

EVALUATING YOUR OPERATION

With the passing of summer, golf course superintendents in many parts of the country have an opportunity to step back, take a deep breath and evaluate their operations. On many courses, heavy player traffic has slowed, seasonal employees have gone and budget time is approaching. It's time to take inventory.

Besides the problems of getting the course and equipment ready for winter and inventorying leftover supplies, it's also time to look back over the summer and take a mental inventory of your operation's strengths and weaknesses.

For example, what went wrong during the season? Was your course damaged by disease or insects? If so, what can be done to prevent a recurrence? Now is the time to figure out what should be done and when.

Were your crew members aerifying the course on the day of a club tournament? The slow seasons are the time to work out lines of communication to prevent such misunderstandings from happening next year.

What can be done to improve the course? Take an objective look at your irrigation system, your equipment and the design and condition of your course. Maybe this is the time to plan improvements.

While you are evaluating your performance over the last season, don't overlook the things that went especially well, either. Did you pick up any additional responsibilities this year, responsibilities you might like to continue? Did you try a new scheduling program that was effective? How can it be changed to work any better?

Which of your employees really came through for you? Did an assistant take over some of your responsibilities and run with them? Which employees are willing to put out a little extra effort? Which ones seem to have good, new ideas? Did one of your seasonal employees prove to be especially hard-working and reliable? If so, you will want to make arrangements to have him back next year.

Now take a look at those projects that were put off all summer. Now is the time to dust them off and get to work on them.

Here is where a good filing system comes in handy. By taking clear notes on problems and opportunities as they occur, and by adding to those notes when you evaluate your operation at the end of the season, you can develop a handy reference tool for use in the future.

Whatever your evaluation of the summer proves, it's important to reap whatever benefits you can. If everything went relatively smoothly, it's just as vital to know why as it is to uncover the causes if there were problems. By building on the past year's achievements and avoiding its mistakes, we can face anything the future has to offer.

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WORTH REMEMBERING

It's unwise to pay too much, but it's unwise to pay too little. When you pay too much, you lose a little money; that is all. When you pay too little, you sometimes lose everything because the thing you bought was incapable of doing the thing you bought it to do.

The common law of business balance prohibits paying a little and getting a lot - it can't be done. If you deal with the lowest bidder, it's well to add something for the risk you run. And if you do that, you will have enough to pay for something better.

John Ruskin