

# Technicians Using Technology

*Happy New Year everyone. I hope everyone had a safe and happy holiday. With January comes the serenity and solitude of the shop for us Technicians. In my world the shop is transformed from a maintenance barn full of life and interruptions to a laboratory of solitude and deep thoughts. I love it! While most of the sleeping giants are kept asleep, some are brought out of cold storage. Without being disturbed from their well-deserved hibernation, they are cleaned and gutted down to the bare bone, without feeling any pain. Then and only then are we the Technicians able to visit the crevices and cavities. The hidden areas, where aliens grow, are uncovered. Where scum, rotted grass, slime, grease, dirt, goose excrement, and the ever probable greasy, grimy, gopher guts reside, we begin unraveling the mysteries of the past season's wear. "How dramatic Dad," my daughter would say.*

*The signature I personally want to leave is the optimum quality of cut and appearance—not roped off areas in fairways that were killed by a faulty after-market hydraulic component.*

By this time I've been through the majority of the cutting units and they are sitting with precision under a sheet of plastic with WD40-coated, sharpened blades. Every winter season seems to start differently. It helps to establish a few different priority lists for winter repairs. The weather this past fall certainly changed what got torn down first this year.

When it is time to scope out a machine or a set of like cutting-units, and you have the preliminary list of service parts you know you will need, check prices with competing vendors. Prices do change every year. Some will go down just to draw your attention to other parts on the same page that probably went up.

In most cases, for the major brands, I have sometimes found original manufacturer's replacement parts are equal or even lower in price than after-market parts. Plus, free shipping incentives are usually in place. The will-fit vendors are worthy of your attention also. Take the time to be inquisitive with the after-market supplier. Find out how close or exact the matching part truly is. By what standards and where (off shore?) did the manufacturing take place is important. Pay the most attention to the critical components and parts that you do not want to take shortcuts with. Granted, a big part of the Technician's job is to spend wisely and save the company money. See if the vendor will send you a sample part. Then compare to the OEM replacement part. Remember, your signature is on every service and repair you perform. The signature I personally want to leave is the optimum quality of cut and appearance—not roped off areas in fairways that were killed by a faulty after-market hydraulic component.

For those of us without access to the internet or lacking a computer at the office/shop, here is some ammunition for the cause of getting one. After attending the IPTC a few weeks back, I was stopped and pulled aside by a few presenters. The latest technology was on hand at a few major manufacturer's booths. After seeing what is available through the manufacturer's on-line site, many services can be obtained easily via the internet. Continuous service bulletins and updates on equipment are very important. Parts break-downs, which include any changes and superseded numbers that the Technician needs to know

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about, are not passed on without access to a computer. Many times when a part is ordered, it arrives and appears to differ from the original. Without knowing about a running change or bulletin on a part, we are often left standing with a machine down and a further delay. Without a computer you can only call the parts line and hope to talk to someone fast about your predicament. The "luxury" of ordering parts on-line is now a necessity. With some major companies it will save our golf courses money.

Although the more traditional fax-line is still important for ordering lengthy parts lists, it too can be inconvenient and futile if you are faxing old part-numbers. So along with the convenience of a computer comes savings both in the parts budgets and in the technician's efficiency. If the upfront cost of the computer is still considered prohibitive, here is some more ammo for your argument.

With a computer, it's now possible for the Technician to carry the trouble-shooting materials to the machine. The information in many cases is available on CD and can be accessed easily with a laptop. The laptop can be right next to the technician at the piece of equipment he/she is working on. One major manufacturer, for example, has a CD with working flow-schematics that show the entire electrical systems of all of the equipment they produce. This is also available on-line. Technical repair manuals are quickly becoming harder to get. The paper manuals that used to come with new equipment are extinct. All the information for today's and tomorrow's equipment is at our finger tips. With a very small investment on the golf course's part, the grateful Technician will produce time and money saving results.

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In closing: Next to the computerized spin grinder, bed knife grinder, spray rig, and the on-board diagnostic systems on equipment, a laptop right there next to the technician is a necessity.

Wouldn't that be wonderful?



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