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6 REMODELING BLUNDERS TO AVOID

I recently saw a newspaper article titled, “The Top Home Repair Blunders.” After a quick read, I realized that with minor tweaks, they are the same six blunders to avoid in golf course renovations. So, here we go.....

ACCEPTING THE LOWEST BID

I had a neighbor who continually used roving undocumented workers for home repair because they were cheap, and continually had to re-do work when they failed to show up after a few days on the job. He never learned.

In golf construction, low bids are great, and some great deals are out there right now, provided you prequalify the contractor. You can use references and research and/or limit bidders to members of the Golf Course Builders Association of America. If only qualified contractors who understand the work are bidding, then you should be happy with the low bid.

THE FRIENDS AND FAMILY PLAN

This may work for cell phones, but many reputable architects and contractors politely decline projects at their home clubs. The potential for hurt feelings is just too great. Many members will have some – but not all – of the expertise to be successful, raising chances of problems. And, while there have been some great deals from club members, there are enough bad ones to spawn jokes about the “brother-in-law” discount actually being 110 percent of the market price, too.

DIY SYNDROME

Some clubs work under operative phrases like “What could possibly go wrong?” and “How hard can it be?” to justify design or construction by themselves without outside help. But, they don’t know what they don’t know – until it’s too late. Club members who are engineers feel they can design greens or irrigation, and contractors who “have put all kinds of pipe in the ground” except for the specialized golf course drainage and irrigation kinds feel they can build it, but there are little twists to everything.

Even when using your maintenance crews, which are qualified for some construction, a typical problem

is that they aren’t really equipped in machinery to handle bigger construction projects.

LETTING MAINTENANCE SLIDE

Adding to the problems of an underequipped maintenance staff is that you often expect them to be in two places at one time, which isn’t possible.

Another aspect of this is thinking that the golf course is fixed forever after a renovation. In fact, it starts wearing out from the day it opens, and the best time to start saving for the next rebuild 15 to 20 years down the line is right now!

FOLLOWING EVERY TREND

If you have a harvest gold or avocado green appliance, you know how silly trendy things can look later. Some great courses have been disfigured with trendy design styles or features like waterfalls. Our currently trendy hairy fringed bunkers may end up as the beehive hairdos of the 2020s, when our retro-vision should be perfect, right? Past trend initiators had to be pretty sure their style was “last thing” in good taste, too, right?

Although there are exceptions, even if your course is a somewhat bland design, you are usually better off following its styling cues than reinventing it completely. Fix what you must, but be sympathetic to what is there for the best results.

ASKING QUESTIONS LATER

Renovations aren’t “shoot first, ask questions later” situations. Determining style, budgets, construction techniques, etc., and picking golf course architects and contractors are best planned in advance, but a surprising number of projects rush to start (perhaps afraid members will change their minds) and leave key questions unasked and unanswered until after construction starts and changes get far more expensive.

I have seen projects spend twice what a contractor would have bid, all in misguided efforts to “save money by not using a contractor and golf course architect.” Not realizing that golf courses require just as much expertise in maintaining, planning and building is perhaps the biggest blunder of all. **GCI**