

Fee or Free?

You Don't Have to Pay for Internet Access

I have to think that by now, most of us are on the Internet in some way or another. You might just browse around, visit our great Web site (www.magcs.org), purchase items online for your course, check up on your favorite sports teams and of course, retrieve and send e-mail. Whatever you use the Internet to do, I would bet that you pay between \$6 and \$20 per month for access. Then again, some courses have the superintendent hooked up for free. If that is your case, then don't read the rest of this. If not—read on!

Why are the free ISPs giving Internet access away, you might ask? Naturally, it's all for the almighty buck. You don't have to pay a monthly fee, but these ISPs are banking on the fact that you visit the sites that advertise with them.

Many Internet service providers (ISPs) exist that do not ask for any fee. The only obligation you fulfill to get service from such an ISP is to fill out an online questionnaire. Then, while you are online, an advertising banner will appear on the top or bottom of your screen. Some think this is annoying. So are commercials during football games. It's the same concept, except—since you filled out the questionnaire before you got online—the banner ads are actually aimed at your interests.

Why are the free ISPs giving Internet access away, you might ask? Naturally, it's all for the almighty buck. You don't have to pay a monthly fee, but these ISPs are banking on the fact that you visit the sites that advertise with them. Every time you actually click on a banner ad, you are sent to that site. Every time you do that, that advertiser pays the ISP. It costs you nothing to visit advertisers, unless you want to purchase whatever they have to offer. Then you are on your own.

You can take advantage of additional perks when you use free ISPs. Some have a recurring banner ad that you can customize. I use this space for local weather, sports scores for only the teams in which I am interested, and current news. If you see a news or sports story that intrigues you, just click that and you jump to that news/sports story. Plus, all of this happens in real time. You can't get more up-to-the-minute than that.

What about free e-mail? The old standby in free e-mail is Juno. Juno's weakness is that the freebie is only e-mail. You still have to pay

(continued on page 32)

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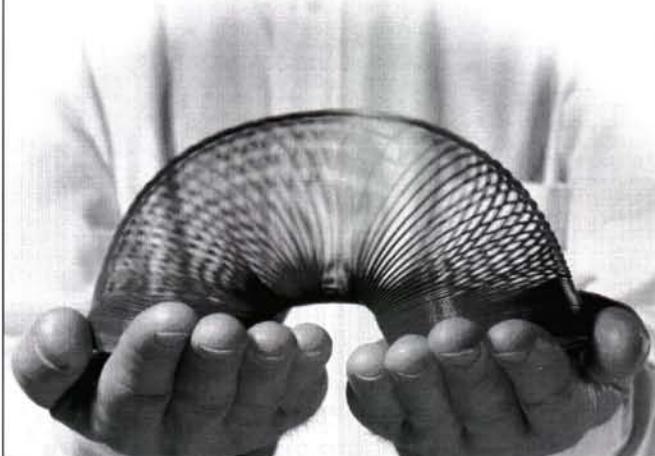
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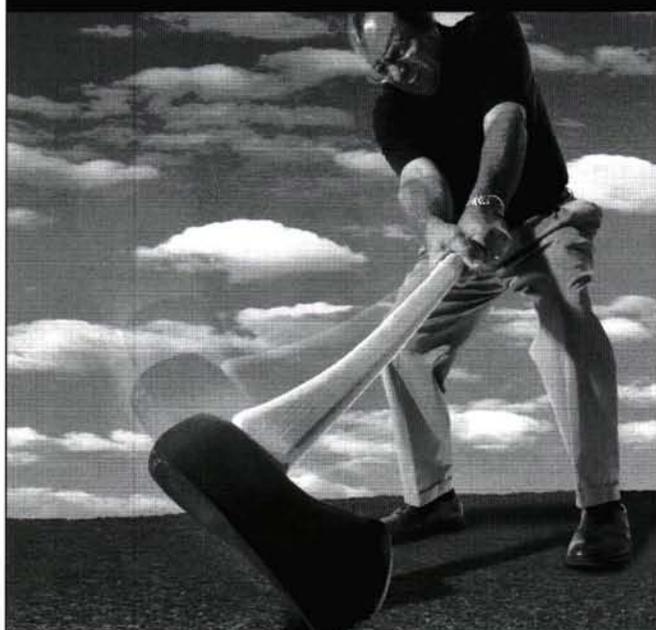
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ZPP-TRI-002

