



Fasten Your Seat Belts— It May Be a Bumpy Season

After a chilly March and snow to usher in April, the 2002 golf season has finally begun! Combine the abnormal weather with the need to tighten budgets and you have the ingredients for a very difficult season.

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Many superintendents are being asked to cut their budgets due to last season's economic downturn. I don't know about the private arena, but many of us in the municipal side of the industry do not have much fat to cut out of our budgets. When I ask the powers-that-be from where they would like me to trim all this excess money, the usual answer is "staff." Like most of you, my largest expense is labor. It is the nature of the business—people are needed to run golf courses. Why is it that they want to cut the very commodity that generates revenue? A well-trained and experienced staff will actually save a course money by working efficiently and providing better playing conditions. Conversely, an inexperienced and poorly trained staff can ruin a good course faster than any disease or insect. My point is, cutting staff may be the easiest cut to make, but it is probably not the smartest.

Speaking of staff . . . we took the time early this spring to do some intensive staff training. We covered general golf course safety, equipment operation, Right to Know and our department's specific policies. Our insurance company requires us to review all of these topics at least once a year. I myself learned several things during this year's training.

- Do not take **anything** for granted.
- English-to-Spanish translation takes a lot longer than you ever expected.
- Be prepared for the tough questions.

It seems that even if you have had the same staff for a few years, they may have forgotten everything you ever taught them. (Well . . . not everything.) I was shocked to find out that even some of my most experienced staff did not know or remember some of our most basic safety and operation policies. One of our goals this year is making sure staff continues to be aware of our policies while working. Do not take for granted that your staff knows or remembers.

"Do not mow the collar with the greensmower." I do not know what gets added to this simple statement when translating from English to Spanish. Whenever I give my assistant something to translate, it always takes more time to get out than I expected. I am not sure if he adds extra commentary to a brief statement or the Spanish version just requires more words. Whatever the remark, I usually notice smiles from my staff after my assistant is finished so I suspect something was changed. In any case, I am very lucky because I have a

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Spanish-speaking assistant. We must cover a mountain of material annually and having him there to translate makes getting through all of it much easier and quicker. One of the many jobs he does well!

Bottom line, it is important to keep our staffs well-educated and trained. The maintenance staff is the most important staff in any golf operation. A well-trained and educated staff is a strong asset and is a lot more difficult to trim or cut than a weak,

untrained staff. It takes some planning and time to train, but the rewards are endless.

I hope everyone has a good start to a long season. Good luck!



The Word, By George! (continued from page 5)

Midwest Golf House in Lemont. This location will be our headquarters for questions and information during business hours, as well as the site for mailing of announcements and referrals via U.S. mail. Yours truly will supply the updated membership lists when needed. If you need to talk with someone during the day, phoning the Golf House will be your best bet.

I plan on continuing with the e-mail side of the mailings as well as keeping track of meeting registrations, collection of dues and directory updates. I will also oversee the Web site for referral and meeting announcement updates. So if your question involves an address or place-of-work change or "am I registered?" and things of that nature, let me know and I will get back to you as

soon as I can. Both phone and fax numbers as well as my e-mail address are listed in your directory.


Enough said. Best of luck to all and have a great year!



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