

# Planning the Work, Working the Plan, Vital in Time Management

By KIT BRADSHAW

Everyone has 168 hours a week, said GCSAA President Bruce R. Williams, CGCS, but how you use this time determines if you control your time or time controls you.

Williams led a standing-room-only crowd through the nuts and bolts of efficient time utilization in the new "Time Management for Golf Course Superintendents," a GCSAA Educational Seminar in partnership with Ransomes • Cushman • Ryan.

Participants learned that all activities should undergo three tests of time:

1) The test of necessity — Look at each activity to see if it really needs to be done.

2) The test of appropriateness — Once the task is identified, decide who is the best person to do the job.

3) The test of efficiency — The job must be done, now what is the best way to do it.

Prioritizing activities into the must-do's, should-do's and, finally, the nice-if-we-could-do categories, helps to focus on the activities at hand. The must-do's should be done when you have the most energy, usually in the morning. The low priority items, such as certain paperwork, can be planned for low-energy times of the day. One reminder: Depending on the project, an item might be a should-do, or "B" priority item today, and be bumped up to an "A" or high priority item tomorrow because of a pending deadline.

## PLANNING MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

Williams said that planning lets you know where you are and where you are going, and then helps you identify the resources that will help you get where you want to be. Without proper planning, you don't have a road map.

He suggested several helpful tools in creating long-range plans. A simple action planning worksheet can be duplicated so that everyone has the objectives for the year, with specific times for reseeding, fertilizing, etc., and augmented with a milestone chart — a flow chart of the steps from the beginning to the end of the project. Evaluating the project is relatively simple through a PERT Diagram, which provides a Program Evaluation & Review Technique to see how the project was done and evaluate its outcome.

Short-term planning begins at a prioritized "to do" list, which covers every aspect of your life, from the personal to the professional. On the professional side, the plan is only as good as the communication that accompanies it. Therefore, Williams said, staff members should be aware of the plan.

"Do a weekly plan of activities," he said, "then post this plan and share it with the staff, so that everyone knows which projects are underway, what equipment and man-

power is going to be needed and who will be responsible. This is important to an efficient operation."

## TIME WASTERS COME IN ALL SHAPES, SIZES

The problem with time is that it is finite, and time can be wasted because of individuals or because of circumstances in the environment.

Individuals can waste time because they are procrastinators, they are disorganized and they just can't say no.

Those persons and things in our environment that can be time wasters include unannounced visitors, phone calls and unproductive meetings where you don't set the agenda.

How does a person avoid, or at least reduce, these time wasters?

Procrastination can be a major roadblock to time efficiency, said Williams.

"To overcome this tendency, which we all have to some degree, set a deadline for the project and stick with it. Arrange for someone, such as your secretary, to follow up with

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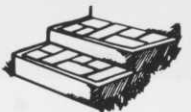
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# Plan the Work, Work the Plan—

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you to make sure the project is done and build in a reward system, so that when the project is done you do something you enjoy. Break the job into small pieces — we can eat an elephant, but only a little bit at a time — and work on the parts of the project you dislike early in the day so they are completed. Finally, just make yourself do the project now, not later,” he said.

Disorganization, a desk that is messy, and an undecipherable filing system can all be time wasters.

A personal filing system, perhaps using color coding to help recognize certain types of files, needs to be established to cut down on paper shuffling.

Williams is also an advocate of using computers, faxes and other electronic systems to help the disorganized become organized.

“You can create a template with your computer so that charts, letters and memos you write all the time don’t have to be written over and over again,” he said. “You also need to use

the computer system to eliminate at least a portion of your paper in your files.”

Time wasters from the outside can be unexpected visitors, and Williams gathered suggestions from the audience as how best to deal with these individuals. Although recognizing the importance of sales people, the golf course superintendents said that they appreciate having an established appointment when they can allocate time to discuss the products. Some superintendents have put in an “appointment only” policy for sales people, others tell the sales person they have a certain time earmarked for their meetings and others have an established bidding form for sales people to designate a day to discuss their products.

Telephones are necessary, but phone conversations can often eat bits of time that translate into an hour or more a day wasted. Williams suggested using a receptionist or an answering machine or voice mail to screen calls.

Although some meetings are important, Williams said, it is important to establish the agenda if at all possible. Before the meeting, Williams sug-

gests finding out if it is necessary to be there at all.

“If you do have to go to the meeting, then be on time, and be prepared to stay with the discussion without getting off the track,” he said.

Mail can be a time waster, but much of this can be eliminated by ridding yourself of junk mail, and only handling each piece of mail once.

Crises are unavoidable, but can be reduced by checking prior similar situations that may have caused a crisis.

Finally, Williams said, superintendents must learn polite, but firm, ways to say “no” to projects that will overwhelm them and their staffs.

“You can say you can’t add any more to your schedule right now, or you can say you need to finish a project now, but will be available at a certain time. There are ways to say ‘no,’ mean it, but still keep the communications going” he said.

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(Editor’s Note: This article appeared in *Showtime ’97 during GCSAA’s Conference & Show. “Time Management for Golf Course Superintendents” is a new seminar now offered through GCSAA.*)



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