

TPC superintendents sail smooth waters with computer support

By CHRIS SMITH

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — The Tournament Players Club (TPC) Network has taken efficiency to a new end.

Though the 15 TPCs excel in service operations geared toward such patron satisfaction as golf and food and beverage, a true litmus test for this commitment is found in an area many clubs keep from public exposure: the maintenance facility.

Perceived as cluttered and oil-stained, with machine parts strewn around, the maintenance facilities at TPCs have adopted a policy of cleanliness and overall efficiency.

"We teach organization and professionalism, and we carry that image onto the course," explained Gary Myers, TPC regional director of golf course maintenance. "We have taken it to a different level. Our equipment runs well and lower and looks good. In turn, our crews take more pride in doing their work."

The maintenance area is as well organized as any department at a TPC. Not only is it immaculately clean, but every piece of equipment, every spare part, every maintenance requirement and every chemical is accounted for by computer.

The equipment, from mowers to blowers, is subject to a strict schedule of routine maintenance. A check-and-balance system accounts for who uses what and when.

Moreover, all the equipment and parts needed for maintenance are right there, as complete as any auto-repair shop. Inventory use and needs automatically are updated in the computer system.

This initial commitment to high care has resulted in untold savings and old equipment looking and running like new.

"The total labor and cost is kept on each piece of machinery," said George Degeal, corporate equipment manager who is based at TPC at Summerlin in Las Vegas. "We have 110 to 120 pieces here, which cost about \$628,000," he said. "The only reason we buy equipment now is to upgrade. But we don't need to replace anything."

"The whole concept is efficiency," said Degeal, a former Marine jet mechanic. "If you buy equipment and don't maintain it, you buy it again in maybe four years. How long it will last is not cut-and-dry."

"If a piece of equipment doesn't work, it can disrupt the maintenance schedule. So it is important for our labor to be efficient. We have a \$30,000 inventory in parts (at Summerlin) and rarely have to wait for one to come in. The computer tells us when to reorder. The entire TPC Network is computerized this way."

This is consistent with the fundamental management philosophy throughout the Network. The bottom line is maintaining a consistency of excellence through a well-thought-out plan of action.

It begins with meticulous attention to details, be it employee orientation, quality hiring program, training and safety programs, the overall maintenance operation, or food and beverage. Nearly everything is computerized and

spelled out in black and white.

Administrators have found a basic system that works and have continued to perfect it. In fact, the Networkwide Above and Beyond program for employees, which instills the importance of pride and service, has been used by other corporations.

"We have a lot of guidelines and procedures," Myers said, "to ensure a quality presentation each day. The program, which started eight or nine years ago, instills in the staff

what customer service is."

The Above and Beyond program has proven successful.

"It all starts with communication," Myers said. "We have a lot of rules and procedures and are always looking for ways to improve."

Regular safety seminars are held for the entire maintenance staff, which has had a significant impact throughout the Network.

"We have a very thorough orientation," said Cal Roth, TPC national director of golf

course maintenance operations. "We promote a safe, correct, efficient manner in all jobs. Our employees are cross-trained and our safety program is on-going."

"Since we initiated our safety program, our workers' compensation losses have dropped dramatically throughout the Network. In 1994, we had three clubs that had no workers' compensation claims. That is significant with the number of people we employ."

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