

Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Rutherford replaces Dimino at LESCO

Jeffrey L. Rutherford was named to replace Michael P. Dimino as president and CEO at LESCO in Cleveland. Dimino resigned both positions and his directorship, the company said. Rutherford was previously senior vice president and chief financial officer.

The company also announced a number of other senior management promotions:

- Bruce Thorn was named chief operating officer;
- Michael Weisbarth was named chief financial officer and controller; and
- Kathleen Minahan was named general counsel and secretary.

Bayer names Cleveland

Neil Cleveland was named director of the U.S. Green Business for Bayer Environmental Science in Research Triangle Park, N.C. Cleveland will assume his new position in April. Dan Carrothers, current director of the U.S. Green Business, is resigning effective Dec. 31 to become chief operating officer of Datacore, a company based in Kansas City, Kan., that specializes in database marketing and customer relationship management (CRM) initiatives. He has been with Bayer in various positions for nine years.

"Dan has always had a strong entrepreneurial spirit and this opportunity is consistent with his ultimate personal objectives," said Josh Weeks, vice president of Professional Products North America for Bayer Environmental Science.

Weeks will assume management of Bayer's Green Business on an interim basis and will work closely with Cleveland, who currently holds the position of global portfolio manager of Green Business at the global headquarters for Bayer Environmental Science in Lyon, France.

Handheld Controllers Revisited

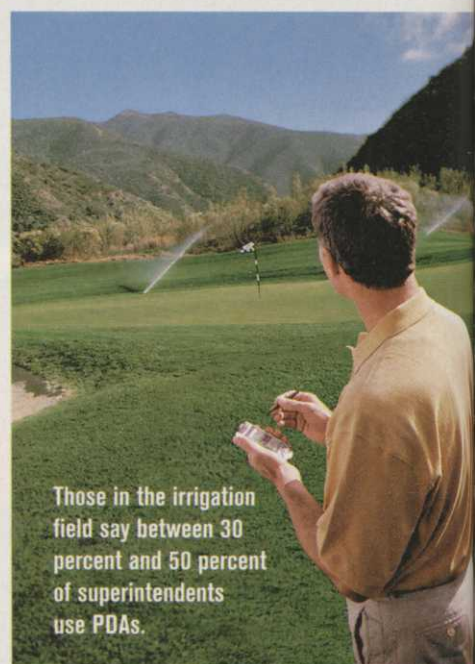
IS PDA TECHNOLOGY ON THE WAY OUT? ARE CELL PHONES ON THE WAY IN?

By Anthony Pioppi,
Contributing Editor

Five years ago there were predictions that handheld controllers would be the wave of the future in the golf course irrigation field.

The prediction that PDA's would be standard equipment for superintendents has only turned out to be true at higher-end facilities. Down the economic ladder, transmitting irrigation commands via UHF radio still is the norm on most courses. But some say the PDA may already be on its way out, surpassed by the increasingly versatile cell phone, while others think the hand-held controller technology has gone as far as most superintendents want.

Randy Mills, central control product manager for Rain Bird, said the PDA has not performed as well as expected, not just in the golf course maintenance industry but in many industries. He also points out that Rain Bird and other irrigation companies are at the mercy of the technology developed by PDA manufacturers, such as Motorola.



Those in the irrigation field say between 30 percent and 50 percent of superintendents use PDAs.

As an example, Mills said that when PDA's first hit the market, superintendents shied away from them because their battery life was short and they couldn't be kept on for an entire day. But that technology improved dramatically in the past couple of years, Mills said, making PDA's more enticing.

But Paul Standerfer, The Toro Co.'s product and marketing manager for golf central controls, said the improvements might not have come in time to save the PDA's place. He compares the PDA-cell phone battle to that of VHS vs. beta.

Standerfer said a few years ago PDA had the upper hand but not now. "Cell phones have now blown by

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what you can do with a PDA," he adds.

Standerfer does not see the pendulum swinging back since a larger portion of the multibillion-dollar communication industry is designed to support cell phones with a much smaller proportion funneled towards PDA improvement.

Another problem in getting PDA technology adopted by superintendents, he said, is that the device just adds to an already large list of carried-around items such as radios, pagers, sunglasses, knives, notepads and cell phones.

For some superintendents, the technology of the PDA does not simplify their jobs.

For some superintendents, the technology of the PDA does not simplify their jobs, Standerfer said. Although there is no hard evidence to back their guess, those in the irrigation field surmise between 30 percent and 50 percent of superintendents use PDA's.

Jim Barrett, president of James Barrett Associates, a New Jersey-based irrigation

consulting and design firm, says his mostly upscale clients have embraced the PDA technology. "We haven't done a system (in the last four years) that didn't have a PDA in it," he said.

Barrett's firm has worked on courses such as Shinnecock Hills Golf Club and Muirfield Village Golf Club.

It doesn't matter if the PDA, the cell phone or another communication device is the tool of the future, said Brian Smith, president and CEO of Signature Controls, who is more concerned with the fact that the industry is hesitant to adopt technology quickly, or even at a rate on par with other parts of the world.

Smith said technology to improve a superintendent's life is available but is not being embraced. He says he has heard that superintendents are often not permitted by owners/members to be the first on the block to purchase new products. That attitude, he adds, is hurting the golf course's operation.

As an example, Smith says that one European country club his company works with runs its irrigation system exclusively by cell phone. "You don't see any course here with that," he added.

Quotable

"In Canada, we play hockey."

— Jim Ross, of the Prairie Turfgrass Research Center in Alberta, Canada, on what superintendents in the Great White North do when they get ice on their greens.

"If there's a way to get the speed of a round under control, that will help the game. I think more people should watch John Daly and the way he plays. He walks up to the ball and bang. . . . And he walks up to the ball and bangs it again."

— Dave Catalano, director of Bethpage State Park, on finding a figurehead to speed up the game.

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