

Taking care of business

How important is administrative help to a golf course maintenance operation?

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Times have changed for golf course superintendents. Gone are the days of spending most of your time where you need to be spending most of your time ... on the golf course. Today's superintendent can be found in the office working on budgets, ordering supplies, answering the phone, fielding questions from members, and trying to keep up with mounting administrative paperwork.

A recent poll of superintendents in Florida who do not have administrative help revealed the following:

- On a normal day, there may be 20 phone calls to respond to, and during construction or renovation, as many as 30 to 50 calls daily.

- Many superintendents who need administrative support are still trying to convince their boards or general manag-



ers that there is a need for a secretary or administrative assistant. Depending on the golf course, administrative duties for superintendents are averaging 15 to 20 hours per week, or more.

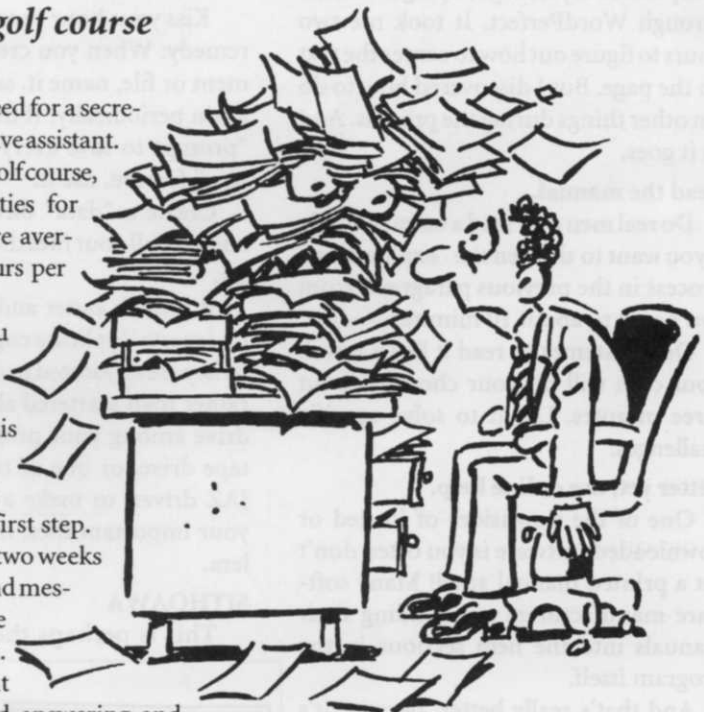
For those of you in need of administrative help, how do you justify this extra support?

Documenting your needs is the first step.

- Keep a log for two weeks of all phone calls and messages you receive during the day. Record the amount of time you spend answering and following up on those calls. Were you able to return the calls in a timely manner, or was it a couple of days before you could get back to them?

- Record the time you spend on paperwork each day. Be sure to include time in meetings with managers or staff, as well as seminars you attend to maintain your certification and licenses. How much time do you spend typing memos, reports, and club newsletters? Who takes care of the office when you are away, another employee, an answering machine or no one?

Before turning in your request to the board or general manager, look over your budget and see if there are things you would not mind giving up to have administrative help. Be willing to



compromise if necessary. Having someone to share the load is worth a little compromise, even if your budget will only allow part-time help.

Another option may be to let an existing employee split their day between the golf course and the office. There may be someone who would not mind spending some of the day inside and taking on a little extra responsibility. One golf course superintendent said that having office help was as important to his golf course operation as the irrigation or spray technician. He also said he would sacrifice one person on his golf course to have administrative support.

Bill Jeffrey, CGCS, expressed great frustration at the lack of administrative help because he is spending more hours at his office just trying to keep up with it all. He spends one hour before the crew comes in, at least an hour and half after they leave, and 4-5 hours every Friday afternoon working on administrative duties. Bill had office help for 12 years at a previous golf course, and now has been 10 years without that help.

"In that 10 years, the amount of administrative work has increased tenfold," says Jeffrey. "When I had office help, I felt like I got more accomplished, was more efficient, and I was definitely less frustrated."

For Bill, who has small children, taking work home is not an option. There is no office space, and no quiet time to do paperwork. "Personal time? Ha, forget it".

Once you have documented the need for office support, the second step is determining the duties and responsibilities of your administrative support person.

The following are suggested guidelines.

1. Review the position; define responsibilities and the required education level for the job. Basic duties may include:

- Processing purchase orders
- Comparing invoices and related documents to determine correct billing for products received

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Operations Checklist

Robin Raby, administrative assistant for Royal Poinciana Golf Club, developed the following Organization Checklist for Golf Course Operations:

• Procedures of Interviews and Hiring Practices

- Is application information complete?
- Are proper procedures maintained during oral interviews?
- Is identification reviewed and current?
- Are references checked?

• Employee Handbook

- Does the maintenance facility have its own employee handbook? If applicable, is the handbook available in other languages?
- Do employees sign an acknowledgment for receiving and understanding rules and regulations in handbook?

• Employee Files

Personnel files should be kept in the maintenance facility. Each file should include:

- Application
- Employee Orientation Check-list
- Medical History
- I-9
- W-4
- Emergency Contact Form

- Copy of Drivers License, Social Security Card, and/or Resident Alien ID
- Signed Acknowledgement of Probation Form
- Signed Acknowledgement of Receiving Employee Handbook
- Signed Receipt for Protective Equipment Received

• Drug Free Program

- Is there a program in effect?
- If so, do employees fully understand policy and consequences if policy is not complied with?

• Sexual Harassment Policy

- Is a policy written and posted?
- Is policy reviewed with new employees?
- Do employees understand policy?

