



Steps to Make Your Course Unaffordable

12/4/2015

Have you heard the word “sustainable” so often that sometimes you want to be unsustainable just to buck the trend? We can help. Simply implement the steps below and in no time your course will find it necessary to make golf more expensive and less profitable.

Bunkers

The most expensive words in the lexicon of bunker maintenance are “consistency” and “uniformity”. Bunkers are virtual money pits when maintained at the level many golfers have come to expect. To make your bunkers more costly to maintain, do the following:

- 1) Add more bunkers. When doing so, be sure the bunker faces are extremely steep (more shoveling of sand after rains), and the shape of the bunkers are wildly convoluted (more edging).
- 2) Rake bunkers on a daily basis. Be sure to rake every bunker whether it needs it or not.
- 3) Edge all bunkers manually instead of using herbicides.
- 4) Hand water bunkers to try to keep the moisture of the sand uniform (it can't be done, but at least you can spend a lot of time and money trying).

Trees

- 1) Plant more trees. Every tree slows mowing, adds debris and needs trimming.
- 2) Hand trim around every tree on the course instead of using herbicides.
- 3) Plant trees near greens to inhibit light and air movement resulting in greater expense on fungicides.

Lakes and Stream Banks

- 1) Mow and hand trim as close to the water's edge as possible. This also allows more fertilizer to be washed into the water resulting in more algae and aquatic weed growth, which, in turn, will require more money for aquatic herbicides and manual weed removal.



Ball washers

- 1) Be sure to have at least one ball washer on every hole. This addition will necessitate the constant cleaning and repair of items that are seldom used and can be effectively replaced by a damp towel carried by the golfer.

Filling fairway divots

- 1) Have the maintenance staff fill all fairway divots instead of asking golfers to do so.
- 2) Be sure to buy expensive green sand to increase further the cost of this step.

Blowing debris from fairways and roughs

- 1) Make sure to blow debris on a daily basis to ensure golfers never have to learn and implement [Rule 23 – Loose Impediments](#).

Have a multitude of mowing heights

- 1) Implement complex mowing patterns with as many different mowing heights as possible. Each requires different machinery that also adds to the cost of buying and maintaining equipment.

Walk-mow greens and tees

- 1) Avoid using labor efficient riding equipment whenever possible. “Surprisingly”, a triplex mower is about three times more efficient than a single cutting unit.

Ornamental flower beds

- 1) Add flowers everywhere. The constant weeding of the beds and replacement of annual flowers adds up quickly. The cost and labor can be increased further by creating elaborate patterns.

Irrigate non-play areas

- 1) Water as much of the golf course as possible – even those areas that seldom, if ever, come into play. Years of scientific research has proven that if you water grass it is likely to grow, which requires mowing, weeding, etc.



Overseed turf that would normally go dormant

- 1) Dormant turf is a wonderful playing surface, but no one likes brown grass. The solution is to overseed the dormant grass with turf that grows most of the winter. Another extensive scientific study revealed that green grass also is likely to grow so it will be necessary to mow all winter.

Make your natural areas unnatural

- 1) Be sure all “natural” areas are as unnatural looking as possible by using a large amount of labor to manually remove all plants except fescue.

Plant the wrong grasses for your area

- 1) Plant grasses that will be under stress for long periods of time in your climate. This guarantees huge expenses for water, fungicides, herbicides and, of course, the labor and cost of sod to periodically replace dead grass.

Edge the cart paths frequently

- 1) Nothing adds more to the playability of a golf course than a well-defined cart path edge – right? Edging cart paths with string trimmers is a great way to increase labor cost and consume labor hours that might otherwise be wasted on producing better putting greens.

Let your irrigation system get too old

- 1) Few things consume available labor hours like the constant repair of an antiquated irrigation system. In addition to the labor required to fix the system, there is the cost of parts and the replacement of turf damaged by poor irrigation system performance.

Use plenty of signs, stakes and ropes

- 1) Make liberal use of signs, stakes and ropes in the attempt to prevent carts from being driven too close to green and tee complexes. Courteous golfers don't need them, and discourteous golfers ignore them, but at least you will significantly slow down mowing operations by forcing the staff to stop mowing to remove and reinstall the obstacles. The staff will surely appreciate the exercise they get by constantly getting on and off the mowers.



- 2) Bonus tip: to slow down fairway mowing install multiple yardage poles in the fairways for the last remaining golfer who has not purchased a digital measuring device.

These tips are not offered to criticize, but rather to offer advice to those courses that are struggling to remain economically viable. If nothing else, this list illustrates the importance of performing a time and labor analysis on every course to accurately identify where critical resources are expended. It may well be that these resources can be better used to improve the playing quality of the course.