Zen and the Art of Equipment Maintenance

Didn't get to see the course today. Came damn close, but the dreaded call came in before my cart had cleared the maintenance yard. Ring goes the cell phone. Caller ID says it's Fran-



cisco calling from his mobile phone. Francisco works for me. He carries a cell phone. That's a whole 'nuther issue, though. "Crap!" I think. "This is gonna be bad." Usually when "Francisco Mobile" appears on my caller ID, it IS something bad. I already am prepared for the worst. I know I'll hear words like "maquina" and "tirando aceite" and "no corta" and, God forbid, "sangre." For those of you who've not grasped the basics of the Spanish language, these words mean machine, throwing oil, no cut and blood, respectively. To most, they mean radio the technician and get him to fix whatever is ailing whichever machine Francisco would be calling about, or call the ambulance if the latter word was used. To me, these words mean it's back to the shop for another unpredictable adventure into . . . the Twilight Zone (i.e., the garage, the equipment repair bay, the "mechanic's place").

You see, for reasons I won't endeavor to explain in detail here, I have no technician. Haven't had one since December. Back injury. Fickle doctors, ambiguous lawyers and other outer-worldly variables have conspired against me, causing the hiring of a technician to be nearly impossible. Thus, I have—along with my godsend of an assistant—become the end of the line for equipment repair and maintenance at my club. This is not good from any angle you look at it—not good for the equipment, not good for the crew that has to operate it, not good for my assistant, not good for my intern and definitely not good for my own mental health. Projects started must be left until later. Normal, everyday maintenance practices getting properly done must be assumed. Boneyard equipment must be revived (if for nothing else, to make room in the boneyard for

the NEW dead machine). Plans get tabled, or even scrapped. No, this is definitely NOT good.

I have managed to look at this experience from as positive a standpoint as I can, though. I truly am learning on the fly—adding another feather to my cap, so to speak. The elation that comes to me when I turn that key and hear the engine roar to life, regardless of how many little pieces and parts are left over after the fix is completed, is almost orgasmic. I have new talents! I can drive to the hardware store, the bearing store and the auto parts store blindfolded. I know every equipment distributor's number by heart. I know every service and parts department manager by first name. Hell, I know

(continued on page 24)

their kids' names. I can find the tow valve on every piece of equipment in our shop (or out, as the case usually will be). I can fix a flat tire with the best of them. I've learned that that metal plate on the floor actually goes up and down—turns out it's a hoist. I find myself just watching it and being, for some unknown reason, amused: Hoist goes up, hoist goes down. Hoist goes up, hoist goes down. Hee hee hee. I am now a savvy member of the "in crowd" that knows there's no such thing as a kanootin valve or a muffler bearing. Ask me where the around-the-corner Phillips head screwdriver is, I'll point you right to it. I've discovered ingenious products I never knew existed, such as "Nu Dough" (basically a stick of Play-Doh that turns into metal when it sets); as well as new, inventive uses for everyday products like duct tape and baling wire. I can fix anything with this stuff! This isn't so bad after all . . .

I can find the tow valve on every piece of equipment in our shop (or out, as the case usually will be). I can fix a flat tire with the best of them. I've learned that that metal plate on the floor actually goes up and down—turns out it's a hoist. I find myself just watching it and being, for some unknown reason, amused: Hoist goes up, hoist goes down. Hoist goes up, hoist goes down. Hee hee hee.

Yes it is. The downside far outweighs any positives I can come up with. When I drive blindfolded to the hardware store, it is to buy jumper cables and tow straps and push mowers. When I go to the bearing store, it is to buy exotic puller-thingies and hydraulic hoses (and fluid to replace that which striped my seventh fairway all to hell). When I go to the auto parts store, well, that's a world all its own—a different need each trip, save for the two bags of Oil-Dri required daily. If I take off the blindfold while on my way, and spot a dead lawn mower out on the curb with someone's trash, I become a vulture on carrion, pouncing upon it and picking at its entrails until I've had my fill, or find fresher roadkill down the street. When I call on a service person to "walk me through" a problem, by his second sentence—the one that goes like, "Take your whatchmacallit meter and clip on to the positive thingamajig and you should have twelve hooferdinguses"—I hear Arabic (which I don't speak). Oh, sure, I pretend to understand, I tell him I'll try that right now, I thank him for his help, I hang up, and I go to the tool box for a hammer. I have permanent grease under the few fingernails I have remaining. My golf/work clothes are trash. My repair budget is shot on batteries and starters alone (this a result of my own unique philosophy: if it doesn't start, buy a new battery first, and ask questions later). If the battery isn't the answer, buy a starter. After that, we're talking solenoids (which I previously thought were those things up one's nose that get taken out by a surgeon when one is young), coils (the things that keep one's bed firm), voltage regulators and those god-forsaken safety switches that require death-defying acts of bravery and self-contortionism to locate (and bypass). My mowers spark, click,

