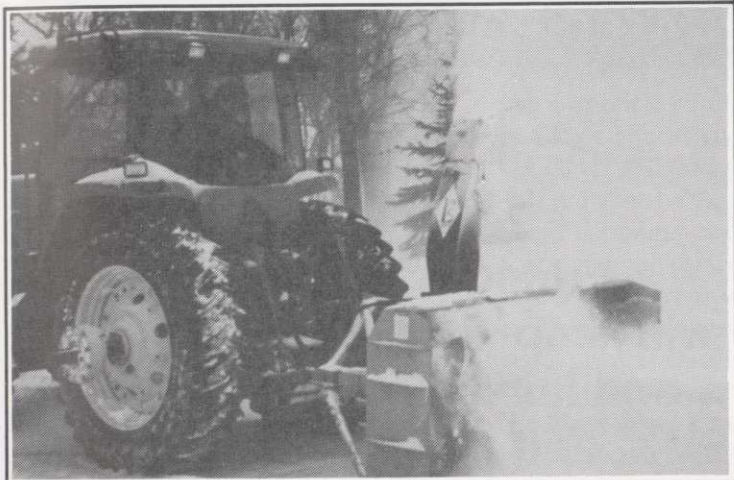


Dave Sime uses a canoe to "get around" the course to inspect the greens. This is No. 14 green with only 1/4 of it showing.



What a difference a couple of weeks can make. Only two weeks before the canoe, Dave had to use this to get around the course. That's a serious snowblower, Dave!

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For further information contact Par Aide Products Company at 612/779-9851.

NOTICE

Get your teams lined up for the **MGCSA Scholarship Scramble** on July 14 at Hidden Creek Golf Club in Owatonna.

Cost will be \$40 per person. There will be a morning and afternoon shotgun with morning players having available tee times for afternoon golf at other local courses.

Prizes will be awarded to top scramble teams with on course contests and other events. All will be followed by a Pig Roast at Hidden Creek.

This tournament is available to members and their crew only. No ringers!

More details and sign-up will follow.

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Choosing a Great Crew

By JACK MATEFFY
Mateffy and Company

What a pleasure it was to spend the day with MGCSA members at the 1997 Mini-Seminar. As those of you who attended recall, we spent the morning looking at employment interviewing. Although not the most inspiring topic in which to invest four hours, learning how to interview properly can make the difference between a well-run course or a run-down superintendent. If you know what you are looking for in potential employees and understand how to determine if candidates possess those skills and qualities, you'll be able to build a strong crew and ultimately reduce turnover.

Probably the most important point we covered was to **use a structured interview format**. A structured interview format uses the same set of questions for each candidate. The questions are prepared before the interview. These questions are designed to bring out examples of past behavior to determine if the candidate possesses the skills and/or character qualities you need in the position. For example, if you are looking for service skills, you could ask, *Give me an example of a time when you had to serve someone who was angry at you? What was the situation? How did you handle it? What were the results?* The answers to these questions will go a long way in seeing if the applicant has the skills for which you are looking. Consider the following list of skills, character qualities and corresponding questions when creating your structured interview format:

• **Communication Skills:** Tell me about a situation where you needed to communicate a suggestion or problem to your employer and/or co-workers. How did you present the information? How did you make sure they clearly understood your suggestion? What kind of feedback did you receive?

• **Continuous Improvement:** What has been the biggest change you've been asked to make to an existing process? How did this change help the process? What recommendations did you make for improvement?

• **Decision Making/Problem Solving:** What type of problems did you solve in your previous job? Give me a specific example of a problem and how you solved it.

• **Giving/Taking Responsibility:** Tell me about a time where you were given the main responsibility to get a specific job/project done. How did you organize your work? What barriers did you encounter? How did you work around those barriers?

• **Openness to Change:** What is the biggest work method change you have experienced? What did you do to make this a positive work experience? How did you help other employees make these changes?

• **Teamwork:** In past jobs when the work flow stopped or was interrupted, how did you respond? What did you do to help get the work moving again?

• **Dependability:** What was the biggest mistake/error you made at your last workplace? What did you do about it?

• **Workplace Organization:** Tell me about a time you brought to the attention of the people responsible for a situation/problem which was adversely affecting workplace organization. What role did you play in correcting this situation/problem?

• **Quality:** Could you affect the physical appearance of a product in a previous job? Tell me how this related to your job duties.

• **Safety:** Tell me about a time you've shared a safety tip with another employee that resulted in avoiding an accident. What safety recommendations have you made and with what results?

• **Productivity:** What was the most complicated piece of equipment, machine or process with which you've been involved? How did you learn to operate the equipment/work the process? What was the productivity expectation? What was your productivity?

• **Equipment Upkeep:** What charts, meters, dials or graphs have you had to read on past jobs? Tell me about your experience.

• **Customer Relations:** What was the most irate that you have ever seen a customer? What caused this dissatisfaction? How did you handle the situation?

When you create your structured interview format, be sure to:

• Write/use only job-related questions. To make sure your questions are legally defensible, you must be able to draw a direct link between the job responsibility and the question used to determine the candidate's qualification. If you are not sure, do not ask the question. For example, it is illegal to ask an applicant if he or she will be playing sports during the summer. The ideas behind the question might be to determine if the applicant will come to work on time or consistently. However, the question could be misunderstood as looking for information to discriminate for or against someone who is involved in sports. Instead, show the candidate a schedule and ask if he or she will work it.