• Workers Compensation

- Are copies of completed forms kept in a separate medical employee file?
- Are they signed by employee (if possible), as well as management?

• OSHA 200 Forms

- Are the OSHA 200 forms filled out properly?
- Are they posted, as law requires?

• Payroll

- Is payroll done in office?
- Are backup copies of timecards/timesheets kept if originals are forwarded to main office?

- Sorting and preparing invoices for coding and approval
- Following up on deliveries or services promised by vendors
- Assisting in keeping equipment maintenance histories and inventory
- Keeping employee records up to date
- Taking phone messages and scheduling appointments for superintendent; Responding to questions that do not need the superintendent to answer
- Accurate filing for immediate reference needs
- Computer/Word Processing work (letters, memos, reports etc.)
- Maintaining records for preparation of annual budget
- Maintaining file of applications received

2. Compare salaries, skill levels and experience with those of similar positions in your area. When determining salary, consider the demands of the position and specialized skills required.

For example, a secretary may answer the phone and refer calls to someone else. An administrative assistant may be required to help answer the caller's ques-

tion. An administrative assistant should also be aware of labor laws and hiring practices. Making sure that these are followed will help prevent labor-related legal action against the superintendent and club.

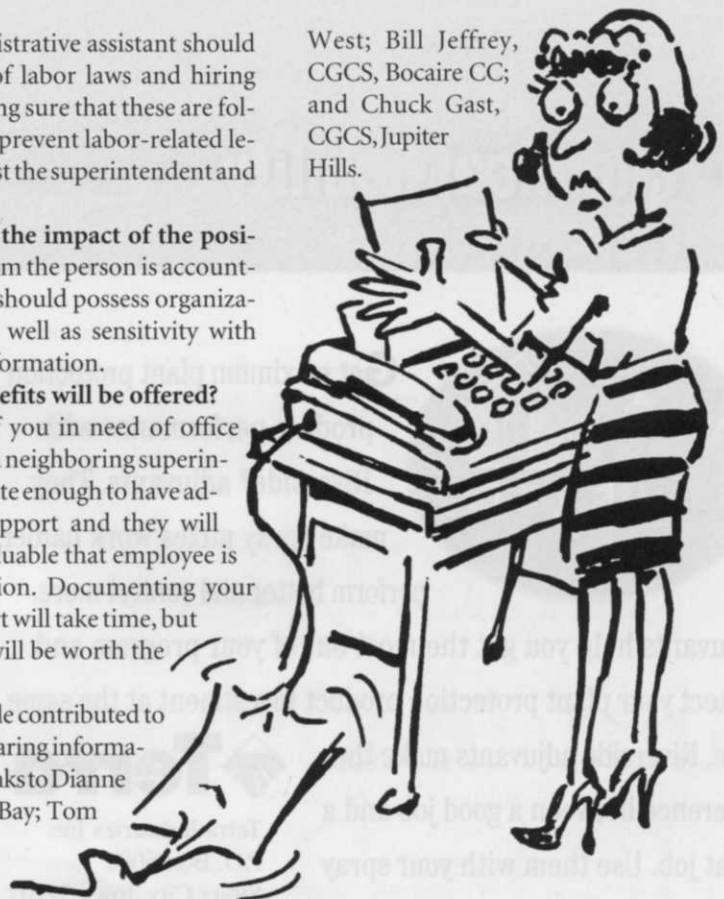
3. Consider the impact of the position and to whom the person is accountable. He or she should possess organizational skills, as well as sensitivity with confidential information.

4. What benefits will be offered?

For those of you in need of office help, chat with a neighboring superintendent fortunate enough to have administrative support and they will tell you how valuable that employee is to their operation. Documenting your need for support will take time, but the end result will be worth the effort.

A lot of people contributed to this article by sharing information. Special thanks to Dianne Radkin, Bonita Bay; Tom Trammel, CGCS, Metro

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• Safety Meetings

- Are monthly safety meetings conducted?
- Is attendance of each meeting taken and topics of meeting documented?
- Are emergency phone numbers posted and updated?

• Vacation and Leave of Absence

- Do employees complete a request in writing for vacation and leave of absence?
- Is there a policy in effect concerning leave of absence and return to work? Do employees understand and sign this request?
- Are forms kept in employee's file?

• Attendance and Tardiness

- Is attendance and tardiness documented and kept in employee's file?
- Is there a monthly sheet kept for all employees?

• Procedures of Termination

- Is proper procedure followed prior to and when terminating an employee?
- Is appropriate paperwork completed?
- Are exit interviews conducted?

• Invoices/Accounts Payable

- Are copies made and kept in vendor files before submitting for payment?

- Are orders complete and prices correct before submitting for payment?

• MSDS

- Is the MSDS book current with sheets for chemicals, herbicides, insecticides, etc.?
- Is there an inventory of all chemicals, herbicides, insecticides and cleaning compounds and solvents in mechanic's shop and maintenance area?

• Insurance

- Are materials readily available for employee's pertaining to insurance coverage?

• Miscellaneous

- Are copies of pesticide license(s) in one main file, as well as in employee's file?
- Are job descriptions written and given to employee pertaining to position and job expectations on the golf course?
- Is a Hazcom Policy in effect?
- Is a Hurricane Preparedness policy written, if applicable? Is it reviewed before each season?
- If applicable, are forms available in Spanish?

Thorough record-keeping at golf courses is required by law. Some superintendents may not be familiar with current laws and record requirements. There may be penalties involved if found negligent from non-enforcement. How many of the above items do you have completed?

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