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A pheasant wends his way through snowy woods.
(Photo by Tom Maple)

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The Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents (MAGCS), founded December 24, 1926, is a professional organization whose goals include preservation and dissemination of scientific and practical knowledge pertaining to golf turf maintenance.

We endeavor to increase efficiency and economic performance while improving and enhancing the individual and collective prestige of the members.

The MAGCS member is also an environmental steward. We strive to uphold and enhance our surroundings by promoting flora and fauna in every facet in a manner that is beneficial to the general public now and in the future.

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Thanks and Reflections

Strength, dedication, persistence and perseverance are the combination that comprises the core of our membership, a core that makes this chapter stand out among the peers within the golf industry. My taking the helm of MAGCS gives me a chance to reflect over my past 20 years being part of a great “plan:” an organization that has produced unselfish leaders, devoted volunteers and great companionship. I am looking forward to an exciting and challenging year as your MAGCS president.


... I am really looking forward to the new season as your president. Please feel free to call me, e-mail me or just pull me aside to converse.

Great Midwest Turf Clinic!!! Tony Kalina and his Education Committee did an outstanding job; I thought the itinerary was excellent, took a variety of different directions and made good use of roundtables that got fellow superintendents involved—which would have made Dudley Smith very happy. Even the keynote speaker followed through on the theme of “change.” Da Coach, Mike Ditka, was refreshing, inspiring at times, a straight shooter and quite entertaining, especially with comments towards Vikings fan Ed Braunsky.

Now that Phil Zeinert has passed the gavel to me, I would like to express my feelings to the officers and directors. To Phil, you are a very soft-spoken and receptive leader who believes in the strength of the committees. You have taught me valuable lessons; hopefully I can successfully fill your shoes. Congratulations to Tim Anderson and Dave Braasch for being elected as vice president and secretary/treasurer, respectively. I have a great Board of Directors that will be striving to achieve goals and set new objectives. To that end, I'd like to welcome to the Board Tom Prichard, already cracking out ideas at Dave & Buster's, and welcome back Dan Sterr, who stepped in last year and is doing a great job on membership—Dan won't miss a step. To veterans Tony Kalina, Scott Witte, Paul Bastron and Todd Schmitz, I'm really looking forward to your fresh ideas, enthusiasm and undivided devotion—thanks.

I'd also like to acknowledge the advisors and staff, a great group of people who have their hands on the pulse that surrounds our industry: John Gurke, Chad Kempf, Ed Braunsky, Cathy Ralston, Sharon Riesenbeck and Luke Cella. Many thanks for your support, contributions and sacrifices. To Fred Behnke . . . a friend, colleague and Packer fan (two out of three isn't bad) . . . as Godfather of the Board, and a Board fixture since 1996, you always have a point-of-view. I wish you new challenges and endeavors, you will be sorely missed at the roundtable.

Again, I am really looking forward to the new season as your president. Please feel free to call me, e-mail me or just pull me aside to converse. Members, please get involved by signing up on committees and making your presence known; your fresh ideas and unlimited imaginations will give assurance to the Board.

In conclusion, the holiday season is upon us and it is a time for reflection, time to be among family members and friends, time to set goals and rejuvenate the soul and the body, time to take care of the staff and remember the memories, and time to view life outside the world of golf. My family and I would like to wish you all a joyous holiday and a prosperous New Year. 



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Parting Shots

If you want to hear God laugh,
tell Him you've made plans.

The past president's position on the MAGCS Board of Directors is a lot like sending your kid off to college. On the one hand, you want to be involved and available to step in and "fix" the inevitable problems and crises that crop up, but on the other it's time to let go and get out of the way so they can fly. At least the Board of Directors doesn't call home for more money.

This Association is nothing but a network designed to connect individuals. Sometimes in groups and often between just two, but always individuals—the buzz is invigorating when we get together.

Every year I've spent on the Board has been a learning experience and this year was certainly no exception. This should come as no big surprise, but it's all about people. This Association is nothing but a network designed to connect individuals. Sometimes in groups and often between just two, but always individuals—selling, buying, questioning, gossiping, complaining, celebrating—the buzz is invigorating when we get together. But we are more than individuals. Away from work we have families—even the most curmudgeonly golf course superintendent has a mother and a father.

The MAGCS Benevolence Policy is a powerful acknowledgement that we are more than individuals. Through memorial contributions, flowers and sympathy cards, this Association makes an effort to reach out to bereaved members just to say we care. The past president gets this sobering but important assignment and sadly, it was a busy year in the benevolence department. I would venture to guess that every member of this Association personally felt the loss of at least one of our passed members or member's loved ones. This holiday season, pause a moment and reflect on those who went before us, and give everyone you love a hug on behalf of your friends in the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents.

Thoughts from the pasture:

- We golf course superintendents need to seize and hold the reins of accountability in our area of expertise. It's a big mistake to allow a surrogate to speak for you, and never ever allow someone else to bring you a directive or request from a decision-maker at your facility without personally following up. Something as seemingly innocuous as, "Mr. Golf Pro, tell the Superintendent that we need flower pots for tee-markers on ladies' day" can quickly turn into "Mr. Golf Pro, how's the maintenance budget doing?" Pretty soon you're out of the room when the big decisions are being made. I've seen it happen and yes, it's politics—deal with it.
- As for greens committee members . . . Among the professions that often represent the decision-makers at our respective clubs, I particularly like doctors. As a rule, they understand the fact that while medicine is a science, the patient is an individual. What works for one does not always work for another. Much the same is true on a golf course, and I think doctors are more capable of understanding that idiosyncrasies exist and, in fact, should be embraced.
- Bankers and accountants are the other side of the coin. They like their world in a box with clear-cut parameters and expectations. Throw a member-guest event following a two-inch rain at them, and you're likely to be dodging shrapnel from the explosion. If you have a couple of accountants or bankers on your greens committee, take a business-writing seminar—you'll be doing

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The Paper Trail: The Role of Records/Documentation/Reports in Golf Course Stewardship

Eighteen years ago, as a student intern, I had a professor who required us to write a detailed report outlining our summer work experience. The report was different from others that I had been required to write. In the past, I had written reports that were narratives or research reports. This time, the assignment was to do a documentary. The report was to document course activities, maintenance procedures, financial records, communications, employee records, etc. The motivation for taking the assignment seriously was simple: The grade that you received on your report counted for 100% of your grade in the professor's class the following semester.

