

The Back Nine

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

Redundancy is one of the worst possible situations to find yourself in, and the greenkeeping industry is not immune. Here former Chairman Paul Worster explores all aspects of redundancy

Redundancy is a very stressful and difficult situation to find yourself in. Often, the potentially redundant person is one of the last people within the company structure to learn of the proposal.

Taking a wider view – in making a Head Greenkeeper or Course Manager redundant a club risks losing that entire bank of experience, site specific knowledge and skills.

Employees are of course protected by law, and in some cases redundancy is a last resort when all else has failed to keep a company financially viable.

Every employee in this position is entitled to a consultation period, and the company must demonstrate that it has examined all options, and has considered other people for redundancy within the process rather than singling out an individual. The individual has every right to a hearing and to submit a plan to show that the situation is not irretrievable.

Often redundancy is not a straightforward issue of simply paying someone off – it requires a complicated calculation taking into account other factors such as leave entitlement and length of notice periods, and hardly ever brings the immediate anticipated financial impact. So it really is, or should be, a last resort.

Experience shows, that people who 'go the extra mile', who make regular contributions over and above that which can normally be expected, are much less likely to fall victim to redundancy – although of course this is not always the case.

How then do we do this? How do we become the person to whom the club turns when it needs to save a significant amount of money, rather than the first person in the firing line – the expendable luxury that the club wishes to unload? Harsh words perhaps, but please read on.

As managers we need to under-



stand our departments. We need to understand what makes them tick, where we are spending the most money, and most importantly what the consequences of taking up those other options may be. We need to ensure our staff understand that there is no place for passengers, no place for complacency, and no place for anything less than a very visible 100% effort.

We need to be adaptable. We need to be able to vary what we are doing to meet the times and the circumstances. For example – if, in seeking to aid the recruitment of new members, we need to lay off making huge jumbo holes in the greens for even a couple of years then we should not shirk from doing that. We need to find other ways of achieving much of the same end, but not at the expense of performance.

We need to get close and stay close to the Club Management or the Ownership structure within the club. We need to be the ones feeding through the information. We need to be the ones coming up with the proposals for the course, the proposals for reducing spending, the proposals for improving the member experience. We need to be the ones ready and willing to go the extra mile, to stick our necks out and take

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about the author



Paul Worster is Course Manager at Minchinhampton Golf Club and a former BIGGA Chairman. He is now a director of FEGGA and believes in strong Greenkeeper Associations preparing and equipping their greenkeeper members for management

the hard decisions. We need to be the ones who show adaptability and a willingness to manage change.

If we are doing all that, we are much less likely to come under threat.

What can BIGGA do to help? BIGGA is not a trade union but does provide advice and personal support. The helplines will give access to legal advice – to ensure that you are being fairly treated. Your Regional Administrator would be an important port of call. Don't leave it until the day before a hearing or tribunal but at the first sign of problems get in touch.

To summarise – be proactive, know what is happening within the club and the staff, look ahead and try to predict difficult areas and find solutions.

And above all be the professional person.

The views expressed within this column are not necessarily those of Greenkeeper International