

Rising costs, labor problems and technical advances in turfgrass maintenance have made many superintendents' budget formats outdated. The time has come for re-evaluating old formats and bringing budgets into line with current trends

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## Move Your Budget into the 70s

Superintendents can expect increases of from 8 to 12 per cent in their course maintenance costs for 1971 if current economic conditions continue. Moreover, the critical labor situation could push these percentages even higher.

Although increased costs are nothing new to the superintendent, it is becoming apparent that his traditional method of dealing with them no longer will work. In the 1960s, rising costs generally were matched with more dollars. However, resistance to increased spending throughout the club industry is likely to block this approach to budgeting. The dilemma facing superintendents, therefore, is how to fight rising costs while maintaining the quality and quantity of services.

The key to controlling rising costs lies in a more efficient maintenance operation. And the present dollar squeeze, however dismal it now seems, may ultimately be the catalyst that forces golf courses to improve their operational practices. Especially in need of improvement are those golf courses where procedures are so thoroughly en-

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trenched that effective changes have long been delayed or ignored. The superintendent is not solely to blame for this type of situation. Equally at fault are club officials who have allowed an unworkable system to exist.

Although few people would argue against running a golf course on a budget, living within that proposed

budget does not guarantee efficient operations. In many budgets the potential efficiency of manpower and machines remains unknown. However, a superintendent does not have to be in the dark on these matters. One can easily achieve and measure "on paper" efficiency by cost accounting each individual job procedure whether it is mowing greens or maintaining sandtraps. A comparative budget is valuable only when it is based on the actual time and cost necessary to complete a job.

At the heart of the problem of efficiency is that too many course operations do not meet the accepted standard of 90 per cent routine maintenance and 10 per cent unexpected incidents. All too often the unexpected, such as labor and equipment crises, takes a much larger share, thereby making the existing budget valueless and the course's scheduled maintenance program a myth. And more money for labor and new equipment is not the answer. Only getting at the sources of the crises can bring a long-lasting solution.

Begin the analysis at the heart of the golf course—the maintenance building facilities. One can easily index the relative efficiency of courses with a 30-minute visit to maintenance centers. One quickly observes a place where neither man nor machine can function at the anticipated norm.

The principle of more mechanization to cope with increased course use, labor costs and supply is being defeated at many courses. Deficient working conditions with minimal employee benefits are attracting a type of course worker who is untrained. For years, golf courses have been blessed with a nucleus permanent crew supplemented by temporary help. Now it is being said that this vanishing breed is being lost to other in-

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dustries. In reality, they are being driven off.

The situation with temporary help is currently the most serious. The amount spent for seasonal employees reveals the true value of the labor budget dollar. One 18-hole course in the East with eight seasonal job openings utilized 19 different men in 1969 and 44 men over a three-year period. The superintendent estimated that hourly costs based on work performed was between \$12 and \$15 per hour. Another superintendent started the season with one man and himself, and he became a grass cutter.

Often at the core of such labor problems is a communications gap between the superintendent and appropriate officials, who feel that the superintendent is paid to cope with the maintenance situation and the headaches are his alone. Many clubs have learned the hard way, however, that the most valuable asset a golf course can have is a competent, dedicated superintendent. One resignation, firing or death of a superintendent can result in two to six position changes at a club. These are very costly. Courses allowed to deteri-

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orate for any reason take years and many dollars to restore, and even more to improve. However, some clubs have the mistaken idea that the way to efficiency is via management  
(Continued on page 80)

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## Budget

(Continued from page 47)

personnel changes, when in actuality such action often has a reverse effect. And this certainly cannot be afforded in these days of belt tightening.

Many solutions rest with mechanization. Relatively recent developments in irrigation and triplex greens mowers are just a beginning. But more important than the acquisition of new efficient devices is the over-all adoption of a new philosophy toward needed changes.

Along with a competent superintendent, courses need professionally trained technicians. But unless constructive action is taken to create conditions that will attract such skilled personnel, budgets will become

## Face-lift

(Continued from page 57)

The relocation and enlargement of tees is one of the easiest and most inexpensive projects, and one which can bring about immeasurable improvement.

Packard revealed that the normal cost of remodeling a tee runs between \$500 and \$1,000, depending if the course is located in a congested metropolitan area or an easy-access rural area. The trend today is to build tees up to 100 yards long, providing championship length from the back, and woman's yardage from the front.

Remodeling or revising a green is a more difficult task, and the cost usually falls in the \$5,000 to \$10,000 range depending on the course location. Naturally, if a green can be relocated, play can continue on the

valueless in the wake of more and more "unexpected" labor and equipment crises.

In addition, the golf club industry must develop the ability to anticipate changing conditions and prepare for them rather than resist them. The advent of the golf car is a classic example of a revolutionary change affecting play, golf course maintenance and budgets.

Make analysis and communication key starting points for budgeting and planning this year. Through this approach, final proposals are likely to reflect a greater relevance to today's maintenance problems and conditions. A simple rehash of years-old formats no longer will work. □

old green until the new one is finished.

The cost of remodeling three tees and three greens would probably range from \$15,000 to \$35,000, depending on the locations and the extent of work.

Packard suggests that a decline in the restaurant and bar business can usually be avoided by scheduling extra, non-golfing activities to keep members coming to the club while the remodeling is underway. "Most managers who have lived through well-planned renovation projects will admit that lost business is no real problem," Packard adds.

A remodeled golf course can inject new enthusiasm and pride into a membership today—and for years to come. □



*"The soil test lab reports that with our high pH, we'd have trouble growing grass in that particular area. However, they gave us three alternatives: parsley, carrots or beets."*

*Miller*