



It can prevent wars, family strife and the collapse of a business. It's as old as language itself, yet we still struggle to make full use of its power. It's a major part of our daily lives, but we often have difficulty doing it with our next door neighbour. Bruce Stanley listens to the art of communication...

Speak *easy*



Inform golf club members about new machinery purchases, what they will be used for and how they will improve standards

Communication. What is it? An action which most people understand, but very few properly utilise.

Take the golf club environment. Anyone having any involvement with a golf club knows that regular communication is essential between the staff, officials, members, visitors and the owners, managers or shareholders. Yet how often have greenkeepers been asked the same question time and time again about the reason for a specific maintenance programme which could have been answered by means of a timely bulletin pinned to a notice board in the clubhouse bar, locker room or pro's shop?

No matter whether you are responsible for raking the bunkers, planning next year's competition programme, stocking the bar, chasing subscriptions or giving golf lessons to beginners, there is a fundamental need to communicate continuously with other people. The result will be a sustained improvement in the efficient running of the club and the understanding and education of all involved with it.

It is a fact that most golf clubs are very good at informing members and visitors about future competitive and social events. Yet how many give their greenkeeping staff the opportunity to tell players

about current or forthcoming maintenance programmes and how they might affect play?

One simple solution is a special notice board headed Course Maintenance or Greenkeeper's Report, devoted to relaying news on seasonal work and developments taking place on the golf course. Alternatively, those clubs that publish a regular newsletter could consider giving the head greenkeeper space for a course maintenance report. Invite feedback, suggestions and questions and you will be taking a big step towards improving communications at the club.

Such actions can all make a huge difference to golfers' understanding of what is going on, when and where it is taking place and why it is necessary.

If the club does not have a regular members' bulletin or space for a dedicated notice board, then a neatly-typed information sheet, photocopied and placed in the bar or by the visitors' book in the pro's shop, will go a long way to dispelling the mystique that surrounds the greenkeeping profession in the mind of the layman.

It is very important that any published information is put together with the full co-operation and input of the course manager, the head greenkeeper, the chairman of greens and any other club officials sharing responsibility for



A regular greenkeepers' bulletin can be used to highlight seasonal maintenance programmes, explaining why they are necessary and what their effects will be

course maintenance matters. It can be helpful on any bulletin or report to list the names and positions of the staff responsible for looking after the course, including any external advisers. They deserve credit when it is due, but should also be prepared to answer criticism when it arises, as it always will.

The look of any publication is most important. Few people have access to sophisticated desk-top publishing (DTP) facilities of the type used to produce award-winning magazines such as *Greenkeeper International*, but one can still do a very good job on a computer loaded with word-processing software, outputting to a colour printer.

If you do not have ready access to a computer, enlist the help of the club's secretarial staff and ensure that if a regular report is promised, that the words are delivered on time.

Keep the text concise and to the point. There is no need to write pages and pages. In many cases, a series of bullet point headings - as in the style of the box within this article - will suffice. Provide sufficient detail to tell the reader what they need to know without slipping into technicalities. If the subject particularly interests someone,

then they can always seek out further information.

A word processor allows a range of type sizes and styles to be used which will attract and hold the reader's attention. The introduction of headlines and sub-headings will also add interest to a page, for example, when listing the various work programmes being carried out on different parts of the course. However, make sure that the type size is legible to someone standing maybe two foot away at a notice board.

Never be afraid to ask for assistance. If the club produces its own newsletter, seek help or advice from the person who puts it together. Alternatively, look for ideas in the trade magazines that land each month on your desk. You could always phone the editor or designer of *Greenkeeper International* who will be able to provide ideas on style and appearance.

Content should not be too difficult thanks to the wide ranging work programmes taking place on a golf course throughout the year.

- List the members of the greenkeeping team and their specific responsibilities on the course. Provide updates on training or further education.
- Describe any special maintenance programmes planned over the coming months, why they are necessary and how they might affect play.
- Provide updates on course developments such as new bunkers, reshaped fairways, additional tees, tree planting, new pathways, etc
- Give advance warning of any seasonal changes that may be introduced on the course, highlighting special measures affecting any specific area.
- Describe any new machinery purchase, why it has been bought, how much it cost and what it will help achieve on the golf course.
- Detail the environmental attributes of the course, highlighting features such as wildlife habitats and rare or unusual plants, birds, insects and trees.
- Reinforce the importance of replacing divots and repairing pitch marks by detailing the cost of employing staff to do the job.
- Explain why seasonal tasks which cause the most aggravation to golfers are needed and what the alternatives might be. Start with hollow coring, top dressing and liquid fertilising of greens.
- Give a run-down of the typical daily and weekly course maintenance routines, and why staff have to be out on the course during the day.
- Forewarn golfers about seasonal variations to the condition or position of greens, tees, trolley paths and the route between tees and greens. It is far better to alert golfers to changes in advance of them taking place.
- Remind golfers of the various safety aspects which need to be observed during play, especially when staff are out on the course.