

"I approached Ron and asked him if he'd be interested in going in on a golf course project with me," Ed relates. "He told me to put together a business plan and come back. When he saw the business plan, he said, 'Let's start the process.' He became my partner."

From 1998 to 1999, while still working at the River Course, Ed did lots of preliminary work – attending town and county meetings, working with the DNR and other state agencies. "It took us a year before we had the go-ahead for Sunset Hills Golf Course and Driving Range," Ed recalls.

Breaking ground...

In 1999 they started the driving range, which was open for business in the summer of 2000. In the spring of 2000 they started work on the 9-hole, par-3 course; five holes were open for play in August of 2001. "We had hoped to have all nine holes open by then, but we had some stumbles with the DNR," Ed explains. "All nine holes will be open for play by mid-May of this year. We have three sets of tees for each hole, as short as 100 yards and as long as 220 yards."

Ed chose to build a 9-hole, par-3 course based on his research. "Right now, all of the people who analyze the golf industry are saying that too many Blackwolf Runs are being built and nobody is building for the family golfer or the person who golfs only two or three times in a summer," he explains. "There's a void there."

"People can golf our course in two hours, which is all the time some people have," Ed continues. "And we're a family oriented business. A lot of the bigger courses don't want young children running around. But we want them to come. We want our course to be geared for family entertainment. It's relatively inexpensive to play here — \$8. And for \$600 you can buy a family season pass and golf

as much as you want to or hit balls in the driving range, too."

Safety is another reason he chose a par-3 course. "With the land we have, maybe we could have put in a few par-4 holes," Ed explains. "But we kept safety in

mind. I kept it spread out and safe instead of trying to squeeze in one or two par-4 holes."

The land also dictates that Sunset Hills will remain a 9-hole course. "We don't have any land for expansion," Ed says. "We're

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bound by the Sheboygan River to the west and roads to the east and to the south. To the north, it just wouldn't work with the way the course is laid out."

Ed designed the course himself, working with the natural landscape. "There's a creek that runs through the property," he points out. "Five holes are bordered by the Sheboygan River. And there's some nice terrain change. I drew the course up about 20 different ways with topographical maps. We did some picking and choosing until we finally came up with the plan we wanted. We didn't move a lot of earth – just carved some greens and tees into the hillsides."

He is thankful for his parents, his wife's parents, and other family members who helped build the course. "When I needed stone pickers, I'd call them," he relates. He also thanks the many Wisconsin superintendents who helped him out with used equipment purchases.

Big differences...

What's the difference between working for a large corporation and working for yourself? "When you work for yourself, you worry about the finances every day," Ed admits. The hours differ, too. "When I was a superintendent I thought I put in a lot of hours. But that was nothing compared to what I work now that I own my place. I go to work when the sun comes up and go home when the sun goes down."

"If you want to own your own golf course you've really got to want it," he continues. "It's a big sacrifice. For the first couple of years you do a lot of work for nothing, it seems. Even once you're done you've really got to love the game and the customers or you'll drive yourself crazy because you're at the course constantly."

Up to now, Ed has done all of the course maintenance work himself. He plans to hire his first



Holes 5, 6 and 7 with the Sheboygan River and a man-made pond in the background.



Ed's children Ellis and Andrea enjoy Dad's practice range.

employee this summer. He's also working a second job during the winter – as a jack-of-all-trades for Morrelle Transfer and Warehouse in Sheboygan Falls. "I'll do anything from truck driving to plowing snow to building offices inside the warehouse," Ed explains, adding that eventually he expects the course to keep him employed full time. One thing Ed enjoys about Sunset Hills – something that was missing while he worked at Kohler – is "the one-on-one contact with the customers. I never knew the

names of the golfers when I worked at Kohler. I never saw the same person twice," Ed says. "Now, that's my main objective – trying to meet everyone who is golfing with me, learning their names."

Ed is pleased with the amount of business Sunset Hills experienced in its first two years when the course wasn't even complete (driving range only open in 2000; driving range plus five holes in 2001). "We haven't advertised much at all, but people know we're

here because of the driving range," he says. "We have a lot of families that come and use the driving range. The word has been spreading. Last year we had about 1 million balls hit on the range. I think that's a pretty good number for the second season.

"Last year we had 29 memberships just for the range, which was more than I expected," Ed adds. "I'm expecting about 50 memberships for the range this coming summer. I don't know what to expect for golf course membership now that all nine holes are open. A lot of people don't like to commit to just one course, especially a 9-hole, par-3 course. But I figure we'll go over 20,000 rounds easily."

Life off the course...

When he isn't consumed by his

new business, Ed enjoys deer hunting – both bow and gun seasons. And he plays softball in the summer. "My wife says I have to keep playing because I need to do something besides work," he admits.

Ed's wife, Amy, is an office manager for a dentist. They have three children: Becky, 18, a freshman at UW-Stevens Point; Andrea, 8; and Ellis, 5.

