

Superintendent skills

By Ronald C. Frame



A management consultant from Oklahoma City, Ron Frame has conducted seminars for GCSAA for four years and for the Southern Turfgrass Association for

two years. He has consulted directly for a wide variety of firms and was with the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Director of Human Resource Management and lecturer in health administration. He has authored a management manual for GCSAA, and has authored or co-authored various professional journals in the hospital and banking field.

Management's #1 ingredient: Those managed

During those times of our lives dedicated to working and learning and struggling as a non-professional, non-manager worker, our focus was on the promise of achieving a professional role; first, assistant superintendent perhaps, the **SUPERINTENDENT!**

It isn't difficult, when a working stiff, to perceive the role of the professional. Being exposed to solid training under a savvy superintendent meant that his knowledge of turf, equipment and supplies was being passed on daily. Such wisdom and judgement in

matters of earth and rain and growing things came hard, but it was there to be absorbed and tested. Such training, along with more formal exposures was good preparation for the manager's position.

Healthy ambition in a pre-professional, that urge for the responsibility for a golf course is a good thing. A motivator. An achievement-oriented challenge. Learn to do **things** well and it will come. Right?

But confidence in turf technology, in acquired judgement regarding the fragile relationships between earth, rain and growing things (and the golferes)—these are not solely the areas of concentration that, once achieved, maintains one's superintendency.

Having focused on a superintendent's position while in a subordinate role, now, as a superintendent, the focus—at least a major segment of the total—must be back to the workers on the course.

For what keeps the superintendent in business? A good fairway mower helps. So does the greens mower, the fertilizers, the pesticides, the irrigation systems and all the other organic and inorganic tools of the trade. But, most of all, the superintendent is kept in business by the people who push, guide, spread, operate, swing and are engaged in all the other action verbs appropriate to course maintenance. It has been said that "without people, the rest is junk."

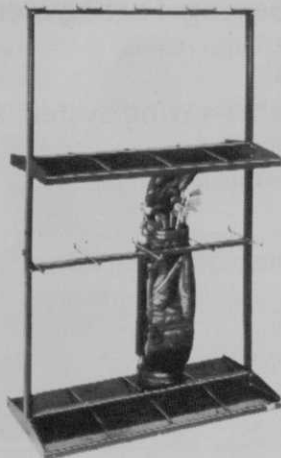
A good crew can make a technically average superintendent look great. A poor crew can ruin an excellent one. To a large extent the difference between "good crew" and "poor crew"

lies with the superintendent. There are familiar phrases that go like this: "He's still feeling his way around, but he's a helluva boss" and "He really knows his business, but I could never work for him again." Those comments tell our story. Wherein lies the key to success in this business? Knowledge, understanding, patience, experience in large doses and applied to **both** physical and human resources.

To define management in its most simple terms as **getting things done through people**, is to strongly underscore the critical value of those being managed to the personal success of the manager/superintendent. Without this necessary and rational focus, the superstar of golf course maintenance can become the fallen star of golf course superintendency, simply because career ascendancy is fueled by those doing the work.

What shape does such focus by the Superintendent take? There are many things, but all require the basic understanding that, while the boss **directs**, the worker **does**. Thus the manager has to do whatever necessary to make sure the **doing** complies with the standards set for course condition. Otherwise, the manager has done himself a disservice in the eyes of those who sign his check.

In later columns, we'll discuss some of the specifics of a productive focus by the Superintendent upon those managed. Meanwhile, as you tour the course and evaluate the work being done, through people, keep saying to yourself: "But for them, there go I."



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