in the following day’s issue of the Glasgow Herald, was - “To move this hole would be like repainting the Mona Lisa. I think there would be utter dismay throughout the world of golf... I hope it does not happen in my lifetime”.

The Royal West Norfolk course at Brancaster, the venue of a seminar to discuss the wider aspects of coastal erosion last October, prompted the identification of a major conflict. This was the lack of agreement between various government bodies and singled out for special criticism was English Nature, who it was alleged were a ‘bureaucratic spanner in the works’ pursuing their own agenda regardless of the consequences and the interests of others.

They were accused of adopting a policy of preservation rather than conservation, though this was denied by Keith Duff, representing English Nature, who suffered antagonism from the delegates with the confession that...
he was one of a rare breed of environmentalists by also being a golfer!

Some decisions emanating from the European Parliament also attracted the wrath of many, who felt much of the legislation was draconian and unnecessary.

It was at this point there was a suggestion that the R&A could play an important role where there appeared to be unresolved differences, a mantle they were quick to accept, despite Sir Michael's earlier comment that the conference was for discussion not decisions.

Throughout the two days of intensive debate, the conference discussed irrigation, changing pesticide legislation, planning problems and the recently launched 'Committed to Green Foundation', headed by David Stubbs. This is the organisation that has taken over the role formerly held by the European Golf Association Ecology Unit. (Note - See last month’s interview with David Stubbs by Scott MacCallum).

Committed to Green is currently funded by the R&A, the European Tour and the European Golf Association to promote environmental awareness in golf course management and design and construction, but Stubbs said he believes it should have a wider base, encompassing more sports than golf.

He told delegates that an approach had been made to the football authorities, which prompted Chris Kennedy, Wentworth’s Course Manager to ask what common interests he had identified between golf and soccer.

Many felt that by expanding into other sports it would dilute the effect the organisation had set out to achieve in the Valderrama Declaration, though this was not accepted by some of the European representatives.

A Belgium representative said that what is lacking in the UK is a National Ecologist. The continentals would like Committed to Green to be expanded into other sports to give golf a bigger and better profile.

To close what had been two stimulating days, Michael Meacher, Secretary of State for the Environment, left the Commons early on Friday to give the conference an update on how the government were tackling the effects of climatic change, new pesticide regulations and pending legislation on water abstraction.

He said, referring to questions on coastal erosion, he accepted there was conflict on occasions between various departments under his control and agreed at times local officials used the written rules rather than the guidance notes.

Asked how clubs should react when met with bureaucratic intransigence, he suggested there was a higher authority and if that did not work, take the matter up with a local MP. Finally he added, one can write directly to me.

Summing up, Mr Meacher said the way forward must be by consultation, not legislation. The R&A are in the van of environmental protection.

---

LOW VIBRATION!
HIGH PERFORMANCE!

A HIGH PERFORMANCE BRUSHCUTTER WITH
A VIBRATION RATING
OF ONLY 2.3

For heavy duty professional operation. Specially constructed handlebars dampens out vibration for comfortable day-in, day-out use.
Fitted with a four line nylon cutting head.

- Double handlebars.
- Lightweight and easy to use.
- A vibration rating of only 2.3 racing.
- 41.5cc Zenoah Komatsu engine.

All Allen brushcutters are supplied as standard with a nylon line cutting head, safety guard, harness, goggles, tool kit and full instructions.

FOR A FREE BROCHURE CALL
0845 60 10 815

The Broadway, Didcot, Oxon OX11 8ES
Tel: 01235 515400 Fax: 01235 515401
Website: www.allenpower.com
Email: sales@allenpower.com
Water

Water is a commodity that we in Britain take for granted, though perhaps it is opportune to reflect on Thomas Fuller who wrote in the mid 17th century - “We never know the worth of water until the well runs dry”.

Golf course irrigation, relatively new, has now regarded that it will have to adapt to changing conditions. Mains water surprisingly used by two thirds of UK courses is certain to become far more expensive or discouraged altogether; extraction licences are to become 'time limited' and even where courses have their own supply such as bore holes it is likely amounts will be strictly controlled.

Pesticides

Pesticide use has been increasing condemned by the 'Greens' as nothing more than chemical warfare on the environment. A description put with fervour and feeling by Mark Davis of the Pesticide Trust.

His view, certainly not shared and which most believed was totally over stated, was that the hi-tech courses rely more and more on pesticides without considering the alternatives. He said that world-wide there were over 1,000 chemical products that had been approved and used, many containing acute toxicity which in the long term can produce chronic health affects. He added that in the UK there were 72 chemicals being applied to the environment which were suspected to be endocrine disruptors or in other words can cause cancer.

