

Replacement parts: Part II

A Roundtable discussion

This is the second of a three part series reporting the results from a roundtable discussion among manufacturers, distributors, superintendents, and educators on how to make the system work better. In the first part (January issue), some of the manufacturers discussed how their system works. This second part will further that discussion and get into some of the reasons a part may not be available as quickly as you would like and what some of the possible solutions may be.

Keep in mind that this series is mainly food for thought and not really a program that will be immediately instituted, though we hope that some ideas will persist and soon come to pass. One of the keys that was brought up in the first of the series and is echoed in this second part is communication. The key to having your best shot at getting a replacement part quickly in an emergency "down" situation is communicating the urgency to the right person immediately.



Reed LeFebvre:

"Can I ask the major manufacturers what arrangements they have with their subsidiary dealers for getting replacement parts so they can get them back to us?"



Ben Johnson:

The Kohler Co., Kohler, Wisconsin: Let me answer that question. "I'm speaking as an air-cooled engine manufacturer. Kohler, Briggs and Stratton, and Tecumseh use basically the same network of distributors throughout the country. Kohler has 40 central distributors in North America. These central distributors utilize a three-step distribution system: Central distributor to a service distributor

to a service dealer. I don't see any change in the distribution system at this time, although I do see some service distributors getting stronger, and there will be fewer but bigger and better ones.

"Some of our major OEM accounts, such as Toro and Jacobsen, have provided us with lists of their dealers nationwide. We utilize these lists and give our central distributors stocking lists of the parts required for a specific manufacturer's engine specifications. Jacobsen would have different specifications for their equipment than would Toro. We give them lists of parts that their service distributors and service dealers should stock. With the dealer lists and parts stocking lists, the central distributor would see that his service distributors and dealers are stocking sufficient quantities of spare parts to ensure adequate field service and support.

"As a result, I think there is a more conservative, more sophisticated effort being made by the engine manufacturers to get suggested parts down to the lowest level. We allow each central distributor one big monthly order. You can come in with any quantity of parts. We also allow them a weekly order where they know what we will ship. Let's say the distributor's day happens to be Wednesday. They know we pick parts on Monday, so if they send us their order and we have it Friday, we pick Monday to ship Wednesday. This never changes.

"We also have an emergency system where, if you call us by 10 o'clock in the morning and it's a true emergency, we'll ship that afternoon. If we got it after 10, it would have to go out the next day.

Editor's note: We've now heard how the major manufacturers handle parts requests. All have an organized routing plan that a request would follow. There are only two reasons an urgent parts request cannot be met. One is if it gets to the top and the part is simply not available. The other reason would be because of a failure in communication. No matter where the conversation ranges, it always gets back to this recurring word: communication.



Steve Ferguson, International Harvester: "Basically, you never talk to the salesman again. If something happens to the piece of equipment, the first thing you

do is go to the dealer and the first person you see is his parts manager. We talked about parts and service and I think all of us as manufacturers have pretty sophisticated systems as we know today to keep these high-priced pieces of equipment running.

"I've seen a lot of good distribution systems for any company whatever, criticized unmercifully because the communications were never generated to the right people. I think the point we've got to make as a manufacturer is that everybody is made well aware of the situation and to make sure that our systems are working to the fullest extent. I don't care which manufacturer it is, I think we all have our systems in place to give you our response.

"But the urgency usually comes because the piece of equipment sat there for three weeks before anybody or everybody that really is going to jump on the bandwagon was involved. Usually it is the unexpected, something the engineer didn't anticipate, that goes wrong, the field failure, manufacturing problem, a defect. Some of the bigger problems that you face today aren't necessarily that fast moving part that we as a distribution system have in our system because we can get you that part pretty quick. It's one where the field demand is now such that we never anticipated because this product is simply breaking when we didn't anticipate it."

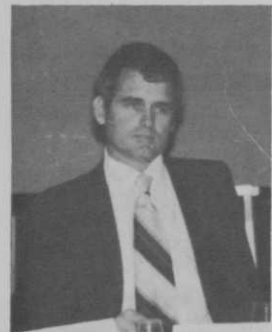
Reed LeFebvre: "I think the ideal situation I ran into and it wasn't with a mower, but when the salesman came out with a piece of equipment, the service manager came out also and we went over the thing together and irregardless, it doesn't change your mind about whether you want to buy this piece of equipment or not, but he told me right then the strong points and the weak points of that piece of

equipment.

