

# Chairman's Column

## Utilising New Communications is Key to Success

Two weeks of dry, sunny weather in March was just what was needed to get more golfers through the clubhouse doors and out onto the courses. With subscription renewals due by April 1 the fine playing conditions have provided a welcome kickstart to the season and encouraged people outdoors.

Despite the lack of grass growth golfers expectations start to rise as soon as the spring sunshine appears, yet it's too early to begin verticutting and top dressing.

Two years ago we moved members' main competitions into the period May – October rather than April – September, this coincides more closely with our growing season and when we are able to provide the best playing conditions. Keeping greens renovations out of the main part of the golfing calendar is commonly demanded at many clubs, however, this can often result in less than favourable recovery times.

The first week of April is the earliest we like to schedule our spring renovations while another is timed during the summer holidays when play levels diminish. Getting these dates fixed in the club diary along with golf events is essential, but it is important not to be pushed into carrying out hollow tining out of the growing season. Educating Managers and Club Secretaries, as well as members, on the merits of carrying out thatch control is part of our job and well worth making the effort. With their support and understanding our job becomes that much easier.

The use of the internet and e-mail has changed all of our lives, but none more so than at work. Utilising this to communicate with members, visitors, management and colleagues can be an effective way of getting our message across on a regular basis. Sending out an e-mailed newsletter containing a course update column with photos offers an opportunity to educate and inform golfers of our work and its benefits to them.

Many clubs have grasped the marketing opportunities that the use of websites and e-mail presents to enhance their communication with both existing and potential golfing customers. Is your club one of them? Since the rapid growth of golf clubs in the 1990's, the competition for business has become intense and now more than ever the need to retain existing members and attract new customers.



Peter Todd, far left, with the 2008 European Open Support Team

Having a club website with stunning images of the course not only creates visual appeal, but should also focus minds on the importance of course presentation to attract business and the key role greenstaff play in this.

Recently we have equipped our workshop with a computer and internet connection to improve efficiency and management of the machinery fleet. As well as looking up parts online, ordering etc the ability to download machine hours via wireless hour meters each time a machine enters the maintenance facility will be available very soon. This will make it much easier when trying to keep track of equipment due for service and maximise use of the mechanics time.

As part of a current pumphouse project to convert from fixed to variable speed drives we have also installed a cable link to our irrigation control computer. It will enable the pumphouse to be monitored remotely by an engineer and ultimately save delays and travel costs compared with calling someone to site every time.

Equipping our greenkeeping staffroom with a flat screen TV & computer connection is next on the list. Staff training and education play a key part in achieving constant improvement on the courses and a budget area that brings rewards to the business and job satisfaction to the team.

As I write, with just 10 weeks to go to the European Open, the last month has been focused on checking sand levels in bunkers. Staging a major event provides a deadline to meet and tasks like this are an integral part of the work. Meeting the challenge of providing a professional tournament venue brings significant benefits to the club's greenkeeping team and everyday customers.

For the staff it's an opportunity to showcase their work, which inevitably all eyes are upon. As a member, it offers the chance to play the course like the pros, where all the additional effort and resources have provided them with more challenging playing conditions.

In the build up period there is a careful balancing act between preparing for the event while focusing on the normal golf business. In these less than certain times we have to remain focused on all 52 weeks of the year as well as the week of the tournament. However, the publicity, raised club profile and spotlight on the greenkeeping staff provide welcome recognition of their hardwork and the achievements of all the team.

Peter Todd  
National Chairman

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