His argument was for organic methods rather than chemical, though he appeared to have few solutions to worm control and none at all to an invasion of leather jackets.

Woodhall Spa's Peter Wisbey, no doubt with tongue in cheek, suggested the use of a fine tines perhaps with barbs for spearing, though George Brown thought closely spaced deep slitters could be more effective!

The research requirement by CSHH of all new products was highlighted by Richard Minton, Scotts Marketing Manager. He said it required up to ten years research and millions of pounds investment extending to 100 individual tests before a new product satisfied European law. This could be a valid reason for the high cost.

The agricultural industry was by far the largest market for pesticide products, accounting for 97% of the products sold. Amenity and private gardens took another 3% with the remainder for horticulture and amenity, selling to Japan, Australia or the USA, for example. Pesticide use has been increasing, though if he adopted the usual method of tackling a green at a time with a standard vice, his solution is to work on three greens at the same time, but only half a green at a time with a hollow core followed by top dressing, play would be disrupted.

He said an on site weather station can prove invaluable in saving water or failing that greenstuff should have access to up-to-date predictions of rainfall from their local meteorological centre.

And food for thought from the floor... It was reported that Hayling Island golf club have a 15 acre lake to meet their irrigation requirements. They also have a tangible investment with an annual income of £12,000 from the sale of fishing tickets to local anglers!

J. S. Wood who is currently finishing a book on turf management in comparison to the Open Championship. He said an on site weather station can prove invaluable in saving water or failing that greenstuff should have access to up-to-date predictions of rainfall from their local meteorological centre.

He said an on site weather station can prove invaluable in saving water or failing that greenstuff should have access to up-to-date predictions of rainfall from their local meteorological centre.

And food for thought from the floor... It was reported that Hayling Island golf club have a 15 acre lake to meet their irrigation requirements. They also have a tangible investment with an annual income of £12,000 from the sale of fishing tickets to local anglers!
THE COMPLETE UTILITY TASK FORCE.

Kawasaki Mules. Lightweight taskmasters built to tackle the toughest of tasks. Now available in four models including the powerful new Diesel Mule that’s heavy duty yet light on fuel. Kawasaki gets the job done. To experience the power behind the work, call our freephone number or your nearest Kawasaki dealer.

Call free for a brochure
0800 500245

The difference is Flowtronex

Whether you want to keep your green green or your pitch perfect, Flowtronex makes the difference.

Flowtronex variable speed pump sets are the heart of any irrigation system, boosting flow and pressure wherever it is needed to make the most of your landscape.

Integrating the latest in variable speed technology with superior design, engineering and construction, Flowtronex brings you energy savings of up to 50% and reduced maintenance costs.

And when you order a Flowtronex pump set you can have every confidence that it has been designed to meet your specific requirements – from bowling greens to championship courses.

With a pump set from Flowtronex you can see the difference.
Buy on-line

Send for your FREE mouse mat

www.uapamenity.co.uk

Email: amenity@uap-europe.com
Telephone orders: 01787 226100

Tel. 01603 746229 Fax: 01603 746243
Mobile: 0850 752744
email: pwlgroup@farmline.com

SOVEREIGN TURF LIMITED • FIR TREE FARM BLAXHALL • WOODBRIDGE IP12 2DX

Our financial strength is your guarantee of long term, secure, competitive funding for all kinds of turf care machinery. Call our Sales Desk: 01904 488771

THE INDEPENDENT LEADER IN TURF CARE FINANCE
When Rod Feltham launched Avoncrop Amenity Products on February 1, 1990, from a converted house a few miles outside Weston Super Mare, in Somerset, his wildest dreams and most optimistic projections would not have placed him, a mere 10 years later, in his custom-built office looking back at a decade of virtual uninterrupted progression and success, as BIGGA's latest Golden Key Supporter.

Above (L-R): Rod Feltham, Johanna Feltham and Chris Briggs

Sure you can still see that original house from the window of the new offices on a small industrial estate in the village of Sandford but in every other respect you would need extremely powerful binoculars to look back and view the beginnings of the company from where they are now.

"In our first two years we reached where we hoped to be in five and if we'd said, ten years ago that we'd be as heavily involved in London and the Home Counties, and indeed the entire south of England, I certainly wouldn't have imagined it," said Rod, who has 30 years experience of the amenity industry under his belt.

"It just evolved that way. Business came in and we needed to expand...and we still need to expand as there are some areas - Norfolk and Suffolk - where we haven't got anyone. We certainly haven't finished expanding," he smiled.

Avoncrop Amenity Products was launched with a team of five who'd worked together for another company in the Bristol area, which had sold out, and it was to another former colleague Rod turned for assistance when the decision to strike out on their own was made.

