



# Within the Leather

by David Kazmierczak, CGCS

By now everybody reading this column is deep within the frozen confines of the

off season in the upper Midwest. Mother Nature let us hang-on through Thanksgiving this year and then slapped us on the behind with the cold reminder that she is in charge and there will be no messing around. Winter is here for good.

When winter comes, two things happen for me: the reflection upon the previous season and the planning for the new. We are blessed (or cursed depending on how you view it), that we have this period of reflection. It's a period our brethren to the south are not afforded. It allows us plenty of time, the further north you go, to identify successes and failures, strengths and weaknesses and develop strategies to alter both for the next season. The further along I go in my career, the more important I feel this time has become for any number of reasons, but mostly because time in everyday life is becoming the most precious commodity any one person possesses. For a manager, the value is exponential.

As golf course superintendents we are

asked to do about a half a million things, wear a thousand different hats and be at least somewhat skilled at all of them. The further north you go, you are asked to do them all and accomplish everything in a much shorter period of time. The reward is that the off season is supposed to allow for a mental and physical break from the busy season and afford the turf manager time to make him or herself more efficient when the new season arrives. This is sound in theory, but are you actually able to accomplish that goal? More so than ever, it is critical that you do.

The old adage that time equals money has never rang truer. I know I don't have to beat anybody over the head about shrinking budgets, shrinking salaries and rising expectations. There is a finite threshold in all that we do. To produce the conditions at golf course X it takes X number of dollars. I can't imagine that there is a turf manager that hasn't streamlined his or her operation streamlined and got the most out of what they spend in 2013. If they didn't-shame on them. The only area in which to further streamline an operation is in the area of time management, and I don't care what your operation or budget there probably is someplace that time can be saved with a new procedure or product. The trick is finding that procedure or product.

Technology is one good place

to start. The invention of personal computers, ipads and such allows a tremendous opportunity to develop systems that can save time. It's just a matter of finding the time to learn them so you can save more time. Some of these devices seem to be more work than they are worth, but there is no doubt they have made a lot of things more efficient. They have also opened the door to communication both from an individual and group perspective. The sharing of ideas promotes efficiency. Ask, seek and share with other people in the industry. It will only make us all better at saving time.

Another avenue is taking a seminar or class pertaining to becoming more efficient or dealing in an area of interest that will make you more proficient at that individual interest. There are many of these opportunities both locally and nationally. It has been my experience, however, that it's one thing to take one of these seminars and hear the thoughts and ideas, quite another to actually follow through and implement or incorporate these ideas to help become more learned or efficient. To take a class and not use what is taught you is simply wasting time.

If you put your mind to it, I am willing to bet you can come up with many ways and many vehicles for which you can become more efficient and save on more time. Too often we get caught in a trap of focusing all that needs to be done, thus becoming overwhelmed instead of compartmentalizing, and developing systems with which to deal

with individual or sets of issues. I will not refute anybody that says people have more on their plate than ever before. However, I would respond that there are more tangible things to help manage those issues than ever before.

My parents and parents-in-law are in their seventies and eighties. Though slowing down the past 10 to 15 years they are still active and able to do things in life. If I had a dollar for every time I heard we are so busy or we just don't have the time I might have enough to fund the new Vikings stadium.

As I look at their lives in retirement during that time I am amazed at what they consider busy. Their busy is about 45 minutes of my life but it seems to consume them and put them in a mind-set of: "I'm always busy." Think about this: how many times do you greet somebody and within five minutes the words I'm so busy or I've been so busy come out of your mouth? More than you probably realize. Stop it! It's counterproductive, the person you are talking to probably is two times busier than you and you sound like a whiner! I know, I've been that person.

Instead, make a pledge to come up with a positive thing you have done that helped make you more efficient to share with that person. It's a big challenge but you have a lot of time this winter to work on it!