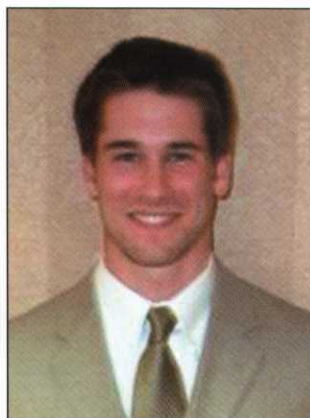


# Working Smarter, Not Harder

By RYAN BROWNING

Assistant Superintendent, Town & Country Club

In the turf management industry we are people who wear many hats. From day to day we may be a manager, agronomist, electrician, carpenter, and the list goes on and on. However, there is one



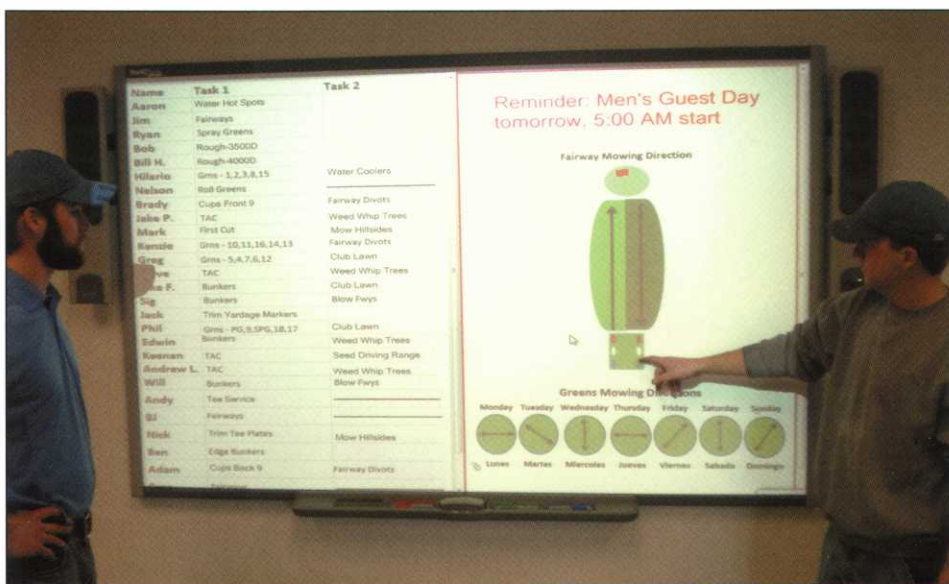
**RYAN BROWNING**  
Assistant Superintendent,  
Town & Country Club

thing that we do each and every day and that is taking on the role of teacher. Think about the endless list of tasks that must be completed on a golf course throughout the season from something as

seemingly mundane as string trimming, to something more technical like an irrigation repair. The fact is that we are not only managing what our employees are doing on the golf course, but also teaching how they are doing things so that the desired result is achieved.

Nobody can refute the fact that the age of technology in which we live has had an enormous impact on just about every facet of our lives including the way that we teach our employees. Such is the case at Town & Country Club in Saint Paul where we have been fortunate enough to employ a magnificent piece of technology called a Smart Board to help teach our employees.

The Smart Board is an interactive white board used in conjunction with a projector and a computer equipped with the necessary software to allow the interactive board and the computer to communicate. The projector displays your computer screen as you would see it normally on your desktop monitor. The interactive board and software then allow you to use your computer with the touch of your finger the same way you would with a mouse. As well as being able to control your computer, the system also acts just like a normal white board. The board comes with electronic pens which can be used exactly like a dry erase marker on a



conventional white board. It also comes with an electronic eraser pad for erasing your pen markings.

**This technology is now being used worldwide in many different capacities.**

You may recall seeing something similar throughout the 2008 Presidential Elections as several major news venues used them to illustrate various polls and voting results. School districts throughout the country and the world are also finding tremendous value in this tool. Teachers are using them every day in their classrooms to administer their lesson plans with an interactive approach. This approach can help students become more engaged in the lesson material and potentially understand it better. This is how Town & Country Club superintendent Bill Larson, CGCS, came across the idea for using the Smart Board in our everyday operations. While dropping his kids off at elementary school in Mahtomedi, MN, he noticed that the boards were being employed in every classroom there. After speaking with teachers and his kids about how they were used in the classroom, he thought there may be potential for its use in the direction of our employees.

Our consideration of using a Smart Board came about at the same time a new maintenance facility was being constructed at Town & Country Club. It had been established during the designing and planning stages of the facility that the employee break room would also be used

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as a potential meeting space for members and club events. We thought about how a Smart Board could add to the operation of the golf course as well as how it could add value to the break room for member use. In our search for the proper system we found that there are many options available. Board sizes can range from 48" to 94", projectors can be mounted on a ceiling in front of the board or there are models which have the projector mounted directly on the board to eliminate shadows. There are also overlays designed to fit over the screen of an LCD or plasma TV to create an interactive display essentially the same as a stand alone, wall-mounted Smart Board would.

**The overall effect of using the Smart Board has been outstanding.** Most importantly it allows us to interact with Generation X/Y employees (who are very technology savvy) in a way which they are more likely to pay attention to. The system allows us to create a very clear and organized job board to present to employees every day. Also, the electronic nature of the system permits easy cataloging of these daily job boards for future reference (rotation of tasks, workers' compensation claims, etc.). The system is also useful for displaying training videos for new employees through the computer, or a DVD player connected to the board. Member use of the break room for meet

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## Working Smarter -

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or presentation purposes was also a significant selling point for the Smart Board. Accordingly, a couple other features were added to enhance the room as a functional meeting space. The tables and chairs can be set up in a conference style and a conference call system was also added. Furthermore, members are capable of using their personal computer in conjunction with the Smart Board system via plug-ins installed in the floor.

The ability of turf managers to teach their employees effectively, so that they know and comprehend what is expected of them, is invaluable. The fast-paced, technology driven society in which we live dictates that we stay abreast with the times. Just the same as one would stay current with new pesticide formulations or advancements in irrigation technology, one must also think about how to stay current with employee interaction. Here at Town & Country Club, we feel that the addition of the Smart Board has allowed us to reach a generation of employee that is more techno-savvy.

In turn, we have been able to teach and communicate with our people more efficiently so that the best possible results can be achieved in our operation.

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