

The Blog Grows Up

Conventions have the effect of energizing you as a professional. Seeing your peers, looking at the latest stuff and taking in the energy of companies selling the next big thing invariably make most superintendents want to jump back into their work. And that's why there is no better time to start a blog.

I know what you're thinking: 'Didn't he write about this just a couple of years ago?' Yes, but that was when the blog was still just the plaything of political junkies, sports fans and *Golfdom* columnists. Since then hundreds of thousands of online gathering places for thoughtful commentary and delusional bickering have come and gone, yet the blog has become the ideal communications tool for a golf course superintendent.

Still, many in the golf industry are reluctant to start a "web log" because they are not writers. Many others say they've resisted a blog because they are not techies — which is why God created interns.

The first rule of blogging: it must be personal. Let the interns and tech-savvy assistant supers handle the tech side, and yes I know it's painful to write. However, no matter how bad you are at slapping some sentences together, the compositions must come from you, the head man.

Now, about those sentences. Rule two: keep them short. You only get into trouble when you start writing really long sentences that meander on and try to make multiple points while still trying to sound informational. Like that last sentence.

Rule three: don't worry about

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BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



content. A lot of supers have told me they don't start a blog because they feel they'd have to post something every day. Nonsense. Post when there's news and something to say about a maintenance practice. But don't over-post, you can only get yourself in trouble. That said...

Use a blog to promote what you are doing to make the course better and don't hesitate to bore the reader with details about the most minor of projects. Not only is this educational for the golfer, it demonstrates knowledge of your course, your desire to make it better and best of all, cuts off questions when you happen to run into your golfers at the halfway house or the local Italian restaurant.

Rule five: no comment sections. Most of the best blog hosting companies allow you the option of turning off comment sections. You have better things to do than to read and monitor the rants of your readers.

As for writing, two last tips: read your posts out loud -- that's why you have an office door -- and spend most of your time editing. Don't fret about the first draft. The follow-up edits are where you make the text sing.

"Try to have someone proofread it before posting, and definitely spell check," recommends Stanford Uni-

versity golf course superintendent Ken Williams who blogs from tech industry central in Palo Alto, Calif., where he produces one of the best blogs in the industry. "Photos or videos also improve it. Nobody wants to read a lot of text on their computers."

Another great example is Stone Creek Golf Club super David Phipps' graphic, photo and even video-rich blog. Phipps can attest to the improvement the website has made in communications, awareness and his own role at the course.

"I think blogging has been good for me personally and professionally," he says, noting the site is collecting nearly 2,000 hits a week. "I feel it has increased my value not only as a superintendent but also as a promotional resource for the club."

If it sounds like too much pressure, don't hesitate to start the blog but keep it "unpublished" for a while. Let only a few people see it, then roll it out when you feel comfortable with the process of writing and hitting the publish button.

And if you can't find the publish button, just ask the intern.

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