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BETTER TIME MANAGEMENT

Everyone talks about time management, but who really takes it to heart? Amid your daily duties as an assistant, managing your time will do wonders now, and hopefully create good habits in the future.

As long as the sun is up, there must be something to do, some say. But starting a fairway drainage project at two o'clock in the afternoon doesn't make sense. I'm not saying we should take it easy, but we should work hard at the course and be done with it. We work long hours, and some say we're paying our dues. But who are we paying?

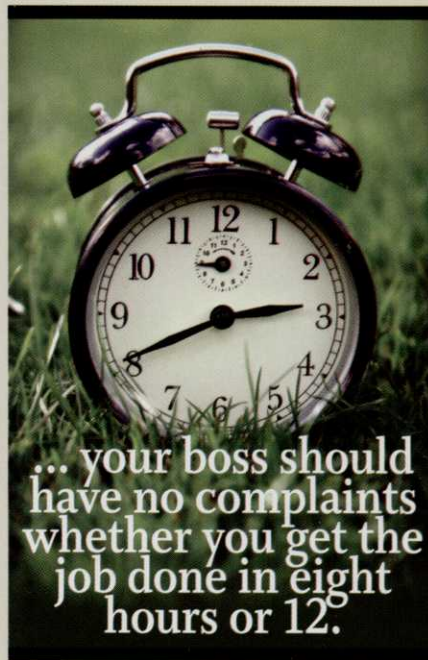
Employers don't base their hiring decision on how many hours you work per day. And if you work hard and are efficient with your time, your boss should have no complaints whether you get the job done in eight hours or 12. There's no need to hang around waiting for something to do, just for the sake of saying you worked 10 hours one day. There are more important things to deal with.

I have a wife and beautiful baby boy at home who mean more to me than anything. My goal is to get my job done and get home – plain and simple. Sometimes it's not as early as I'd like, but sometimes it is, and I'm rewarded with being able to play with my son before he goes to bed. We must prioritize the important projects and duties and attack them as time allows. Planning is your biggest ally in proper time management.

For me, planning starts the day before. Although this might not work for everyone, it works well for me. I learned this habit from my former superintendent, who wrote everything down and always planned the following day. I try my best to be back at the office 30 minutes before the crew clocks out. This provides me enough time to evaluate the day's achievements and decide what needs to be accomplished tomorrow. I'm also around the shop for employees who might have questions, and

to verify completed and incomplete tasks.

I'll record that day's activities in a log and write the first jobs of the next day on the board for the morning. I'll also write tomorrow's plans on a notepad on my desk and anything else I need to remember for the morning. Then I'll answer phone calls, check the shop, check the yard and head home. I try my best not stay 30 minutes later than when the crew clocks out. This varies depending on irrigation scheduling needs and special situations – but the point is I try.



The next morning, I try to arrive 30 minutes before the crew to check what's planned for the day. Sometimes it's a little later, but try to stick to my schedule. This time gives me the opportunity to review the plans for the day, make adjustments and get revved up for the day. I don't like being there right at starting time and jumping into everything immediately. This gives me a cushion to get ahead.

Once the crew arrives, we have a staff meeting and head out on the course. Usu-

ally, I'll lag behind for 10 or 15 minutes to assign second jobs. Depending on the size of the crew, I use a spread sheet to write down first, second and third job assignments to carry with me so I can address a crew member on the course if a job needs special instructions.

Before lunch, I try to come in 20 to 30 minutes early to check the board, assign any remaining jobs and make and send necessary phone calls and e-mails. It's all based on 30-minute intervals. Giving yourself breathing room always helps.

This sounds a lot like what a superintendent should be doing. But the job of an assistant, in its simplest form, is to assist the superintendent. We all should be doing these types of jobs and setting good habits for ourselves. Doing so now will only benefit you in the future.

It's easy to translate more of the assistant and second assistant roles. Starting your own records and logs will help you organize items in the future and give you a quick reference for spreader settings, fertilizer applications, etc. I write important information and notes in a simple weekly planner that lasts all year. There's not enough space for everything, but the small size allows me to carry it with me at all times. I also use the spreadsheet – clipped to my steering wheel – for notes, irrigation problems and areas that need attention. If anyone is interested in a copy, e-mail me, and I'll send it to you.

When the staff needs to know how we set our topdresser last time we aerified, or at which rate we sprayed the greens during the last application, I just pull out my little notebook and look. I have about eight books I look back on constantly for application timing, what worked and what didn't. You can keep records of projects, spray calibrations or anything you feel might help you later on.

I've always been an avid notetaker but just recently started reading my old notes. Hindsight is 20/20. Why not help yourself by planning and managing your time better? It will help you become a better superintendent when the time comes. **GCI**