

The changing environment for golf course management

By ROBERT H. DEDMAN JR.
• President and Chief Executive Officer
ClubCorp

The golf industry has changed greatly in the past decade, particularly in terms of member service.

The trend toward consolidation has especially impacted talent resources, an issue we have met by formalizing our company's service-oriented operations into a culture called "Star Service."

The recruitment of skilled human resources is of such concern that I have charged all our employee partners with the responsibility. We

have a goal to be 100 percent staffed by employees recommended by other employees. Emphasis on the employment process has been critical to our success in selecting the best available talent and our attempts to become the employer of choice in the markets we serve.



Robert Dedman Jr.

To keep good hourly wage personnel, we have cross-training programs so many employees learn to do more than one job. At the same time, we strive to instill employees with a passion for delivering personalized service and exceeding expectations.

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10 satisfying years for golf

By L.T. WALDEN
• President, E-Z-GO Textron

The last ten years have been exciting for both E-Z-GO and the golf industry. Thousands of new courses opened, new companies came into the industry, some left the industry, and countless rounds were played.

One of the biggest changes in the golf industry is the emergence of multi-course owner/operators. They are now significant players in the golf industry, which is now a multi-billion dollar business. The emergence of these companies is a reflection of the growth and success of the golf business.

While individually owned courses are still the majority, there is no denying that the influence of multi-course operators will continue to grow in the next ten years.

A lot is written about new golf course construction and the number of new courses that open each year. Ten years ago, many new courses were private

clubs built as part of a large residential subdivision. Today, most new courses are high-quality daily-fee facilities. I believe that the total number of golf courses will continue to grow slowly and steadily.

The number of people playing golf is flat and it has not grown in the last five years. The challenge for the future is

how to entice more people to come out and play. We also have to strengthen the player base for the future. That's why there is such a focus on junior players and bringing young people into the game.

The golf industry has seen tremendous ups and downs in the last 10 years. While the golf

car business is not recession proof, the revenue generating potential of golf cars has helped us overcome most of the downs. Golf cars are a tremendous source of revenue at most courses. That fact has helped us smooth out the business cycles in golf.

For E-Z-GO, the last ten years were very satisfying. We introduced the TXT

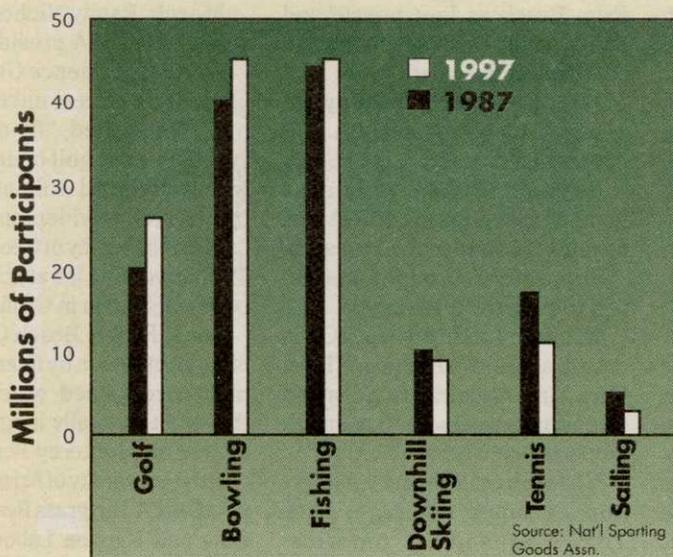
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L.T. Walden

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molecular biology to gene cloning and *in vitro* culture and somaclonal variation.

June: Tessenderlo Group of Brussels buys Hickson Kerley, a manufacturer and marketer of specialty liquid fertilizer.

August: The BioJect system, a sort of on-site brewery for disease-suppressive bacteria, gets sparkling results making biological-control agents effective.

September: USGA Green Section launches Construction Education Program, with Jim Moore as director.

November: Jacobsen Division of Textron, Inc. acquires the Bunton Co.

1997

February: 1996 course openings reach 442, the second-highest total ever.

March: Zeneca Professional Products releases Heritage, the first fungicide ever approved in the EPA's "reduced-risk pesticide" category.

April: PGA Tour and John Deere ink three-tiered, nine-year deal in which Deere provides turf equipment to TPC courses network, assumes title sponsorship of Quad

City Classic and provides 385 acres for new TPC course in Moline, Ill.

May: Alice Dye, first woman voted into the ASGCA, becomes its first female president.

August: Widow's Walk, the first "environmental demonstration" golf course, opens on what was once a gravel pit and dump site in Scituate, Mass.

September: Audubon International creates trust to accept land which environmental group will develop into courses bearing Audubon name.

November: Group of 27 Sarasota, Fla., courses battles county government over

storm-water runoff assessment that costs some courses as much as \$46,000 annually and seriously threatens survival.

1998

April: El Nino-driven storms hammer California courses while heavy rains wreak havoc on Florida links.

May: Audubon International revokes Signature status from golf courses failing to follow guidelines.

June: Purdue University in Indiana opens new Pete Dye-designed golf course that will conduct extensive studies on effects of course maintenance on ground water.

July: Kentucky's Bob O'Link Golf Course unveils Kids Course within existing championship layout.

August: Meditrust completes Cobblestone Golf Group acquisition.

1999

January: Y2K could mean major headaches for nation's golf courses.

February: Meditrust decides to sell off Cobblestone Golf Group.

March: Virginia Circuit Court judge clears way for Richmond First Tee facility.

April: Project manager at Aspen, Colo.'s Roaring Fork Club charged with stealing \$230,000 from developers.

Dedman

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pectations, whatever their role.

We have instituted the "Three Es" of performance management: Expectations, Equipping, and Evaluation. We set clear expectations for employee partners, make sure they are equipped with the necessary tools and resources, and consistently evaluate the results.

Also changing is the role of the golf professional, who can no longer simply serve as a retailer of goods and services. At ClubCorp, we make pros responsible for member retention. That means programs and services to make a member's whole golf experience the best.

Linked with this issue of enhancing the golf experience is the growing challenge of pro-active player development. What are we going to do to encourage more women, juniors, and seniors to take up the game of golf and remain in the sport? Some of our clubs have installed 4,800-yard tees for beginners and high-handicappers. Others are devising innovative programs to better serve juniors, such as additional forward tees. Scoring systems for these tees can be customized to age groups, with a higher par for younger players. Providing juniors a handicap makes them feel like "real" golfers.

Of course, no discussion of the past decade or the new millennium is complete without acknowledging the impact of technology. More and more golfers in the future will be making tee times via the Internet. But in addition to logistical efficiencies, technology has the potential to provide innumerable opportunities to personalize the consumer's golf experience.

If the past decade is an indicator, the future will pose operational challenges we cannot even imagine now. Yet creating a future based service values will define our success and allow us to continually reinvent our services, products, and amenities in a changing environment.

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