At the end of the interview, I ask Ed the \$64,000 question: "Is this a dream come true for you, or do you wonder if you've jumped off a cliff?"

He laughs and then answers, "A little of both. Some days I ask myself, 'What did I do this for?' Other days I realize I need to look at the long-term picture and not

the short-term picture I'm in now."

In the long term, Ed has fulfilled a dream of more than 30 years. And that has to be satisfying no matter how you look at it.

Author's Note: For those of you who like "Small World" stories, during the course of the interview I discovered that Ed is my husband's second cousin; his grandfather and my husband's grandmother were brother and sister. Somewhere along the line family ties were broken because neither Ed nor my husband knew the other existed. But my husband knew his grandmother's maiden name was Kirchenwitz, so we consulted a family genealogy book to discover that he and Ed are actually second cousins. ♡

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Managing A Multicultural Workforce ¿Cómo Usted Dice “Golf”?



By **Thomas R. Maloney**, Cornell University

Editor's Note: This article, which reflects the ever changing staff on golf courses today, is reprinted from Volume 12, No. 4, the Winter 2002 issue of CUTT – Cornell University Turfgrass Times. It appears with permission of CUTT Editor Frank S. Rossi.

In February 2001, a group of golf course superintendents attended a seminar in Dallas Texas entitled “Managing a Multicultural Workforce.” Prior to the seminar superintendents were asked to complete a survey regarding their experiences managing Hispanic workers. A total of 30 superintendents completed the survey, which included a variety of questions relating to culture, language and supervisory issues. The superintendents reported on their successes and challenges in dealing with this growing segment of the workforce.

Over half of the golf course superintendents surveyed indicated that they had employed immigrant workers for six years or less. The primary reason that the majority of golf course superintendents cited for hiring immigrant workers was availability; most employers had difficulty attracting dependable golf course workers. In addition, superintendents indicated that the work ethic of immigrant workers was superior to that of many local workers. Superintendents also reported that the overwhelming majority of their immigrant employees came from Mexico. Most of the other countries mentioned were either Central American or Caribbean countries. When asked about the residency status of their immigrant employees the superintendents were split in their responses. Half said that their employees were long term residents of the local area, the other half indicated that they were seasonal employees who returned to their home country in the off season. Only two of the employers surveyed provided housing for their Hispanic workers.

When superintendents were asked to discuss the challenges of dealing with an immigrant workforce the majority indicated that language was clearly the biggest challenge. They used a variety of strategies to overcome the language barrier. Over half indicated that they and their supervisors were making a concerted effort to learn Spanish and have taken Spanish classes. Approximately one-third of the respondents indicated that their non-English speaking employees had taken English classes. At one time or another approximately one third of the respondents had hired an interpreter to help with translation in the work place. In addition, many superintendents have a bilingual employee interpreter for the rest of the employees. Most employers indicated that overcoming the language barrier was a gradual process, which involved a variety of strategies at the same time.

Cultural Issues

The superintendents surveyed also reported on the issue of cross-cultural understanding. Some indicated that their workers were motivated primarily by money and did not take a longer view of their job. One employer indicated that older Hispanic workers did not like younger Hispanic supervisors telling them how to perform a job. Similarly, women superintendents reported that Hispanic men often did not readily accept or respect their management role. All of these examples relate to Hispanic cultural values and traditions.

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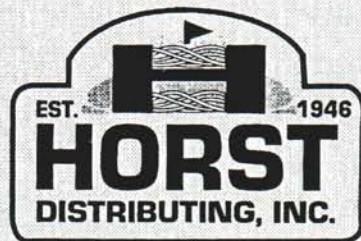
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Some superintendents noted the need to help employees understand the customs and policies of their new country. For example, when superintendents were asked if their immigrant employees had any problems with law enforcement authorities the most common difficulty cited was motor vehicle violations. This indicates a need for employers to work with their employees to understand local laws and customs.

Superintendents discussed openly their feelings about their most challenging aspects of employing immigrant workers. Communication and language issues were very common. Another challenge some superintendents raised was motivating Hispanic workers to take pride in work and to make a long-range commitment to the job. They felt that their ability to motivate was tied to understanding the culture of their workers. Training was also raised as an issue that is linked to the language and communication problem. By far the consensus of superintendents regarding challenges came down to several key issues – motivation, training, language, and cultural understanding.

Regardless of the challenges, golf course superintendents are impressed with the work ethic and personal qualities that their Hispanic employees bring to the job and they are committed to creating a work environment where people will stay and be satisfied with their jobs.