sputter and drip. My Cushmans have one gear—you push for the other direction. I'm considering cutting the floors out of them and going "Fred Flintstone." Dangerous and frightening new parameters have been set—how many drips per 10 linear feet are acceptable, how many strips of paper should be used to determine that a reel "cuts paper," and so on. I can't even bring myself to sit back and read all the trade magazines from which I typically find relaxation because they are grim reminders of my plight. "Turf Twisters" brings to mind how my rough mowers are operating. "Top Ten Turf Tips" just makes me long for the fingertips I used to have before my many unfortunate forays into reel adjusting. Even this very magazine—*On Course*—makes me yearn to be just that. *Bull Sheet?* Figure that one out for yourselves.

The light at the end of the tunnel is getting bigger, though. I soon will have my technician back, and my assistant and I will once again be able to tour the course, to manage the staff, to tackle the projects—maybe even get in a round of golf on OUR course! My intern will once again be able to learn the finer points of GOLF COURSE MANAGEMENT. And my crew will once again be able to operate equipment that runs from starting time to quitting time without needing its very own jumper cables and oil-drip bucket on board. My life is finally turning around and the clouds that have covered my sunny outlook have disapp...

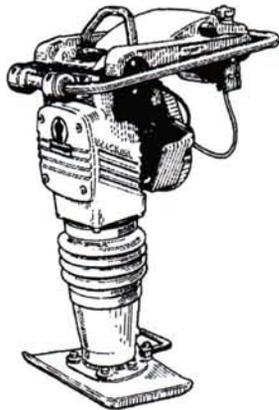
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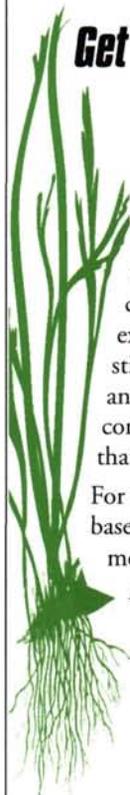
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The architecture and layout of the building appear to be very traditional, while the furnishings and equipment promise to be anything but. The building is to be outfitted with state-of-the-art technology, with continual updating planned. A 100-seat auditorium will be available for all tenants to use, as well as three conference rooms complete with audiovisual equipment. These rooms are on the first floor along with a lobby, reception area and library. Space will be available in this area for participating associations to showcase historical items and memorabilia. The offices on the first floor will be delivered fully furnished with office furniture and computers. If participating affiliates so desire, a dedicated phone line for each affiliate will be dispatched through a full-time receptionist. Other enclosures in the complex include a research lab for Dr. Randy Kane and greenhouses. Ten acres of land will become a three-hole golf course suitable for trial plots and turfgrass research as needed. The University of Illinois has embraced this opportunity with great enthusiasm, even planning to staff the Cog Hill complex with undergraduates. As far as design, the golf course will be friendly to disabled golfers and junior golfers.

The CDGA's lease from the Jemsek family is for a timeframe no less than 50 years. The CDGA is extending that timeframe to participating allied organizations as well. Provisions exist for lease termination at any time with a 30-day notice. At this time, anticipated completion of the Midwest Golf House

Complex at Cog Hill is March 2001. The CDGA is offering office space to allied associations on a first-come, first-served basis. Among those organizations requesting a presence at the Complex are the Western Golf Association, Illinois Junior Golf Association, Western Women's Golf Association and the University of Illinois.

Such an opportunity will not present itself to us very often, if ever again. We currently conduct our operations (our ever-growing operations) from the home office of George Minnis, our outstanding executive secretary. It is our plan at this time that George will continue in this capacity as his time allows. Yet, the potential to enhance and expand our Association would only be possible if we act on the offer that has been presented. The MAGCS needs a permanent home—a place for us to hang our shingle and be recognized for our role in the golf industry. We need a place to store our last 50 years of history and create our next 50 years. We have been afforded a very generous offer to be a part of this wonderful facility. I waited to make a decision until we tallied the 2000 MAGCS Survey. I wanted to hear all of your comments regarding this venture. The result: an overwhelming response in favor of pursuing this proposal. I will be out of office when the building is completed, but I am nonetheless pleased with what this means to the Association. In joining the Midwest Golf House Complex, we gain a permanent home shared with other prominent golf organizations where we can showcase the professionalism of our occupation.

