

Back Into the Frying Pan???

by Dave Fearis, CGCS
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In January, 1982, after fourteen years as a golf course superintendent, I decided to become a salesman for O.M. Scotts. Why did I switch? Was I tired of working weekends or listening to the petty complaints of the members, tired of fighting for more equipment or an automatic irrigation system? All of these contributed, but the main reason was the challenge of a new job. I had begun to notice that I was developing a poor attitude toward my job in my latter years as a golf course superintendent. Since I had been at the course for 14 years, it was "my course." Anyone who contradicted my views or ideas was wrong. Negativism was too much a part of me; so it was definitely time for a change.

What an education sales proved to be!!! I believe that it should be a prerequisite for any golf course superintendent. You see the job from the "other side of the fence" and gain an entire different perspective. Sales helped organize my time. If you have over 220 golf courses to call on, you have to be organized or you'll catch yourself coming and going. Sales improved my communication skills. I wrote a lot of letters, presented seminars, and talked daily to numerous superintendents. This is where my education was really broadened - by communicating, observing, and listening.

Sales was enjoyable, but in November, 1985 I once again returned to the ranks of a golf course superintendent. Why did I switch back? I truly missed being a golf course superintendent. Granted I have to work weekends once again and fight Mother Nature. However, don't get the misconception that sales is a five day a week job. Good salesmen, like Jerry Adank, spend many hours, including weekends, preparing for their weekly sales call. Paper work consumes many of their nights as does keeping abreast of the competitor's products and making sure that you know your product backwards and forwards. I believe that a good salesman puts in just as many hours in a year's time as does a golf course superintendent.

Another reason why I switched back was that I was on the road over 100 nights a year. I have a lovely wife and a seven-year old son that I wouldn't trade for anything. The irrigation system might not be working properly, pythium might be running rampant, or the 350-D is down, but at least I'm home at nights. That means a lot to me.

O. M. Scotts was an excellent company to work for while I was in sales. They believed in their people and had an excellent training program. Because of my four years experience in sales, I believe that I am now a better golf course superintendent. Perhaps I have stepped back into the frying pan, but somehow that pan doesn't seem quite as hot.

*Worry is like a rocking chair;
it will give you something to do
but it won't get you anywhere.*

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