

## CHICAGO DISTRICT GOLF ASSOCIATION MEETING WITH THE GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS.

### SUBJECT:

### WHAT THE GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENT EXPECTS FROM THE GREEN CHAIRMAN.

By: R. M. Williams, Bob O'Link Golf Club

Carol McCue reports over 230 in attendance today. (March 25, 1976).

This kind of response by all of you is one more evidence of the tremendous job CDGA has been doing for many years in coordinating the golfing interests in the Chicago area.

Superintendents have been fortunate in having men like Chuck Eckstein, Ralph Peterson and Don Johnson heading up The CDGA Green Committees over many years.

I am sure I speak on behalf of all superintendents in saying thanks to CDGA for recognizing and including us in the Chicago area golf family.

My assignment this morning deals primarily with the relationship between the Golf Course Superintendent, the Green Committee and the Board of Governors.

To better understand what is expected of Board and Committee members, we must first briefly look at their respective responsibilities.

Under usual procedure, the Board of a private club is charged with carrying out the conventional corporate responsibilities. In simple terms, "Running the club".

The Board must be responsive to the members desires.---They must control the club's finances.---The Board pretty well determines the "Tempo" for the total club operation in the following ways:

By--Establishing a table of organization with definite lines of chain of command.

By--Setting policy.

By--Establishing Standard Operating Procedure.

By--Giving direction.

By--Describing club objectives.

By--Delegating responsibility and authority to functional committees. And by establishing continuity for club operations in view of the constant change of personnel on the Board.

### NOW FOR THE GREEN COMMITTEE:

Normally, individual members of the Board are assigned to the duties as chairmen of the major functional committees. (Golf, House and Greens.).

These committees in turn, delegate their areas of responsibility to professional management employees who must work together as a management team. The Golf Professional, Clubhouse Manager and Green Superintendent, otherwise known as the Triumvirate, form of club management.

### DUTIES OF THE GREENS COMMITTEE:

--Most importantly, The Committee is charged with the responsibility of the employment of the Golf Course Superintendent. The physical area of concern varies but generally includes all club property outside of the clubhouse buildings.---Responsibility and authority for the maintenance of the golf course must be delegated completely to the superintendent. The committee should constantly engage in liaison between the membership, the Board and the Superintendent. The committee should set department objectives that conform to the overall club objectives.

--The committee should offer guidance and direction for the superintendent.---The committee and the Superintendent together should develop Long Range Plans on a 5, 10 or 15 year basis. Include items of course architecture, landscaping, structures, irrigation, drainage, etc.---The superintendent should prepare an annual budget which the committee can approve and recommend to the Board.---The Committee should insist on having permanent records relative to the course operation. Examples, property survey, plans of the irrigation system, drainage system, equipment inventory, etc. Copies of these records should be kept in both the club files and the superintendent's files. (So much for the committee.)

In spite of all the years of experience and insight, clubs are still making mistakes and running into management problems. Let me touch on some of the more important ones.---For starters, let's mention the selection of Green Committee members.---My idea of the most appropriate prerequisites include the following: A committee member should have, (1) interest and desire for participation.---Improve the club; improve the course. (2) Executive ability--generally non-professional--some exceptions. (3) People of varied golfing ability---Low, medium, high, handicaps. (4) Special interests, or expertise ---Opposition or minority labor, people oriented; Landscape construction. Also, members who are good communicators for liaison to membership.

The Board member prerequisites are pretty much the same.

A little sidelite here while we are talking about the Board and the Green Committee. I'd like to touch on the point of sobriety at their meetings. A Board or Committee meeting held in the evening after golf and cocktails frequently spells disaster, with little accomplished. It is difficult to maintain order and disagreements easily develop. The answer from my experience and observation, seems to be the Saturday morning breakfast meeting. At this time, everyone is anxious to keep discussion minimal, to keep on track with subject matter, and to get out on the course as soon as possible.

