

DIVOTS

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Cutting Costs Through Efficiency

The efficient management of personnel, equipment, chemicals, and time will most certainly keep your planned budget on line. When I accept the responsibility of managing someone's business, I have to know what the company wants out of the operation that I am responsible for.

To objectively manage any business you must have an understanding between management and owner on the cost of operations. As the superintendent of a golf facility you have the responsibility of being able to show that you are capable of operating your facility in a cost effective and efficient manner. When preparing your budget you have to know what type of operation you will be running. A course with nine holes of golf will have a lower budget than an eighteen hole course. Then again, a nine hole course in certain geographical areas will have a larger budget than an eighteen hole course in another

part of the country.

Your company may own two or three or more facilities and the budgets will be different at each course. Costs of operations will depend on the different types of clientele and the different types of amenities at the facility. Whether you are just taking over an operation or you have been at the same location for years, the costs of operations change annually, if not daily. To keep up with these changes and stay efficient, you must gain knowledge through continual business education and by being aware of the economic conditions of your area.

As the superintendent you have the responsibility of continuously reviewing your operations budget with the rest of the management team at your club. When you can show the owners or director of your club that you can run a cost effective operation you can then concentrate on turf and personnel management.

Now that you have the operations budget in your hand, the hard work has just begun. You now must make the budget cost effective. One of the budget line items at a course managed by a bank was out of line. The first thing the bank wanted was the equipment repair cost reduced. Before I arrived at the golf course I had the budget analysis report mailed to me. The first line item I looked for was the one in question. At 30% over to date and only seven months into the budget year, there was something wrong.

When I arrived at the course I had my work cut out for me. There were approximately 57 pieces of major equipment in the maintenance area and one was operable. Equipment repair budget at 30% over, no equipment running, and the company wants me to cut costs? Where does a superintendent start with a nightmare like this? I asked myself, was the preventive maintenance program effective — hardly! How can I cut costs and get operating at the same time? I opened the door to the mechanics area and virtually could not see the floor. The first things that came to mind was to get the area in order and use what I could find to get necessary machines running. Now I could inventory what we had on hand and see what needed to be ordered and where the over ordering had taken place.

After the first teleconferences with my home office to let them know that I had the inventory and purchasing areas on the right track, I would start on personnel. It was plain to see that costs surely could be reduced with a good

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personnel management program. As I hired and brought people into my operations, training became most essential. A well-trained golf course equipment mechanic can prevent what I found when I first saw the equipment at the course.

After showing a reduction in the areas of the budget that were immediate priorities, I started to work on the other areas. When training personnel in your operations, make them aware of the budget that affects their area of operations. When I hired my irrigation man, I made sure he understood how preventive maintenance and proper operation time can help keep costs down. The irrigation man should know that overusing the water system can lead to destruction of turf and cost overrun in the irrigation budget. By controlling the amount of water usage you can cut costs on maintenance of sprinkler heads, irrigation pumps, valves and controllers. By watching the weather closely (we check the rain gauge daily), you can cut costs on electricity for pump operations drastically. By knowing how much water is being distributed from the sprinkler heads, G.P.M., A.C., and time of operation, your properly trained irrigation man can help in the control of leeching of fertilizers, pesticides, and help check compaction. An irrigation department run efficiently can be very cost effective. Remember to let your employees know that they are directly linked to keeping costs down in their daily work habits.

I was at another course the other day that asked me for some help. We were walking through the equipment storage area and we were discussing new equipment purchases. When we got to the end of the building, the gentleman I was with looked puzzled. He said, "I didn't see our new machines." We walked back and stopped in front on a new triplex. It was so dirty it already looked six months old. In reality, the machine had been delivered two days ago. He asked me what he could do to prevent this. I explained my policy of training personnel. The very first thing I teach my operators is that the three most important steps to preventive equipment maintenance are: 1) check the oil, 2) check lubrication, and 3) cleanliness. These three steps can prolong the life of any machine to twice the life of one not taken care of properly. Take that life span times the amount of equipment you have and then add up the cost savings on your budget.

Cutting money costs is not the only way to improve your course operations. One of the most important factors in your daily operations is time. It is not just an old saying that "time is money"—it is a fact!

Effective manpower scheduling is a daily, weekly, and long-term task. Each day you could have from 3 - 15 employees coming to work. Each employee has a specific area of responsibility and each has to be trained in his duties. If a greens mower operator is an excellent equipment operator and fails in effective mowing time, efficiency is lost.

A mowing route should be established so the operator knows how much time it should take to complete his job. If you have trained all your operators properly they can use time efficiently to cut costs. If you can cut 20 minutes a day off your greens mowing operations the cost sav-

ings will mount with your time savings. One way I have implemented a time saving step is to have my greens men start at the edge of the green and not in the center. When the operator starts mowing he should start at the proper edge of the green so when he ends his clean up ring, he can leave the green he is on and head directly to the next green. By not having to drive the machine around the green to head in the right direction he can save valuable time. By starting the mowing operations at the edge of the green, he will pass through the green only once and will not have to backtrack.

If the operator starts on any other area of the green than the clean up ring area, he will have to go back to finish the other side he has not yet mowed. By having to go back and start over he will waste not only time but gasoline. The life of the machines is also shortened. These are just two of the many small time and cost saving steps that can improve your manpower scheduling by using time wisely. Remember, "time is money". ■

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