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It's your business

Golf course manager Bob Farren, CGCS, of Pinehurst believes in mid-season employee reviews (see "Measuring success" on page 36). Mid-season reviews allow employees to make meaningful changes during the season when it counts most.

But the challenge to mid-season reviews is *making* the time when there is no time.

I suggest that right now, when you are the busiest, is the best time to do some big-picture planning for 2005. Right now you're acutely aware of what needs fixing with your staff, equipment and course. Postponing planning until fall or winter means forgetting the details and possibly justifying the reasons to leave things the same.

Deciding to plan significant changes can be as simple as carrying a pocket sized note pad during the week to jot down ideas as they come to you and setting aside some time each week just to think.

Summer is a hectic time in the publishing business as well. In addition to all the "normal" work, this is the time of the year when we get invitations to numerous golf outings and manufacturers' product demonstrations. It's also the time when staffing becomes an issue because of vacations. On top of that, this is the time when we begin planning our editorial content for the coming year.

When work gets wild, the phrase "working *on* your business" comes to my mind. The phrase was coined by Michael Gerber, a business consultant and author of the bestseller, "The E-Myth." The central principle in the book is that three types of people are needed in any business—the technician that performs the tasks, the manager that manages the technicians and the owner who directs the business.

The "myth" in "The E-Myth" is that technicians and managers who are good at a jobs can start their own business—the entrepreneurial dream. For a golf course superintendent, for example, this might mean deciding to become a turfgrass consultant. Unfortunately, technical skill alone doesn't ensure success. More than 90 percent of all business start-ups fail within the first five years.

Gerber's solution is that businesspeople need to spend some time working "on" their business, not just doing the day-to-day tasks and getting caught up in pressing manage-

ment issues. Working on your business means taking the time to see the problems clearly, then planning to take advantage of the opportunities to get things done faster, better and cheaper.

Getting caught up in the day-to-day job is as big a problem for managers as it is for owners. Gerber addresses this in another book he wrote, "E-Myth Manager." He contends that managers will be happier and more productive if they adopt the mindset their department is a stand-alone business and they own it.

For example, imagine the owner of the golf course at which you work decided to eliminate your position and your maintenance staff because next year course maintenance will be handled by an outside service. The course owner wants you to provide him with a proposal encompassing everything needed to maintain the course for the coming year. He wants a bid that includes all materials, equipment and overhead. Your bid has been accepted, and you won the contract for the coming year.

Under this scenario, nothing has changed in the sense that you would still be doing the same work you did the year before. But at the same time, everything would have changed. Now you work for yourself. If you do all the work and come in under budget, you get to keep all the money. But if you go over budget to get all the necessary work completed, then you have to pay for it out of your own pocket. Taking this view probably changes the way you think about maintenance requirements, staffing needs, management systems and your responsibilities.

In the real world, Gerber says taking on the ownership mindset revolutionizes what department managers do, how they do it and how happy they are in the process. His contention is that the manager who thinks and works like the owner—even though they're not—makes improvements that echo throughout the organization.

Approaching your job as the "owner" helps you avoid the trap of working in your business versus working on it. It's easy to get too involved with working on tasks and management issues that need to be addressed and fail to work on directing the business. But that's what's needed if lasting progress is the goal. Having an owner's view also means making the time to plan, even when you don't have the time. GCN

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