



## A LITTLE JOB SECURITY

During a recent round of golf, I watched with wonder as 20-year superintendent Frank Tichnor of The Forest Hill Field Club (Bloomfield, N.J.) grabbed his iPad to either scribble notes or take pictures. What he was using this device for? "A little job security" Frank's responded. Subsequently, I learned Frank was using the information gathered to add to his year-old golf course maintenance blog that he linked to his club's Website.

### WHY DID YOU EMBRACE SOCIAL MEDIA?

Dissenters and naysayers who settle in the back room and spread rumors about what is going on out on the golf course do not serve any value. I wanted to prevent misinformation regarding the condition of the golf course or what we were trying to accomplish. A blog serves two purposes: a form of self-preservation, if you will; and to communicate an accurate story. Many times those who create rumors sway other members into believing their stories and not mine. The blog improves my communication efforts.

### WHY ATTACH IT TO YOUR CLUB'S SITE?

New members are younger and they spend time glued to their phones and PDA's, so I felt I would send the message via a medium through which they are comfortable. The Internet allows instant information to be communicated about the golf course. The blog allows maintenance updates to be literally "at their fingertips" and it has assisted in the accurate portrayal of our version of operations and responses to issues. Furthermore, the blog increased my communication to our members without them having to search me out when I was on the grounds.

Social media beats the club newsletter or locker room postings. We

now put all newsletters and updates online so members can check from their homes, offices or cars.

### WHAT PROMPTED YOUR INTEREST AND HOW DID YOU EVOLVE TO THIS LEVEL?

I am active in all our industry Websites, chat rooms and blogs. So I thought I could do the same for the club's membership who frequent Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn by sending quick notes and updates.

Social media can reduce the "aloofness" or intimidation felt by members trying to communicate with their superintendent. Using pictures is a visible and honest way

You'll also need a reliable camera to uplink photos to the iPad.

You want to start slowly and do a professional job on your iPad and eventually your blog. I would suggest the Key-Note app which is the Apple Power Point app for slide shows, graphs and any form of data. We haven't reached our potential yet and you still have about five years left with current technology.

### WHAT DO YOUR MEMBERS LEARN FROM THE BLOG?

Members have instant access to the following:

---

**"Many times those who create rumors sway other members into believing their stories and not mine."** — Frank Tichnor, The Forest Hill Field Club

---

to reduce the technical aspects and explanations of our profession. The blog helped me speak directly to my audience and visually show them what we are doing, when and why. When the opportunity came along to link the blog to the club's site I embraced it.

Eventually the member who volunteered to do the site grew weary of the task and turned it over to me. There was a learning curve, but it didn't take long to master.

### WHAT EQUIPMENT IS NEEDED?

I do everything from my iPad which is now part of my on-course equipment package. The iPad is small, lightweight and pretty sturdy when traveling across the course. And with the number of available applications, especially turfgrass related, I can visually explain each aspect of our job.

- Maintenance practices. Have you ever attempted to explain aeration without visual aids?
- Training videos for ball mark repair, divot replacement and bunker raking.
- Video updates for projects such as drainage and tree removal.
- Spreading the word about frost delays, storm/rain event updates, whether a course is open or closed, communicating golf cart access parameters on any given day or whether walking is permitted.
- Disease issues and why, when and how we are treating for them and when it is safe to be back on the golf course.
- Q&A sessions and surveys regarding club operations.
- We've included an opinion section so members may express their interests. GCI