• Focus on the candidate's past performance rather than hypothetical questions about the future. The principle here is that past behavior is the best indicator of future performance.

• Begin your questions with phrases that cause the candidate to give answers based on past experiences. Phrases such as, *Share an example of a time.... Tell me about a*

(Continued on Page 14)

Employment Interviewing—

(Continued from Page 13)

time when....Think back to a time when.... How have you dealt with....? etc. These phrases require a real life example of what the candidate has done, not what the candidate thinks he/she can do.

- Consider getting a few sample questions from other managers/supervisors who have interviewed for this type of position.

- Review all your questions for any hint of discrimination.

Using the kind of questions described above to create a structured interview format will:

- Allow you to focus on the candidate's answers—rather than trying to think of your next question.

- Keep your questions legally defensible.

- Bring out the skills and character qualities you know the position requires.

- Help you compare candidates'

qualifications to make the final hiring decision.

- Give you a set of skills and character qualities you can post for others to suggest possible candidates.

- Reduce turnover by giving new hires an accurate picture of what you want in an employee.

- Make employment interviewing much easier by providing a consistent method of choosing great crew members.

I hope this information helps you prepare for your next interviews. If you have questions or need more information on employment interviewing or other training topics, please call me, Jack Mateffy, at 612/472-0820. I would be happy to answer your questions during a round of golf.

(Editor's Note: Jack Mateffy is the president of Mateffy and Company, a training and consulting firm located in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Mateffy and Company designs and presents employee development and training programs for clients around the nation.)



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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

(Continued on Page 17)

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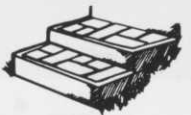
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Plan the Work, Work the Plan—

(Continued from Page 15)

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.

* * *

(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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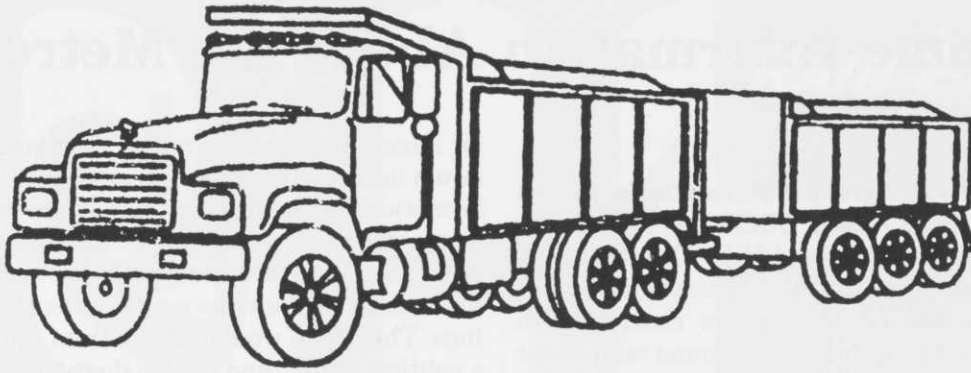
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Here's Some Information About the Metro Group

Dear Editor:

Recently I gathered with a group of Superintendents from the Twin Cities area. Scott Austin, CGCS, host of the meeting and superintendent of Midland Hills Country Club, provided the attendees a wonderful cold sandwich buffet, comfortable seating and an atmosphere charged with professional opinions. The agenda of the round table event was to be focused upon summer staff hiring practices. As interesting as employment practices are, more relevant issues pressed our discussion.

Topics ranged from opening dates to winter damage to the exceptional cheesecake dessert. You can well imagine the tangents we went off on! Besides turf, we also investigated meeting times and attendance.

Upon this subject, one of my fellows indicated that other superintendents not invited to the monthly meetings are feeling snubbed. It seems that some of our associates think that a conspiracy of sorts is in the works. I am taking a moment to announce that this is not now, nor ever was the intent of these monthly gatherings.

Specifically, the Metro Group (so called for lack of a need

for a more imaginative name) was organized to provide a forum for superintendents to gather and share relevant information. At the first meeting it was decided that attendance was open to any interested superintendent. Meals would be charged to each attendee, not to exceed twenty-five dollars. Coat and tie would be the attire at dinner meetings. The group would refrain from topics best suited for a political forum. And finally, there would be no intentional competition with state or national gatherings.

Since its conception last spring, the Metro Group has adhered closely to these guidelines. If you would like to participate, call Scott Austin at (612) 631-1545 and you will be placed on the attendance list. If you live outstate, I encourage you to form your own assembly of professionals. The camaraderie these meetings will promote cannot be overemphasized.

— Respectfully submitted for publication,
John K. MacKenzie CGCS

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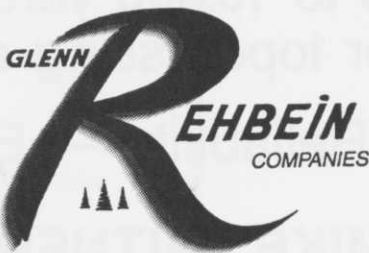
(Editor's Note: Thanks John for submitting this letter. I also addressed this issue in my column this month. Members are encouraged to participate and get to know other superintendents in your area.)

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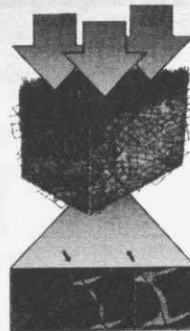
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