



**Nathan Jordan** is assistant superintendent at Country Club of the Rockies in Edwards, Colo. Contact him at [ntjordan@gmail.com](mailto:ntjordan@gmail.com).

## WE'VE ALL BEEN THERE

College students pursuing the golf course management industry have many internship options – public, private, cool season, warm season. The list seem to goes on and on. Regardless of the facility where you're employed, it's critical to bring value to the internship experience.

Typically, those who are looking to gain more experience will be motivated and driven to succeed. The dedication an intern puts into the work experience should be reciprocated with meaningful education and strategic guidance from the management team, and that includes assistants. Leading interns comes with additional responsibilities, but it also offers a rewarding experience for you and the student.

Due to class schedules, few students have the ability to complete an internship that's longer than three months. Time is limited. Meet with interns at the beginning of their employment to gain a solid understanding of the skills they're looking to learn or improve. A few minutes spent here will allow for adequate planning.

While routine tasks on a golf course must be completed, keep in mind that assigning a variety of duties helps maintain an intern's interest in the profession. Reflect back on your own personal internship experience and create a list of duties you liked and disliked. I doubt mowing the rough for eight hours a day ranked very highly. There's much more to our job description than operating equipment.

Don't forget that learning can still take place without extensive practical experience. For example, understanding how to rake a bunker can be achieved simply by observing another skilled employee complete the job. By the end of the season most interns will be able to explain the process and replicate the procedure.

Foster a learning environment that not only allows for the development of physical skills, but also cognitive functions.

A tremendous amount of thought goes into scheduling daily tasks on a golf course. Few of us show up for work without a plan to accomplish the tasks that have been handed down by the superintendent. An intern should be given the same opportunity to think independently about how he or she will carry out a set of instructions. The ability to process information takes various lengths of time depending on the individual, so you need to have patience and understanding. You may need to explain the directions differently than you are accustomed to.

---

**Foster a learning environment that not only allows for the development of physical skills, but cognitive functions, too.**

---

This shouldn't create a negative attitude toward the intern, but merely accommodate the various styles of learning. When fully comprehended, the outcomes are usually great. It's those times when clear and concise communication is lacking that the end results are less than desirable.

It's also important for the student to begin recognizing areas for concern on the golf course and report those problems to the management staff. It takes a concerted effort from everybody to successfully manage a golf course, and everyone's thoughts and opinions should be considered.

The morning is a fast-paced, high-energy time of day, when daily course

preparations are being completed. We are all moving in different directions, working toward the common goal of preparing the course for play. Encourage interns to be aware of everything that's happening around them. Although they may be assigned to cutting cups, keeping their heads "on a swivel" can be a tremendous benefit.

It takes a diligent effort to minimize the "tunnel vision" that can plague all of us when focused on a specific task. For example, cutting cups requires an intern to drive from hole-to-hole and walk on the greens. Remind them there is a lot they can notice during this time. Emphasize that even though the primary task includes a certain amount of responsibility, much more can come from it.

For example, if the intern reports there's an irrigation leak developing before the course opens for play, he could prevent a lot of headaches that would have developed had the problem gone unnoticed until a member reported it later in the day. Instead, course set-up has been completed, a problem has been identified and reported and the intern has gained the feeling that he or she contributed to the team. Learning potential should not be overlooked regardless of the situation or timing of circumstances.

Each facility approaches its internship program differently. The demands vary from one course to another. Despite the differences that exist, one thing should remain constant: We should all work together to provide a positive learning experience for those pursuing a career in the industry.

Don't dismiss the internship experience. Remember, it is a stepping stone in a very competitive market. It's unlikely we would be where we are today without meaningful internships. So take the time to be a positive influence to the next generation of turf managers. **GCI**