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hardware store is having a sale on 6-6-6 for only \$3.99 a bag!" It's immaterial that your greensmix fertilizer is six times better and only three times more expensive. The layman can only comprehend the fact that his 50 lb. bag of fertilizer is less expensive than your blend.

Maybe we could topdress the greens next week with that sand out back in the woods. Who cares if the material contains a few weed seeds and the particle sizes are too fine. The point is, the stuff is cheap and who will ever know the difference, once you pick out the shell rock. Sand is just sand, Right? Obviously we go to great lengths to lab test our existing soil and purchase the material which is best suited for sound agronomic growth. Such factors as pH, CEC, particle sizes organic content, and sterilization are key elements when ordering content, and sterilization are key elements when ordering the proper blend greensmix.

How about the superintendents who oversee. I know you can purchase last year's seed at reduced rates, not to mention some of those fancy high breeds cost far too much when common types are cheaper. After all, our priority is to make the greens look green, Right? Who cares that high breed varieties are more resistant to disease and drought, tolerate lower mowing heights, and are superior in color.

Maybe we could cut costs by spraying a curative program rather than a preventive one. I bet we could save more than 50% of the chemical budget. Don't worry about the fear of quick striking pythium disease wiping out an entire green or two within 24 hours is not caught in time, or the fear of insects gnawing on the manicured greens the day before your member/guest tournament. Much like an insurance policy, the additional cost for a preventive spray program far outweighs the potential risks.

What about equipment repairs? Maybe we could try to eliminate new equipment purchases by simply rebuilding the old for less money. This theory holds true only up to a certain point when, finally, new equipment is justified. To an outsider, it seems rather difficult to appreciate that new turfgrass mowing machinery can cost more than a new Mercedes. However, in the manufacturing world, turf equipment is considered to be relatively low volume production and therefore justifiably expensive to produce. When an automobile turns over the one hundred thousand mile mark, we quickly think of trade-in time. In our business, however, it is common to pour money into old equipment although it would have been economically more sound to trade and purchase new.

Speaking of machinery, what about purchasing after-market parts at less than original equipment manufacturer's cost. Sometimes this application appears effective. Whether the part be a bearing, seal, belt, tire, or whatever, more often than not certain specifications have been cut short. This is probably one of the most altered programs within our budget. There are risks to encounter. Contemplate the inferior strength of a whiling blade shattering, resulting in a liability suit that would be difficult to win in court.

Let's go onto the next area—people. How can we cut

costs here? Nowhere, because money speaks! In order to get good people, you have to pay good money. Sure, there are incentives, but if you take away the incentives, you can bet the employee will move on. Every year at budget time, I hear employees moan and groan because they aren't getting paid enough. What is considered enough? I believe the answer lies within the employees motivated attitude. As long as the desire exists, the employee will be productive if he is justifiably rewarded. The employee must be paid above the average norm. The Palm Beach chapter of the FGCSA conducts an excellent yearly survey that can be a valuable management tool for both the employee and the employer. Money is not everything, although more often than not this appears to be the case. The employee must feel totally fulfilled with insurance benefits, vacation pay, sick days, yearly Christmas bonuses, uniforms, and good working conditions.

At the end of the year when budget reviews preclude even a token raise, employees look elsewhere for better pay or benefits. Many clubs are experiencing greater turnover because of these budget cutbacks or minimal percentage increases. Additional training costs coupled with lower productivity due to new employees, tends to outweigh the money theoretically saved from raises. If we try to cut corners in the payroll department we will realize very little, if any economic gains.

In review, after analyzing the budget from fertilizer purchasing to the human factor, there is very little to take off the top. Perhaps we can cut the budget or reduce the percentage increase for a few years, but this only a short term gimmick. All will soon turn sour.

I believe that we, as professional golf course superintendents, manage the maintenance budget to the best of our ability. To the outsider it may appear that we are extravagant, excessive, and wasteful. Yet, when making equal comparisons with other equal-status clubs, there will seldom be a great difference in operational costs. The best way to put this into perspective is to pretend that "I've got the deed in my hip pocket and I will operate this business as if I were the owner." ■

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