



MAKE AN OFFER



OF ALL OF THE challenging aspects of a superintendent's career, many say budget planning (and the endless meetings that coincide with it) is the most dreaded. Sure, requesting the funds for new equipment from facility management is never easy, but that doesn't mean the issue should be avoided or that your need isn't valid. It's important for superintendents to research and consider their options carefully when it comes to investing in equipment. Before the negotiations begin, have a strong case for your request.

The process of purchasing new equipment can be broken down into three phases:

1. researching your need
2. building and presenting your case
3. closing the deal

As with any investment, it's essential you consider and demonstrate how you'll achieve short- and long-term value with every purchase recommendation you make.

PHASE 1:

STACK THE DECK WITH RESEARCH

It's critical to conduct thorough research and consider every option available when investing in equipment.

"The first thing I do is lay out each of the different scenarios regarding the equipment we need because I already know there's only so much the management team will invest in each year," says Matt Weitz, superintendent at Victoria National Golf Club in Newburgh, Ind.

There are many questions to ask and answer as you map your needs to improve course operations:

THEY CAN'T REFUSE

*The keys to asking for
a new equipment budget*

BY STEVE VINCENT

NATIONAL SALES MANAGER, JOHN DEERE GOLF

- How can you improve operations and efficiencies?
- What new technology is available?
- Which portions of the course are the priority?
- What equipment is used most frequently?

After considering these factors, you might find you have a stronger case than you expected. Paul Chojnacky, golf course superintendent at Pasatiempo Golf Club in Santa Cruz, Calif., needed to justify considering purchasing new John Deere E-Cut Hybrid fairway mowers.

“Our previous units were 8 years old, and it was getting to the point where it was almost impossible to achieve a good quality cut,” Chojnacky says. “We were expending more effort maintaining the older fairway units than it was worth to continue using them. The board wants to see numbers and research. In my case, I did a cost/benefit analysis and was able to show the ratio of repairs compared to the cost of new equipment.”

The second most important consideration to research is dealer support. Often the value of a new equipment purchase is proven in the relationship with the dealer, and the before-, during- and after-sale support that should be provided. During the research phase, partnering with the dealer to schedule equipment overviews and demos, as well as negotiating purchase options, can give you a perspective on the best choice for your needs.

“Our dealer, Reynolds Farm Equipment, was pretty involved in the process, as far as showing me the actual equipment and providing demo units for us to try out to see how they performed on the golf course,” Weitz says. “It also left the equipment for an extended time so my crew and mechanics could get a better feel for it.”

PHASE 2:

MAKE THE ASK THE RIGHT WAY

Once you’ve analyzed all considerations and worked with your dealer to test equipment, you should be prepared to build your case and present it to your management team. That means:

- showing management you’ve done your homework
- putting yourself in management’s shoes
- selling the technology

By discussing the budget numbers and the reasons new equipment is needed, you’re able to show the management team you’ve taken a thoughtful approach to developing your recommendation. Remember, the management team is considering how your recommendation will affect the whole facility, not just the golf course. Thinking from this wider perspective will help to define additional reasons why the equipment purchase is necessary.

Touting new technology’s benefits is another effective way to strengthen your case for new equipment. Often new and improved equipment provides increased efficiency and productivity from your crew, which will speak volumes to the management team.

Chojnacky worked with his local dealer to develop a package plan for the purchase of the 7500 E-Cut fairway mowers and presented it to his management team with a simple but strong argument: “If the fairways are cut properly, they will be healthier, and the aftercut appearance will be cleaner. The available technology has changed a lot during the past few years, so for us, the big advantage was the electric reels because we were able to almost eliminate hydraulic leaks, which is a huge priority.”

2012 Herb Graffis Businessperson of the Year Paul Chojnacky emphasized new technology to the management team at Pasatiempo.



PHASE 3:

CLOSE THE DEAL

The research and purchase process can be long — six months or more — but it’s imperative to take as much time as needed to address the many factors that go into such an important decision. Start early in your research.

Although the budget is often a prime factor when it comes to making the final purchase decision, the most important thing you can do is communicate the value of dealer support and service as an almost-equally-important factor.

Weitz talks about the equipment purchase process he executed in 2009:

“I worked all of the top industry brands against each other aggressively and wound up doing an entire lease package,” he says. “The second the deal was done, the dealers disappeared. My team can deliver great results with almost any piece of equipment, but what it comes down to is the service support.”

Another factor that can strongly influence the final decision is forecasting a long-term calendar for your ongoing equipment purchasing priorities and needs.

Keeping these essential factors in mind and having an open dialogue with your management team will help you reach the best conclusion.

When it comes to asking to purchase new equipment, map these three phases, and you’ll find you’ve developed a complete story that demonstrates your course’s need. Most importantly, you’ll demonstrate to the management team you understand the magnitude of budget decisions. ■

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