

How to get the message across

World wide web, multimedia and e-mail have become buzzwords of the 1990s. If you haven't got a mobile phone, a computer with a modem or an internet service provider, you're told you are out of touch and likely to be missing out on vital developments taking place somewhere on the information superhighway.

Communication is what it's all about and there is little doubt that the world is becoming smaller, figuratively speaking, thanks to rapid advances in computer technology, telephone networks and the associated electronic wizardry.

Our ability to transmit in seconds a document or picture to someone on the other side of the world would baffle our great-grandparents. But what about communicating within our own workplace?

There is a fundamental need to provide information to other people within a golf club. No matter whether you are a club employee, official, greenkeeper, member or visitor,

communications can only help improve the running of the club and the education and understanding of the people involved with it.

While many clubs produce regular newsletters for members, there is an accompanying need for the greenkeeping staff to keep everyone informed about the work taking place on the course and matters which affect all playing the game of golf.

Such information does not have to appear on a frequent basis, just sufficient to keep members and others informed about course maintenance and associated work and developments which will benefit from being brought to the attention of a wider audience.

So how do we get our message across?

Written information is by far the most effective as it is permanent and can be read at any time convenient to the recipient.

For those greenkeepers who do not wish to produce their own bulletin, the simplest method is to provide details to the person compiling a members' newsletter. If this is not possible, then get the information typed up into a single or two-page sheet which can be pinned to the club notice board or

be photocopied and placed in the locker room and the bar. A neatly-typed newsletter or bulletin with clear headings and short, concise news items will be of great benefit to the greenkeepers' cause, able to inform readers about a whole wealth of matters which affect the

playing of golf and the work being carried out on and around the course.

Compilation of any greenkeepers' newsletter should, of course, take place in consultation with those committee members or officials responsible for greenkeeping matters at the club. There is no point in alienating someone who should be an ally and who could be of assistance in producing such a bulletin. After all, the chairman of greens often has a message to get across to members which will be very similar to that of the course manager or the head greenkeeper.

Appearance of any bulletin or newsletter is all important. Unless you have access to desk-top publishing (DTP) facilities, most newsletters will take the form of one or more typed A4 pages produced, at best, by a word-processing computer.

If possible, lay the words out in two columns as this will be easier to read and go for a type size a little larger than the type used on this page. If you are using a computer, you should have the ability to introduce different type styles which will help grab the reader's attention and also differentiate between each article.

Always use a headline to introduce each item, which should be short, snappy and provide just enough information to tell the reader what they need to know. If the subject interests the reader, then they can always seek out further information if required.

The most advanced DTP systems allow photographs, logos and drawings to be scanned in to the computer and positioned within the text to illustrate an article or news item. If you want to use photos or pictures but can't justify a scanner, then a photocopy can be acceptable but be aware that the original quality will be reduced.

Never be frightened to ask for assistance. If the club produces its own newsletter, seek help or advice from the person who puts it together. Alternatively, take a look at local newspapers and magazines for ideas. You could also talk to the Editor of *Greenkeeper International* who

will be pleased to provide suggestions on style and appearance.

Content is another matter altogether. What, you might ask, should I be writing about for a greenkeepers' bulletin? Listed below are 10 suggested subjects or topics which could be looked at during the year. Prompted by this, you should be able to generate many more ideas. As stated above, there is no need to write an essay – simply give the facts and leave it at that.

- Introduce the greenkeeping team, their background and experience if relevant, education and their specific responsibilities on the course.
- Write about the turf maintenance programmes which will be carried out over the coming months and how they will affect play.
- Provide regular updates on progress with course developments such as new bunkers, reshaped fairways, additional tees, etc.
- Give advance warning of the winter measures that will be introduced on the course highlighting special measures affecting any specific area.
- Introduce new machinery and equipment purchases, why they have been bought, how much they cost and what they will help you achieve.
- Introduce new pesticides, fertilisers and grass seed mixtures that will be used on the course. Tell people where they are to be applied and why.
- Write about the environmental aspects of the course, highlighting any specific features such as wildlife habitats and rare or unusual plants and trees.
- Highlight the importance of replacing divots and repairing pitch marks by costing the time and materials used by staff to do the job.
- Explain in detail some of the tasks you have to carry out on the course, why they are needed and what the alternative would be. Hollow coring, top dressing and spraying are three good examples with which to start.
- Remind golfers of the safety points which need to be observed during play, especially when staff are out on the course.