Another problem area: Many country clubs fail to take full advantage of expertise, knowledge and experience of their superintendents, (as well as the clubhouse managers and professionals in their decision making. The pros, managers and superintendents should all be invited to attend Board meetings as experts in their fields, to advise where needed and appropriate. (At least for that portion of the meeting dealing within their respective areas.)

Another problem area: Maintaining an adequate and efficient staff of employees in view of the working conditions with low salary levels, long hours, seasonal work, and lack of generally accepted fringe benefits. In this matter, the management team must share some of the responsibility for the problem. Some clubs have done honorably while many lag behind. For example, Carol tells me that only 41 out of 140 CDGA clubs are using the CDGA Life, Health and Hospitalization Insurance plan. That's 30%. No doubt, some clubs have other plans, but many still have none.---An alarming number of clubs are still without Retirement plans. Yet these clubs can come up with 50 to \$100,000 for charity on short notice, or perhaps 50 to \$75,000 for a calcutta pool.---Uniforms, vacations and paid holidays are additional fringe benefits clubs are going to have to consider in order to keep competitive with industry and business in the labor market. Thank goodness we've avoided the unions



thus far, but let us not leave the door wide open for the future. It is up to the professionals, managers and superintendents to recommend improvement for their respective personnel.--It is up to club officials to follow thru.

**More problems:** When responsibility is delegated to a superintendent, such as the decision on closing the course, no cards or Summer Rules, the Committee and the Board should back up and defend his decision. On occasion, the vocal minority members have been known to make life miserable for all concerned, with the result of reversing the decision. This breaks a smooth chain of command into fragments and is terribly discouraging to the superintendent and frustrating to officials.

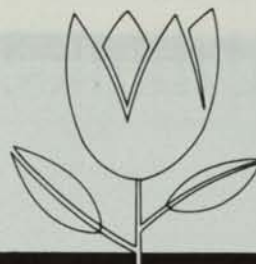
**Still another problem:** Employee rules and privileges, relative to use of the pool, tennis and golf course facilities. Most club directories devote several pages to rules and regulations governing members and guests. Yet relatively few clubs display a list of the privileges and rules affecting the employees. Frequently, we see a different set of rules for different departments. Coordination at the management level in establishing uniform rules and privileges, with Board approval, helps towards employee satisfaction with fair and equitable treatment.

**The problem of interpreting club objectives:** Very few clubs have actually taken the time to spell out exactly what their club objectives really are. Superintendents have a continuing problem of interpreting just what standard of maintenance the club wants, and is willing to pay for. If the Board of Governors will establish club goals or objectives, then the Green Committee and the superintendent can set up department objectives that will coincide. Club objectives are so varied today. We have real estate developments, we have profit making clubs, we have non-profit social clubs, Tourism clubs, Business clubs, etc., etc. Actually the club and department objectives should be on written record. (Example of Bob O'Link Budget Foreword.)

**Another point for discussion:** Chain-of-Command, and channels-of-Communication.--It is most important that club operations and management keep the chain of command intact. Department personnel must function completely under the direction of the superintendent. By the same token, the superintendent must react only to the direction of the Green Chairman.--In a general way, we could say that communication in club operations usually follow a pattern of recommendations moving upward through channels to the Board with decisions and direction moving back down.

**A last final point: General Managers versus Triumvirate Management.** Golf Professionals, clubhouse managers and superintendents are all concerned about the many ramifications involved. It is a very controversial question. However, I believe this meeting today could get off onto a tangent if we were to direct ourselves to this subject. I suggest to the CDGA that we schedule a club management seminar for complete discussion of the subject. At that time, all sides of the question should be presented by representatives from the professionals, club managers, superintendents and club officers.

In spite of many still unsolved problems relative to club operation, most of us still find our profession a real labor of love. We are indeed grateful to be working in pleasant surroundings, with appreciative members who need a bit of recreation in their lives. The golf business has to be one of the greatest.



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