Keys to Successful Multicultural Management

Turf managers who are successful in managing Hispanic employees generally possess the following characteristics:

1. They work aggressively to overcome the language barrier, including learning to speak Spanish themselves.
2. They make a considerable effort to learn about the culture of their employees. This enables employers to better understand their employees as people, and to understand the supervisory techniques that are acceptable and unacceptable to employees from another culture.
3. They develop an organizational culture that accepts and appreciates the differences that individual employees bring to the workplace. They build an organization based on respect and trust for all employees.
4. They establish employment policies and carefully communicate them so all employees understand employer expectations for proper conduct on the job. Once established, employment policies are uniformly enforced with all employees.
5. They continually work at building a multicultural team. They encourage their employees to work and problem solve together.
6. They help orient their employees to United States laws and customs. ♣



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The Mid-Winter Man

By **Pat Norton**, Golf Course Superintendent, Nettle Creek Country Club

As this thought provoking masterpiece is being pounded out on the keyboard...it strikes me that by the time people read this...the phenomenon of the mid-winter man will just about be history for another year. This annual rite of winter...this reconnection to family and a much slower, more simple daily existence...will slowly recede as springtime activity...both within the family and at the golf course...starts to heat up.

Every year the mid-winter experience is just there to be tolerated...I've come to learn. Every year the mid-winter man experience is both enjoyable and a bit maddening. Every year I can't wait for it to start...and then, can't wait for it to be over!

It's one of those periods of recurring experience within a human life that start off being really enjoyable. During the November/early December

phase...the slower pace and time indoors are sort of nice...sort of cozy...and sort of a reward for the big effort just completed. Then, the days stretch through the cheery holidays and the post holiday/Christmas school break calendar complete disorientation thing...which is when things start to turn ugly! And it all begins with that week after Christmas...when people honestly don't know what to do with all of that free time!

Winter break from school is way too long...and much too boring! Normally active, enthused teenagers become pale white, sickly, non-motivated little pests who respond to parental wishes of motivation/housework/home improvement as if self-mutilation is expected during the process. Parents...trying to preserve a sense of normalcy...abandon their offspring temporarily...and break out to a movie and a shared bucket of popcorn. Oftentimes the kids have no idea that the parents have left the property...their main concern is that the electric power and heat continue to comfort them as they pursue chatting on the PC...or wrenching out the "body English" as they attempt to conquer Madden NFL 2002 on Playstation 2.

Whatever happened to sledding, skating, reading, and family board games?? All pretty much a curiosity or completely extinct, I'm afraid. But hey, this mid-winter man does still try the sledding thing...at the insistence of our 10 year old...who must still think that Dad is invincible! Sad to say that when we do go sledding...I'm more worried about my back getting jarred than anything else out there!

After school break is over...I'm totally positive that parents of all students everywhere are totally committed to the idea of confronting the local school board as to why in the world kids need a full two weeks off for the holidays? These school administrators obviously have no children of their own! Have these school districts gone completely nuts??? Have they completely forgotten that too much family time together over the holidays is a terrible thing? Have they ever truly observed kids in their home winter environments during this holiday time off? Do they really think that kids need 14 hours of sleep...followed by complete vegetation in front of the computer or TV? Or do they just not care???

The mid-winter man really gears up in January. He is totally comfortable arriving for work at 8:00 or even

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later. He doesn't mind at all helping a fifth grader review for an upcoming test before school...hauling the kids to whatever athletic or musical practice...or picking up whatever load of middle schoolers at whatever time of day or night. The mid-winter man is always on call...ready to do his duty!

The mid-winter man understands that during this stretch of weeks family is all important. There are tons of basketball games, volleyball games, Sat AM little hoopsters sessions, and family dinners to enjoy...complete with yet another serving of mac and cheese!!

When work does interfere with the lifestyle of the January mid-winter man, he usually spends a fairly slow, leisurely day in the shop or buzzing around town expediting work for the guys doing the real winter work, and leaves for home at 3:00-3:30PM. The winter shop experience is really kind of enjoyable...except for the fact that absolutely no money can be spent...and those machines need attention??? Hey man, let's take it easy on the money being spent...try and recycle that oil one more time...and those filters, bearings, and bedknives look OK for another season!

Truthfully...the big winter juggling act is to make sure that all machinery maintenance and other necessities move along without having to dip too deeply into short term borrowing from the bank! Our department is really only one of the culprits...the bigger spenders are those darn administrative expenses...insurance, bank interest, payrolls for other department managers...some of whom seem to have stolen my idea and transformed it into 'the mid-winter, non-working, out of town manager' sort of experience. Hey, whatever works for them, I guess.

Weekends off mean that superintendents everywhere truly become really great customers of True Value, Menard's, or Home Depot. We get to know the guys at Beatty Lumber on a first name basis...and start attempting home improvement projects in which we have absolutely no expertise or talent...just time.

This mid-winter man really has lots of time...and a home that always seems to require more TLC...and an endless parade of homeowner installed improvements. The big remodeling project this winter involves paint, wallpaper, oak trim, carpeting, and new oak railings. The mid-winter couple are really busy trying to either keep the project moving along...or in the case of the mid-winter wife...trying to hold back the ambition of the mid-winter male as he tries to continually expand the scope of the remodeling project. Actually...the mid-winter project is taking shape nicely...aided by mid-winter access to a maintenance shop that's open 24/7 if needed!