



*What's
the next
big idea
at*

Spectrum Technologies

BY SETH JONES

Mike Thurow likes pain. ¶ Not physical pain, but pain in business. When a group is having a pain with their business, he says he sees that as a business opportunity. ¶ So it could be said that Thurow, president and CEO of Spectrum Technologies Inc., enjoys it when superintendents have a pain in the grass. ¶ “If a superintendent has a pain, then we will look for the solution,” Thurow says. ➔

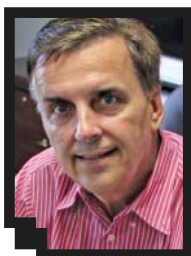
For example, the FieldScout TDR 300. Available for about 15 years now, the technology has caught the industry by storm in the last five. The portable tool gives instantaneous readings of root zone soil moisture, allowing turf pros to spot-water only the areas that really need it.

Today the TDR 300 can be seen at golf courses across the country. "It's the single best tool I've bought in the last five years," says Dan Dinelli, CGCS at North Shore CC in Chicago. That seems to be a common sentiment around the industry, so much so that here at *Golfdom* we even featured the product on our cover last year.

So it's no surprise that Thurow has a big grin on his face when he makes his next statement. "In my 40 years in the industry, I've never seen adoption of a product such as I have with the TDR," he says. "It's because the guys at the USGA and the PGA believed in it. Word travels efficiently in this industry. It's a network, more so than any other crop segment."

Thurow says sales of the TDR increased 80 percent from 2010 to 2011, then doubled from 2011 to 2012. He anticipates more success for the product this year. Behind the TDR, turf now accounts for 30 percent of his total business. Previously it accounted for 5 percent of his business.

Golfdom recently visited Spectrum Technologies in the Chicago suburb of Aurora, Ill. We asked one main question: What is the company's next big idea?



GreenIndex+

Available beginning next month is the FieldScout GreenIndex+ for turf applications. The premise is simple: it's a tool to give an exact reading on how green the grass is.

The value, according to Adam Rusciolli, vice president of product development for Spectrum Technologies, is it takes the guesswork out of applying nitrogen.

"We're trying to make color measure-



Through a photo taken by a smartphone, the GreenIndex will give superintendents an exact measurement of how green the grass is.

ments more consistent and objective. The app can assist in making decisions associated with declining greenness. It's a tool to help keep turf in the optimal range, not over- or under-fertilized," Rusciolli says. "Once it's calibrated any person can go out and take the measurements."

The equipment includes a small board with three colors, and a smartphone app. The user takes a photo of the board and surrounding turf with the smartphone. The app locks in on the board, and uses those colors as a control. So shadows, sunlight or hazy weather won't impact the reading of the grass.

The photo then gives the user an objec-

"We're in the measurement business. We want to help superintendents figure out how to do their jobs better."

MIKE THUROW

tive numeric value as well as an equivalent visual rating for how green the grass is.

"For even the most experienced turf professional, finding the right fertilization formula can be challenging. Nitrogen should be spoon-fed. If you get a rain event, it's gone," Thurow says.

Perfecting the TruFirm

Invented by Matt Pringle, Ph.D., of the USGA, the TruFirm has been utilized to

determine ground firmness. The USGA has partnered with Spectrum Technologies to leverage the technology and create a more affordable version of the TruFirm. Through a licensing agreement, this new TruFirm will include both the USGA and Spectrum Technologies logos on the tool.

"We've redesigned it to make it better value for superintendents," says Jacob Madden, director of marketing at Spectrum Technologies. "The first TruFirm and similar competitive products are more elaborate and expensive."

The new TruFirm — available this fall — will also include an app that allows users to break down greens in nine segments and save that information for future reference.

Bluetooth-enabled TDR

The TDR 300 — the first product mentioned in this article — has been so good for Spectrum Technologies that it shouldn't be a surprise that the company is looking for ways to improve it.

By giving it the power of Bluetooth, they believe they have.

"Bluetooth is so powerful and affordable. It's simply a chip," says Madden. "You can already log the data and download the data, but you can't automatically shoot that data to a device at this point in

time. Bluetooth would simplify this process to save valuable time."

The target release date for the Bluetooth TDR 300 is the 2014 Golf Industry Show in Orlando. **G**

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