*The MAGCS needs
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We need a place
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and create our
next 50 years.*

As you can see, the list of positives is long and I'm sure incomplete. To be honest, I don't have a list of negatives. As a business deal, we will receive quite a return on our nominal investment. I am extremely proud to announce this union with the Midwest Golf House Complex at Cog Hill. The rest of the Board and I agree that this is a monumental step in the right direction for our Association. Enjoy August and all summer has to offer. God bless.



Competency-Based Education:

What Is It and How Will It Help Me?

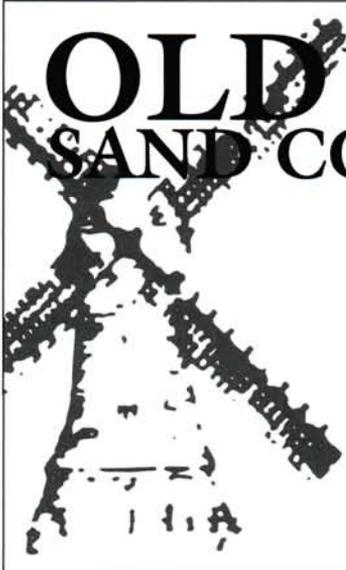
Editor's Note: This article is part of a series highlighting aspects of the proposed Professional Development Initiative (PDI).

The objective of all associations' continuing education is to advance the knowledge, skills and abilities of the members. GCSAA is, therefore, developing a state-of-the-art curriculum that provides golf course superintendents the tools needed to meet the challenges they face in managing their golf courses, staffs and budgets. The result of enhancing our education program will be the elevation of the professional qualifications of our members: the golf course superintendents.

In order to develop the needed curriculum, we must identify what the employers of golf course superintendents need, want and value from the golf course superintendent. Then, we detail the knowledge, skills and attributes required of superintendents to satisfy those needs.

Over the last two years, the Membership Standards Resource Group (MSRG) has been developing the Professional Development Initiative (PDI). The PDI is based on the belief that for golfers and employers to truly value superintendents, we must develop a mechanism to recognize their accomplishments and enhance their knowledge. The MSRG believes this can be accomplished through an integrated, competency-based curriculum. Furthermore, research indicates that we

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must be able to measure the impact of this education and its effects on the playing conditions of the golf course. We need to give employers language they can understand, a bottom-line financial impact or, as they refer to it, a “return on their investment.”

In order to develop the needed curriculum, we must identify what the employers of golf course superintendents need, want and value from the golf course superintendent. Then, we detail the knowledge, skills and attributes required of superintendents to satisfy those needs. Education provides the means for superintendents to fill any gaps between those competencies that superintendents have and those they need.

Using a competency model will document this process. The model consists of three major components: competencies, levels of proficiency and performance statements. The competency categories, which reflect a superintendent’s skills and knowledge, are organized into appropriate clusters. Each competency category is then subdivided into proficiency levels that range from a Level 1 (novice) to Level 5 (expert). Within each proficiency level are performance statements describing the observable behav-

iors of superintendents performing at that level of proficiency. An illustration appears below.

The competencies will be managed through a unique, Internet-based program called the HR Web (more information on this program will be forthcoming). Although the HR Web is currently under development, members can view this tool by logging onto the Members Only section of www.gcsaa.org.

So how will the competency model impact education for superintendents? As you may imagine, superintendents traditionally have focused their continuing education on the agronomic skills of golf course management. However, our research indicates that superintendents’ professional demands are changing. The superintendent’s job requirements have increased the need for competencies in management skills, leadership and communication. This doesn’t diminish the necessity for good scientific education, but it does require a superintendent to “broaden” his/her expertise in various areas.

The current proposal recommended by the MSRSG requires Class A members and

The superintendent’s job requirements have increased the need for competencies in management skills, leadership and communication. This doesn’t diminish the necessity for good scientific education, but it does require a superintendent to “broaden” his/her expertise in various areas.

certified members to maintain some level of ongoing continuing education. These levels have yet to be defined. Many members have expressed frustration with this requirement because they do not believe they will have access to enough educational opportunities.

(continued on page 33)

Resource Utilization: Rules of Golf				
Task: Manage the Course to Accommodate the Rules of Golf				
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access key rules information (USGA Rules of Golf and local rules) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an understanding of how rules affect golf course setup • Play golf • Demonstrate basic knowledge of golfing rules and etiquette 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain current on updates made to USGA Rules of Golf and local rules • Set up course for both regular and tournament play to conform to the Rules of Golf 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct staff training on rules and course setup as it relates to the rules • Play the course regularly to determine how course operation and setup affect play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain the experience and training to administer rules at a state or higher-level event