



“It’s more efficient and cost effective to have the work done by a company that specializes in golf course renovation, rather than do it in-house.”

MARK WOODWARD, *Contributing Editor*

Makes perfect sense

Eventually, all successful clubs are faced with the decision to renovate their most important asset — the golf course. Golf courses are living entities that require more than just ongoing maintenance. As the golf course ages, things begin to change. And not all of those changes improve playability or lead to the course’s long-term success.

Tees settle, greens bind, irrigation systems wear. It’s all part of a golf course’s natural aging process. Add to that the impact of cart traffic compaction, weather issues, divots and pitch marks and it’s easy to see that for golf courses to remain competitive in their local markets and maintain their share of rounds, renovation becomes a necessary part of managing a golf facility.

Renovation requires planning and, depending on the scope of work, it should be budgeted for well in advance.

One thing I’ve learned in my short time as an owner of a golf course renovation and construction company is, in the vast majority of cases it’s more efficient and cost effective to have the work done by a company that specializes in golf course renovation, rather than do it in-house.

Many superintendents I’ve spoken with over the last couple of years have said that with recent budget and staff cuts it makes total sense to let companies that do renovation work every day get in, get the job done and get out. This allows the superintendent to have maintenance staff focus on the job it does best — maintaining the golf course.

This requires planning, budgeting wisely and many times, convincing club officials that this truly is the best way to handle renovation work. Most superintendents I know have the knowledge and expertise to complete renovation work up to a certain point. Renovating a bunker or two here and there generally doesn’t create too much of a burden on the superintendent or maintenance staff.

But if the club plans to do

more extensive renovations, often their scope conflicts with the regular maintenance of the golf course. Something has to give, considering that the regular maintenance practices don’t get done as often during a renovation project if crews have to try to accomplish both.

Therefore, the condition of the golf course suffers, golfers begin to notice things aren’t getting done and complaints begin. How many times have you heard a club official say something along the lines of “Why can’t you just do this renovation project ‘in house’ with your existing staff?”

I’ve even seen this approach work quite well on a relatively small project, such as leveling irrigation heads. Most superintendents would think that is naturally a job a maintenance staff would do,

because it’s generally considered an ongoing maintenance project.

On the flip side, if you budgeted for a project to be completed by a golf course renovation company, it would get done much more quickly. Not only that, all the irrigation heads would be leveled at about the same time. The superintendent wouldn’t have to try to fit head leveling into slower maintenance times, and the project would be completed much faster.

I recently spoke with a superintendent whose club was renovating bunkers in-house as time allowed. He told me they have been doing approximately 14 bunkers per year. That may sound pretty good, except he went on to tell me he has 140 bunkers on his course. At his current rate of in-house renovation it will take him 10 years to get through all the bunkers.

Guess what? By the time he’s done, it will be time to start over again. A golf course renovation company could come in and get this job done in a couple of months and all 140 bunkers would be on the same renovation cycle and look and play the same. Additionally, over those many years, getting bunker sand to match would be virtually impossible.

So, if you really think about it and do a cost/benefit analysis, in many cases this approach makes perfect sense.

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