



above schedule. The unique and demanding elements of a South Florida golf course operation requires a thorough evaluation of turf equipment and a proper comparison to operations in other parts of the United States. Budgets, depreciation schedules and time of equipment replacement should reflect these considerations.

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Editor's Note: This article was gleaned from the Florida Green archives. The information remains timely and constructive when discussing budgets with your club. Fundamental and sound information are always the building blocks in the budget process.

Submitting Proposals to Management

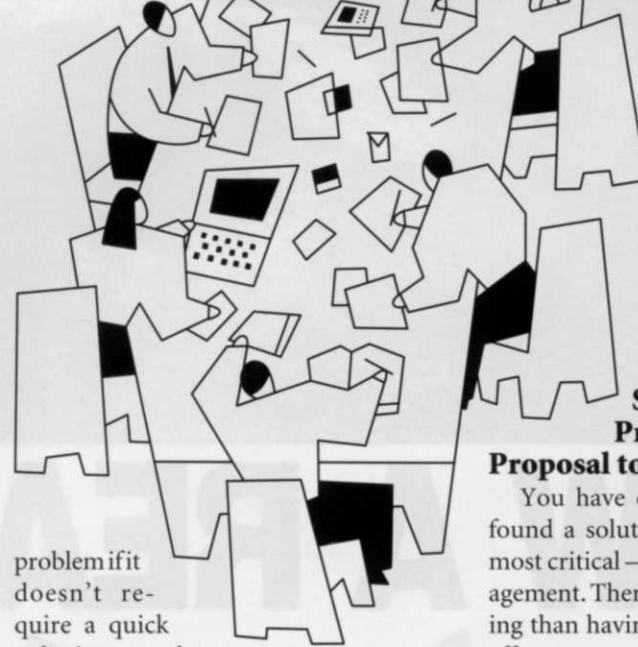
Maintaining today's modern golf course is no easy task. The expectations for course conditioning placed on the superintendent and his or her staff is extremely demanding. Occasionally, unexpected situations occur that hinder the normal day-to-day operations such as the severe flooding problems that affected numerous courses this past winter in central Florida. In addition, many superintendents were also having to deal with greens that suffered from stress and overseeding that failed due to the wrath of El Niño.

When unexpected situations occur, the superintendent may have to deal with a general manager or green committee before any work is started. This is especially true if the situation involves exceeding budget allowances. The purpose of this article is to assist the superintendent in presenting problems and solutions to management in an organized and effective manner.

STEP ONE - Define the Problem

It is impossible to fix a problem if you do not know what is broken. This first step is crucial to the process as a whole.

Once you start gathering information on the problem, avoid the temptation to make hasty judgments. It may be helpful to walk away from the



problem if it doesn't require a quick solution and think about possible solutions overnight. The next time you look at the problem you may notice something that you missed in your first examination.

One helpful tool that many managers fail to utilize is asking their employees for possible solutions to a problem. This process is called brainstorming. This process involves informing your employees of the problem and asking for their input for a solution. This is also an effective tool for building morale among your employees. Brainstorming does not have to take place in a formal setting but can be done even while you are making your rounds of the course in the morning. Remember that lack of communication is a major reason for job dissatisfaction.

STEP TWO - Compile Data

Once you are certain that you have found the problem, it is time to compile all the data for a possible solution. This is crucial step that should be given as much

attention to detail as possible. The adage "leave no stone unturned" is applicable in this step. Factors that you want to consider are costs, labor, long-term savings versus short-term costs, environmental impacts, local, state and federal regulations and ordinances, in-house repairs versus contractors. This list will be dictated by your particular situation. Remember to be thorough in your computations. The more answers you can provide to management, the more competent you will look in their eyes.

STEP THREE - Present Your Proposal to Management

You have defined the problem and found a solution. The final step is the most critical – selling your ideas to management. There is nothing more frustrating than having all your hard work and effort go to waste because you failed to properly prepare.

It may be helpful to think of yourself as an attorney going to court to defend a client. Each golf course is different in its superintendent/management hierarchy. It might be as simple as the superintendent and owner discussing business matters over lunch or as complicated as a superintendent having to deal with several layers of management. Whatever your situation is, the preparation should be the same.

In her book, *Elements of Argument*, Annette T. Rottenberg identifies five key areas to help you with selling your idea to management. Make your proposal clear. All terms of the proposal should be precisely defined.

If necessary, establish the need for a change. Sometimes a problem does not exist but a need for change is in order. The old saying, "this is the way we have always done it" comes into play. As a superintendent, you should always be looking for ways to constantly improve



your course. Even subtle changes can make a huge difference in the way your customers perceive your course. People often resist change so expect resistance.

Consider the opposing arguments. Give this area some careful thought. The time spent thinking of the questions you will be asked — and their answers — will be time well spent. This exercise is like playing chess. Always anticipate your opponent's move.

Discuss the benefits of your solutions. It will be helpful to understand your manager's preferences on certain issues. Is your general manager's main concern costs? If so, explain the cost savings over the short-term and long-term. Is the main concern of your green committee chairman the playability of the course? If so, demonstrate how your solution will make for a better playing surface.

Support your proposal with solid data. The preparation time spent in data collection will show itself here. Remember to leave no stone unturned. Are your estimates for contract labor the total costs or are there hidden charges? The more thorough you are in this department, the more credible you'll appear in management's eyes. In addition, you should also consider common-sense reasons, which may be more persuasive.

In summary, unexpected disasters, day-to-day operations, poor construction and member expectations often create problems that need solving. If you follow the steps outlined above, you will

be better prepared to present your solutions to management.

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Editor's Note: Richard Banks is the spray technician at the Palisades GC in Central Florida. Encouraged by his boss, Dan Winters, he is preparing for a career as a superintendent.

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