



# Preparing For the Next Step

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I have been preparing myself for a Golf Course Superintendent's position ever since I decided to become a Turf Student at the University of Minnesota. After three years of being the 1st Assistant Golf Course Superintendent at St. Cloud Country Club, I believe I'm ready to take the next step and become a Superintendent. It hasn't always been easy or fun being an assistant, but I can still say that I love our field of work and it has been very rewarding putting out a great product for the golfers to enjoy. Turf students and second assistants must learn the skills of communication, expectations and organization if they want to further their career.

Communication is probably the most important thing for any golf course manager. For the assistant, it is also a vital part of being the Superintendent's right-hand man and for being a manager of people. It's the exchange of information between my



*The picturesque par 3, 3rd Hole at St. Cloud Country Club overlooks the Mississippi River.*

*163 Yard Par 3 eighth hole at the Refuge Golf Club in Oak Grove, Minnesota.*



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boss, Superintendent Dan Hanson, myself and the crew that gets us through the workday. Everyday Dan relays information to me that I forward to the crew or take the initiative and tell the guys what I want done and how to do it.

Without communication, work would be chaotic and it would definitely reflect on the golf course's appearance. I honestly can't count how many times a day there is communication to the crew one way or another. As assistants, there isn't a lot of direct communication to members because this is normally the Superintendent's job. However, it is important to pay attention to the strategies the Superintendent uses to get the attention of the members, because some day this will be your job.

Another important thing to know as the assistant is what the Superintendent's expectations are of you. By knowing his expectations, it can ease the burden of trying to figure them out on your own. Expectations might be delegating duties, promoting teamwork, learning on your own, working hard or so many different things. Remember, the expectations that the superintendent has of you will increase as you continue to work for him, so that means you have to take it upon yourself to become a better "manager." One thing that you should expect from your boss is a challenge, because without one you won't learn very much.

It's important to figure out questions or challenges that you have on your own. There is definitely nothing wrong with asking questions if you don't know the answer, but it is very satisfying if you can take it upon yourself to solve a problem you have. For example, when I first started to learn the irrigation system at St. Cloud Country Club, I had a lot of questions because I never had the responsibility of taking care of irrigation before. I would

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I always asked Dan questions about what to do, but decided that I needed to take it upon myself to learn the maps, the irrigation parts and the sprinkler heads on my own. It obviously didn't happen over night, but there have been very few things about the irrigation that I haven't been able to figure out just by determination.

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It is important to learn from your mistakes. There are plenty of mistakes to be made while being an assistant, but the key is to never let the same ones happen again. Learning from my mistakes has made me a better decision-maker because I am more thorough with my thought process.

If you're not thorough and organized, learn to be, because it is



*The 6th Hole at St. Cloud Country Club.*

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very helpful when you are a manager of people. I have always tried to be organized and it has helped me be better prepared for the things that come my way. In fact, I complete the daily duties sheet the night before, so I don't show up for work unprepared. This also allows me to be ready when people call in sick or don't show up because I usually have a backup plan to move people around to make sure all the jobs can be completed on time. When you are an assistant you have to expect the unexpected.

There are a variety of jobs that need to get done every day besides the daily maintenance procedures of mowing greens, tees, fairways, rough and changing cups. This is why it's important to know exactly what else needs to get done to provide quality playing conditions for golfers. There should be a list of jobs that need to get done on a weekly basis and on which days they need to be performed. Also, consider having some kind of notepad or writing material so that you can jot things down as you drive around the golf course. Yes, organization is a key to success.

Taking the next step in your career is going to be based mostly on what your goals are and how hard you want to work to accomplish these goals. There are usually no freebies in this business and you will have to get yourself in the door to make an impression. You are going to have to figure out how to piece all of the information you have gathered from school, work, books or your peers into your own philosophies. Everybody's work situation is different, but I think this article can give you a heads-up into what kind of situations you might face.