... our industry has undergone significant change in the past couple decades. Agronomy is still at the core of our profession, but business acumen is running a close second.

As the years passed, I have often thought back to this experience. I remember the work involved in gathering all the information for the report and organizing it into some type of a coherent format. After that came the difficult task of typing the report and compiling all the charts and graphs. Keep in mind that this was 1987. Computers for college kids were the exception, not the norm. Not everyone was proficient in Word, Excel and Publisher. In fact, my report was written on a typewriter (I paid someone to type the report because my typing skills had only evolved as far as the hunt-and-peck technique). Corrections were made using "white-out" correction sheets. The charts and graphs were drawn by hand on quarter-inch graph paper. As I wrote my report, I understood and appreciated the learning experience that my internship had provided. I saw the report as a means to record the experience so that I could relay what I had learned to my teacher. When the report was completed, I remember thinking how glad I was that the assignment was behind me and that I would never have to go through it again. What I didn't realize was that the report was actually a tool that the professor was using to educate the class on the importance of documenting programs, keeping records and writing business reports, all skills that would be necessary down the road.

Fast forward 18 years to 2005. We find that our industry has undergone significant change. Agronomy is still at the core of our profession, but business acumen is running a close second. Records, documentation and reporting are an important aspect of managing a golf course. Technology has made the process much easier, but it has also caused a tremendous increase in the amount of information that we attempt to track. The record-keeping of today far exceeds that which was done 18 years ago. In the end, it appears that my internship report was not a one-time assignment. Instead, it was the first in what has turned into a continuous process of record-keeping, documentation and reporting. At least now I have the benefit of a computer and Microsoft Office.

The following outline lists several types of documents, reports and records that are used as part of a business plan for the golf course. My professor was truly forward-thinking to prepare us for a future that would involve an array of record-keeping and documentation opportunities and demands.

1.) Financial Plan

- Annual budget proposal.
- Statement of goals and objectives that the proposed budget is intended to fund.
- Survey showing local and national averages.

(continued on page 8)

- Annual budget by line item/month/fiscal quarter.
- Capital budget by item/month.
- Payroll summary by pay period/accrual period.
- Current fertility and pesticide program by application/cost.
- Explanation of major line-item variances from prior year to current year.
- Five-year historical pricing for a “shopping cart” of commonly used golf course items.
- Budget reprisal plan (if needed).
- Monthly inventory of plant protectants.
- Monthly payroll accrual report.
- Annual itemized report of equipment-repair costs.
- Maintenance department ledger of accounts with expenses coded to line items.
- Monthly reconciliation of maintenance-department ledger with ledger from the accounting office.
- Variance of projected versus actual labor costs tracked by pay period/year to date.
- Equipment inventory with current and replacement value.
- Five-year capital equipment-replacement projection.

2.) Communication Plan

- Flow chart to facilitate effective communication.
- Weekly e-mail update to green committee and board of directors.
- Monthly newsletter article.
- Monthly update of bulletin-board material.
- Direct accessibility to answer questions in person.
- Attendance at monthly board of directors meeting.
- Attendance at annual budget finance meeting.
- Preparation of year-end annual report for presentation at the annual membership meeting.
- New-member orientation packet.
- “Glad You Asked!” informational postings.
- “Did You Know?” informational postings.
- Web site postings and mass e-mail pushes.
- Suggestion box, surveys.
- PowerPoint presentations.
- Posters, signage.
- Phone system—informational messages.

- Daily informational meeting with the crew.

3.) Green Committee and Board of Directors

- Monthly green committee agenda.
- Monthly green committee minutes with list of assigned follow-up action items.
- Monthly board of directors report.
- “Issue/Resolution” proposals to document course of action used to resolve maintenance issues or problems.
- Written standard operating procedures for the maintenance department.
- Written goals and action plans for short- and long-term improvement of the facility.

4.) Human Resources

- Manpower study of hourly labor usage by task/week/season.
- Template for daily work schedule.
- Template for weekly work schedule.
- Template for annual/seasonal maintenance activities.
- Mission statement/organizational chart.
- Employee manual.
- Job descriptions.
- Employee recruitment program.
- Employee orientation/training program.

- Employee retention/morale program.
- Employee discipline/termination procedures.
- Management succession plan for key staff positions.
- Employee files.
- Log of daily activities and job assignments.


5.) Other Types of Documents, Records and Reports

- Historical fertility and pesticide records.
- Daily weather records.
- Daily irrigation records—water usage/pump maintenance/repair records.
- Tree inventory/maintenance.
- Soil-test records.
- Maintenance of computer files.
- Maintenance of historical course record related to long-range planning and course improvements.
- Maintenance of course photo library—digital and film.
- Maintenance of blueprints and as-built archive.
- Maintenance of equipment-repair records.



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