

POSITIVE CHANGE

by LARRY THORNTON
Assistant Superintendent
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The role of assistant superintendent has gone through many changes over the past decade. The changes have been of a very positive nature. Hopefully, this article will give some insight into a positive approach to golf course management.

In the past the assistant's role has been one of being used in the area of greatest need. An assistant could find himself on a machine, behind a machine or even in mud up to his knees, having an intimate relationship with a shovel. On the other hand, the assistant may be the mechanic, irrigation specialist or a personnel trainer showing someone else how to have an intimate relationship with a shovel.

At Interlachen Country Club the assistant's role has been all of these things and much more. In the past few years my main responsibility has been training employees,

the irrigation system and working with Dutch Elm Disease. These have been areas where my abilities have been most needed. Those priorities in the last few years have started to change.

With the growth of our operation with respect to personnel, addition of machines and addition of chemical and cultural programs, we have doubled the size of our operation since 1972. The magnitude and scope of things that are being done at Interlachen have made it beneficial to take a new and positive approach to the role of the assistant.

I am presently involved in helping make management decisions and have been to various degrees for four years. There are numerous advantages for having an assistant directly involved with the decision making process.

One of the most important is the increased level of communication. To maintain a high level of quality and productivity, good communication is essential, especially during periods of growth and alterations. The superintendent and assistant will basically be thinking on the same wavelength having consistent policies and practices. Not only is communication better but the confidence and respect level also increases; thus enabling the superintendent to feel more at ease during precious time off. There is more flexibility with respect to golf course and home matters. An involved assistant can help in preventing summer "burn-out". By alternating weekends off duty the summer hours don't tend to be quite so demanding for the superintendent or the assistant.

Another major consideration is the benefit the assistant gets from such a program. Being directly involved creates an atmosphere more conducive to learning and contributing. In this respect the assistant is close to anything new in the field as well as learning the inner workings of the club functions. Having this knowledge is a definite plus if the assistant wants to run a course of his own someday. If not, the assistant's job is at least not a dull one. By being directly involved the assistant's job remains one of growth and variety.

A final positive aspect is the old adage "two heads are better than one". Perhaps the single most important resource a golf club's



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personnel can contribute is their brain power. By having direct involvement, a better over-view of special projects, budgetary needs, and basic organization will probably be achieved.

In summary, direct assistant involvement in the decision making process is mutually beneficial. This involvement helps the superintendent by creating a better organization and creates a positive working atmosphere for all involved. For me having input into our organization has been a healthy release for my energy and creativity as well.

If your organization does not have involvement you may find increasing your personnel's scope of responsibility helpful. We have.

Hope you all have a great 1984!

RANDOM THOUGHTS

It's easier to eat an elephant if you cut it into small pieces first. — Impact.

EDITOR'S CORNER



by DOUG MAHAL
Chairman
Editorial Committee

What a strange winter this has been weather-wise! Record snow in November, record cold in December and January and I don't know what to think of February. To date there still is no frost in the ground and perhaps thankfully. One can guess where all that February water would be lying now. A turf sample I brought in during mid-February is doing very well and in fact needs cutting about every other day.

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