"Avoncrop Ltd supply the commercial horticulture sector and the Managing Director is David Onions. David and I worked for the same company in our raw, younger days and had remained friends ever since," explained Rod.

"He started Avoncrop Ltd in the early 70s and in 1989 we decided that we would form a sister company called Avoncrop Amenity Products to serve the local authority and sports club sector."

The two companies are entirely separate in their operation and are just linked at the top.

"My wife, Jennifer, and I are 50% partners with Avoncrop Ltd. It's virtually unheard of that a company should..."
Above: Johanna displays one of the products from the many ranges Avoncrop stocks

be in partnership with two individuals. In fact initially there were no forms to cover such a situation at the tax office," laughed Rod, as he remembered the incident.

"We decided to adopt the Avoncrop name because it had become widely known in commercial horticulture and we also decided to use the same logo. From the beginning Rod was keen that the company should be more than about merely selling products. They should also provide a service to clients. "As business grew we took on more staff and we were always extremely careful in who we appointed believing that we needed highly competent, technical people to provide the in depth back-up service we wanted to provide."

They also took the decision to start their own fleet of vehicles and now 98% of deliveries are completed this way. "If you draw a line east to west through Stoke-on-Trent that is about our border line. It roughly covers the Walsall to Averbury" explained Rod.

There was a defining moment for Avoncrop Amenity Products - an occasion when the opportunity to move from being a "West Country company to something somewhat larger" - it was in '95 when, together with Avoncrop Ltd, they took the decision to take on a substantial depot, deep in the heart of the Home Counties. "As we grew we began to get vibes that we should be moving into the London area but we felt we couldn't service them satisfactorily from our Sandford depot. So we decided to take the plunge and take over a large warehouse and offices in Bracknell. Our daughter, Johanna, who had joined us from a firm of accountants went up there and now runs that depot," said Rod.

"The cost was high but we felt we could do a good job. We worked out that within a 15 mile radius of the depot there were around 30 golf clubs." It is a nice twist that Johanna Feltham runs the Avoncrop Amenity Product side of the Bracknell business and Chris O'Nions, son of David Onions, runs the Avoncrop Ltd side. The Bracknell and Sandford teams get together at least twice a year while Rod does the majority of purchasing for both depots. Johanna, in her role of Company Accounts Manager, travels to Sandford once a week on accounts business.

"This is a bit of healthy in-house competition about the size of our respective turnovers and until recently Sandford always held the upper hand but I think the scales have just about tipped in Bracknell's favour with about 51% of the total turnover coming from there," revealed Rod with mock sorrow.

"There was a degree of inevitability about that but it has happened quicker than we'd thought," he said, while Rod is particularly proud to be the "Head Greenkeeper to the first two years of Westurf to get it off the ground. They did all the hard work but we gave assistance and that is typical of the relationships we've had with the Sections in the area," said Rod.

We worked very closely with the local Sections and worked closely with Gordon and Marion Child in the first two years of Westurf to get it off the ground. They did all the hard work but we gave assistance and that is typical of the relationships we've had with the Sections in the area," said Rod. "We were very lucky that we could sponsor a golf day or a seminar within each Section and as we have grown over the last five years we decided to put a little more in and become a Golden Key member."

"I like the idea that we keep our team educated and it follows that it is important that our customers are the same. By helping the Education and Development Fund we can do that."

Avoncrop became a Silver Key Supporter of BIGGA in 1999 but had been involved in the Association from day one. "We worked very closely with the local Sections and worked closely with Gordon and Marion Child in the first two years of Westurf to get it off the ground. They did all the hard work but we gave assistance and that is typical of the relationships we've had with the Sections in the area," said Rod.

Chris and the Technical Managers are finding that the information required by the Course Manager or Head Greenkeeper is becoming much more sophisticated.

"They are becoming degree orientated," said Rod. "What first started in the West Country the greenkeeper had followed his father and possibly his grandfather into the club. It was a hand down. There are still a lot of guys like that and they are very important to us but the new breed are coming in and keeping us on our toes."

Avoncrop stockists included Levingtons and Scotts who make the products for Avoncrop and the manufacturer is the same. By helping the Education and Development Fund we can do that."

"We meet once a year and have general discussions on various aspects of the business including training and products throughout Europe. In fact through this the relationships with manufacturers like Green-Releaf and Terralift to the continent which helps the manufacturer and their business."

If the rate of growth continues for Avoncrop Amenity Products who knows what the next 10 years with bring but one thing is for sure, Rod Feltham will take a great deal of pleasure in plotting each path the company takes.