

The Back Nine

A column for writers and members to air and share their views on golf greenkeeping topics

Last month Justin looked at the perils of social networking. Now in the second part of his educational look at the medium, he considers content and the increasing influence of Twitter and Facebook

The first question I'm usually asked when I speak about blogging is "How much time does it take?" The answer depends on your preference on what information you want to get out.

Remember more and more people get information in bits and pieces to their phone or tablet.

So if you post a ten page document on soil respiration and throw in a few Latin names you are likely to lose your audience, plus it is going to be a big commitment for you to write.

Try to keep the posts short and to the point and better yet add some pictures.

A picture is worth a thousand words. It will definitely help your members and guests understand better how a machine goes across the green, or how you are dealing with a layering problem in the greens.

The other fear that superintendents have is content. Here are a few topics that seem to keep the blog flowing and still get some variety.

- Projects – Aerification, renovations, drainage...
- Employee spotlight – Take a person on the crew and give the members an idea of who they are and what they have done
- Frequently Asked Questions - Talk about things that people have come up to you and asked you about, and why you do these things
- Environmental – Golf course superintendents are stewards of the environment, promote your practices that conserve and reduce
- Did you know – Explain a more complicated topic that is behind the scenes

New content will keep your followers interested and also understand more about your profession. Instead of the golfers yelling at one of your guys to get out of the way, they might

know a little more about that staff member and introduce themselves. They can better understand your work and issues on the course.

Twitter is another way to blast information out with short messages. This is a good way to direct members and guests to your blog and post live information like weather, project info, course closure etc.

If the golf shop wanted to get involved as well it could be a good avenue to post deals on rounds or specials on equipment.

When I first got involved in Twitter I didn't really know what I was going to post and if anyone would really care.

Now a few years later I have gathered quite a few followers and it has become a great resource for me to post quick bits of info to inform our membership about what is happening in real time. It also has doubled as a good place to learn more about turf management.

I follow other superintendents that post information about their practices. I can ask quick questions and get fairly quick responses from many different people.

Now onto Facebook and Google+. These are both borderline time suckers. Facebook can be a great tool to connect with many people - after all, 72% of the UK uses Facebook.

That means for every ten people that play your course or that are members, seven of them are updating their status and it may be about your course.

Facebook seems much more personal, can become a sinkhole for time and I feel it's better for revenue seekers like the golf shop.

Google+ on the other hand does have some value.

The instant upload from your smartphone's camera makes it easy to post pictures and the hangouts can be ideal to do meetings with



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other superintendents in your area or across the globe.

This is becoming more popular and ideal to get advice or new ideas for your course.

Social media can become confusing if you don't keep it simple.

You can end up wasting your time posting to several accounts with the same information or not gain traction if you fall behind on posting content.

Keeping your investment to a blog and Twitter is a great start. These two go hand in hand and can be updated quickly and provide a lot of information to your golfers.

Use Twitter for instant information and your blog for more detailed presentations.

If you keep these two accounts simple and to the point, you should be able to keep your time commitment to a reasonable level.

Remember, you don't want to get stuck wasting your time. You just want to increase your communication and visibility.

about the author



Justin Ruiz CGCS MG is Golf Course Superintendent at the Indian Summer Golf and Country Club in the US state of Washington. He runs a detailed blog on work on his course at <http://indiansummerglasspot.co.uk/> and has won awards for previous articles looking at social media.