"I'd never ran into anything like that before, but it is really super because you can say, OK, down the road—six months or a year from now, this is what I'm going to have to do. This is what I'm going to have to watch for. Now, it would have to be an ideal salesman who knew how to fix the equipment, knew everything about it, but there has to be some supportive role by someone else to fill you in on all the real details of the equipment. What's along the way down?"

Jud Debra:

"We have a few fellows on our sales staff who are very mechanically oriented and can give the customer some added help. However, in general it is im-



Ed Combest

practical, in many cases undesirable for him to be a mechanic. That's why we have trained people at our places of business who are experts in the parts business.

"I think service schools held in the field could be a way to go. You have the experts tell the people that this fairway mower has such and such strong points, but if you don't keep the collars on the roller tight, you'll be wearing the bearings out and trying to replace them. Recommendations are check it every six months. Please check it at least once a year. Lay it right on the line and even say, well, we thought that this particular item was going to last 2000 hours. Practical experience finds, here in Florida with sand and moisture and conditions of fertilizer and etc., it's really going to last only so long.

"Unfortunately, I would estimate that in customer representation, and through no fault to the customer but through the demands of the Southern Turf market, our representation at service schools is probably only ten percent."



Ed Combest,

Lake City Community College, Lake City, Florida: "As I travel, I see a definite need for more education. I'm talking about the majority of the golf course

superintendents doing a fine job, but when they go into the maintenance complex, they're lost. And at the prices we're paying, all we're getting is automobile mechanics who are not really trained in the equipment we've got. They need the communication and the education also.

"I think about five days out of the year is real cheap education to find out how to run this business. I think it would be well worth his time and dollars to get, let's say five days worth. You can cover many subjects in five days."



Tom Mascaro:

"As far as I'm concerned, I don't think the superintendent should become a mechanic. He's got enough problems and to learn how to

fix every piece of equipment he's got, then he is no longer a superintendent, he is something else. I really think that the emphasis should be placed on

good mechanics and send them to the schools and train them so that they can report back to the superintendent on what is going on."

Ed Combest: "I agree with you 100 percent. If this is the case, it still goes back to the man in charge, the superintendent. Who he sends to the school is up to him."



John McKenzie:

"I'm a firm believer in education and everything. And I know that job you're doing after I have had several students work out on

their on-the-job training. But like Tom said, superintendents are not twisting the wrench. Reality is, we still don't have the part. All the preventive maintenance in the world can be put in and he can follow all the step-by-step procedures, but when that thing is gone, it is gone.

"Getting back to the salesman, he is taking that profession because he wants to go out and sell. He's not a technician, he should have the available information to relay to the person who's buying it and say this is a technical representative for our distributor or this is a technical representative of the manufacturer. He should be able to help that person find a solution, but he should not have the knowledge to do it himself. It's just like a car salesman, once you buy a car. He points to the service department. He'll help you get it over there."



Buddy Tresca,

Tresca, Inc., Jacksonville, Fla.: "Our problem is communication again. It's knowing when a problem exists. It's knowing what part we need

and if we get a call and someone says hey, it's an emergency, I'm down, we'll get the part for him. Someplace, we'll find that part.

"There are golf courses that have budgets and can stock parts on their own shelves, but we do a lot of business with clubs with only one greens mower. That's the only one they've got and when they have to



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spend three hundred dollars, they have to call up all the board together and it's a big decision. That's a problem."

Tom Mascaro: "But the customer doesn't know what he really wants. When I was in the manufacturing end, we supplied A, B, and C lists. The A list, we would recommend they buy right away, the customer that is. We used to recommend about \$2-3000 worth of parts on the shelves on this recycling system and it worked. Salesmen would call and they'd have the right to write an order without getting a signature. In other words, they'd look on the customer's shelves and if the belts were down to three, he'd bring in five, or whatever was needed and always kept."

