

# Good Management

by Gary T. Grigg, CGCS

Whether you are an experienced superintendent of a golf course, a new superintendent, or about to move up as a golf course superintendent, you are a manager. You need to think and act like a manager.

As an agronomic trained golf course superintendent you have acquired many specific technological skills. As a manager you now need to rely less and less on your own skills and move into managing areas that are more intangible. Some of those areas are time, budget, planning and people. The largest area that will confront you is working with people. As a manager you will now relate to people in new ways.

Dealing with people consists of two major areas. Dealing with your crew and interacting with people in other departments at your club.

For most of us, myself included, we come through the ranks feeling our principal asset is our technical ability. As we move up we find it takes more than that to be successful in this business. All at once, as the manager, it is your ability to get things done through other people that counts most. Your crew becomes by far your most important asset and you must get work done through them. Management of your staff is not taught in turf school, it is acquired from experience. Most of what I have learned, I learned by making mistakes. Believe me, some of my mistakes have been big ones. I survived because basically I like people and it helps a lot to like people. If your crew knows you like them and if you show concern for them, they will get a lot of work done for you.

Interacting with people in other departments is nothing more than good communication. The other department heads at the club are also professionals and they are important for the accomplishment of both your short term and long term goals. You are part of a business and you need to think about the implications of your work and how it affects the other departments of the club. You cannot become too stressed, nor be too casual while interacting with the other professional staff at the club.

Good communication cannot be overemphasized. Mix-ups in communication can be embarrassing for everyone. In my experience most errors on the golf course are caused by improper communication. Most superintendents who lose their jobs do so not because of lack of technical skills but because of failure to communicate properly. The responsibility for good communication belongs to the person who wants to communicate. Usually that is the manager. It is always your responsibility to instruct your staff properly.

Keep in mind that everyone's goal is satisfaction of the member or customer. Remember that ultimately the member or customer influences your job and your salary.

As a manager, your responsibilities are much greater. Some superintendents become overwhelmed by trying to budget time. The key for me is to prioritize. Make a list each day and note what must be done first and so on down. Those things that can wait should also be identified. Several years ago I started using a day planner. I find it very helpful keeping track of projects and sequential tasking.

Budgeting and management of your budget is a process of achievement of your goals by using funds prudently. In my budget process I give the club more than a typical spread sheet.

A high quality budget should consist of:

1. An organizational chart of your department.
2. A staffing chart complete with job descriptions.
3. A description of each category item in your budget.
4. A spread sheet with category items down the left axis and months across the top. A lot of superintendents stop here.
5. A complete management plan for the golf course. This plan should detail how the golf course is to be maintained. Hopefully you can equate budget numbers to this plan. For example:

Under the chemical insecticide use portion of the plan, detail the chemicals to be used and the cost of each program. Nematodes, mole cricket, fire ant, cutworms, sod webworm, chinch bug, etc., etc. Each program should be detailed with cost.

Under fertilization, detail each fertilizer program with type of fertilizer and cost. Green, tee, fairway and rough programs should be detailed.

Carry this on for each category item in the budget including the shop.

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The value of this plan is that when your budget is being reviewed by those who approve it they fully understand that when cutting money from the budget, they are cutting programs. If someone says to you for example, "cut your chemical cost". You lay out your management plan and reply, "Which program do you want to eliminate". Management will find it more difficult to eliminate needed programs than just amending a dollar figure. In the process of budget review you will be seen as an able manager of the clubs money.

Everyone should have heard of the five p's. Prior planning prevents poor performance. There are a lot of steps involved in planning depending on the text book you are reading. In my opinion only four are major:

- ★Where do you want to go
- ★What does it take to get there
- ★Implement the decision
- ★Monitor the plan for feedback as you go

Remember details change as you go and you might have to adapt. The key word is flexibility. If you know where you want to go and a shift occurs along the way, just keep the original goal in mind and you will achieve it.

As manager all these intangibles interact. For example: You plan several projects and for budget reasons or time constraints you may be forced to choose between the projects.

You think like a manager and make an informed decision. It's called good management.

**REMEMBER TO WEAR  
YOUR NAME BADGES  
AT OUR MEETINGS.**