

The New Normal

BY JOEL JACKSON



*All resources maximize.
Now with less — do more.
Quoth my conscience, “Evermore.”*

WHEN YOU THINK
ABOUT IT, CHANGE
IS NORMAL. IT HAP-
PENS ALL AROUND
US. JUST LOOK AT
THE ADVANCES
IN GOLF MAINTE-
NANCE EQUIPMENT
TECHNOLOGY AND
TURF MANAGEMENT
PRODUCTS.

So for evermore, just what is the new normal for a golf course? The new normal has to be change. Play it Forward, Get Golf Ready, Play Golf America, First Tee, Wee Links and on and on. Club members, general managers, golf professionals and superintendents will have to be committed team members as never before. There is no single answer for a particular course because of the wide variety of golf course operations in our wonderful and sometimes wacky industry.

When you think about it, change is normal. It happens all around us. Just look at the advances in golf maintenance equipment technology and turf management products and how they have changed our turf management programs. The changes in society and the time-crunch paradigm have altered how people manage their free time and golf is feeling the pinch.

While we are building up interest in golf and revenues, every club and every golfer needs to be involved in making a contribution to turfgrass research. For decades it was “normal” for the allied turfgrass associations to raise funding. Meanwhile, the true end-users, the golfers usually just sat back in judgment of the playing conditions.

In today’s world of increasing focus on green technologies and environmental regulations, the golf industry must excel in being a model of sustainability to show its value and dedication to people, planet and profit. Golfers from super stars to rank amateurs must now show their love of the game by donating through line items in the club’s budget, philanthropic donations or dedicated surcharges on golf rounds on a state or national “Golf Day” program. If everyone gave just a little it would really add up.

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‘**T**he new normal’ is an expression coined by financial and political wonks to describe the uncertain nature of our current fiscal status quo. Essentially what’s certain is uncertainty. But then

that’s nothing new for golf course superintendents, and frankly general managers and golf pros as well. When it comes to golf, sometimes there is no such thing as normal.

Naturally I’m biased, but I think superintendents are the greatest magicians or wizards of them all. Besides juggling budgets and personalities of an ever-rotating series of committee chairmen, superintendents have to react, respond and sometimes just plain rebuild from Mother Nature’s rampages. This past summer is a perfect example of misery piled on top of monetary malaise.

Superintendents nip and tuck at programs and practices to save bucks here and there to adapt to shrinking revenues. Getting club members to understand zero-based budgets and help set priorities for achieving acceptable playing conditions remains a challenge. The new normal of lowered expectations unfortunately is not yet a reality for many who cling to the old ways.

Sometime last year in a semi-conscious “creative mood” I jotted down a poem, with apologies to Edgar Allen Poe and his classic “The Raven.” In this little ditty I tried to capture the mood we seem to be going through.

And so, I give you: “The Raving!”

*Once upon an economy dreary,
As I pondered weak and weary,
Would the budget grow once more?
Quoth the Green Chairman, “Nevermore.”*

*Budget gets another tweak.
Mowing fairways twice per week.
Need to spray, turf looks poor.
Quoth the EPA, “Nevermore.”*

*Member-Guest; cut and roll,
Staff reductions take their toll.
Need 40 hours, maybe more?
Quoth the GM, “Nevermore.”*

To succeed, must improvise,