"No one has touched on that yet, purchasing parts. This is a weakness within many organizations of golf courses, especially when they may have a good mechanic and a good superintendent but no one inbetween who orders those parts. The superintendent is involved in so many things that he shouldn't keep track of all those pieces. The mechanic isn't well educated enough to order those parts

and somewhere along the line, the machine breaks down and nothing happens."



Jack Krug: "You know we've got a weird business. Kind of like the agricultural business in that a lot of our machines are running 20-25 years after we sell them. And we as suppliers, whether we like it or not, have to have those parts on our shelves because there's enough of the machines out there to warrant it. That sets up another problem."

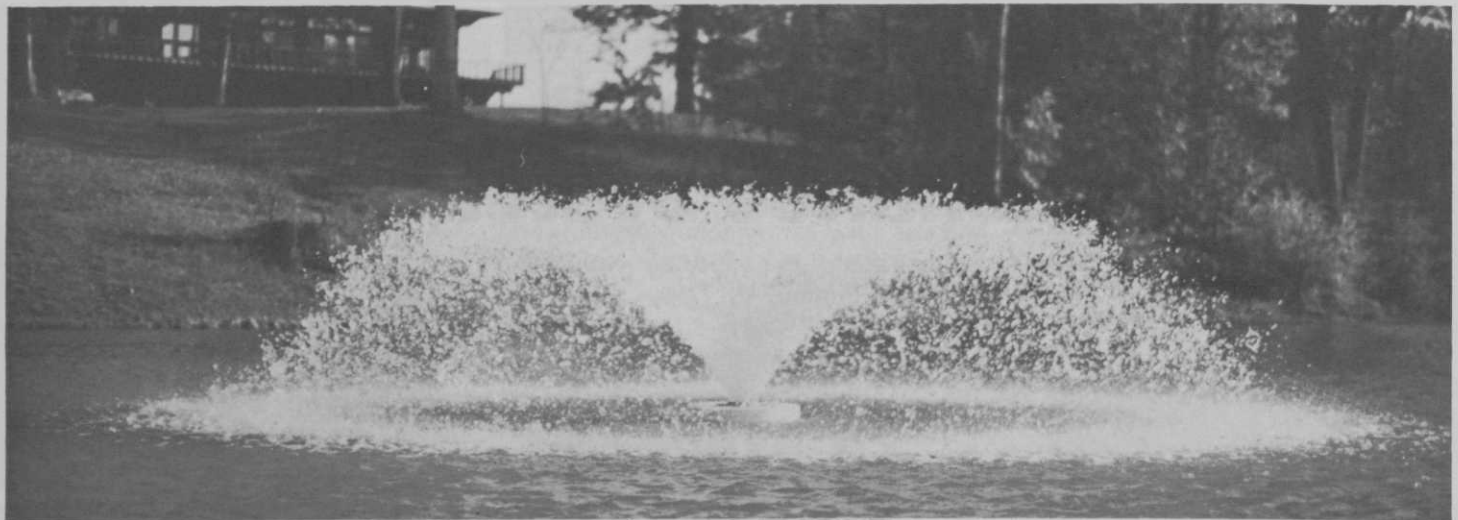
"You've got a division in your parts, current and non-current. Current will have problems with reaction times. Non-current parts, if your company changes over a long period of time, some of those non-current parts, you might not even know what it is, much less where it is."

"At Jacobsen, two years ago, we identified a non-current aspect as a

major headache. We pulled purchasing non-current parts away from the manufacturers and put it into our central warehouse operation and parts still has their own purchasing operation. That solved the problem almost overnight because there was only one job, buying non-current parts, whereas manufacturers do it as kind of a side job. They tended to fall behind the sheets over a long period of time."

Jud Debra: "Let me say, on the other hand here, our problem is not the fast moving parts, it's not the bearings, the bedknives, the things that we know we're going to sell."

"Our problem is the things we don't sell. A guy calls up and orders one and we look on our card system and say well, we sold one of these two years ago and he raises why don't we have it on stock. Well, we said, we can't afford to stock something and move it every two or three years. Our problem is not the fast moving stuff, it's the one shot item when you wrapped some mower around a tree someplace and break something that's not supposed to be broken." □



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