MACINTOSH - A COMPUTER FOR USE IN GOLF TURF MANAGEMENT

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As we deal with the use of computers in golf turf management we will discuss the following:

1. How does a computer fit in?
2. Why should I have a computer?
3. Why don't I have one?
4. Why a Macintosh?
5. What can I do with it?
6. Hardware requirements?
7. Software choices.

How does a computer fit in?

The image or perception of the Golf Course Superintendent has been changing throughout the years. We began as grasscutters, came to be recognized as Greenskeepers, and through the efforts of individuals and organizations like GCSAA we have become recognized as Superintendents, a technical professional. Hopefully the evolution is not complete and we will soon be recognized as professional managers. The computer should be an important part of that journey.

We have to remember that just calling ourselves professionals and telling each other that we are does not do it! What makes a Professional Turf Manager? By definition a professional is one who has explored all aspects of his profession and has prepared himself to face problems that demand intelligent decisions. You have not explored all aspects of your profession without exploring the computer.

The role of a Professional Turf Manager can be divided into several components.

1. Technical Skills - developed through education and experience.
2. Management Skills - again by education and experience.
3. The Image Presented
4. The Decisions Made
5. Results

All of these components can and will be enhanced by the use of a computer in your work by placing you in charge of information.

Why should I have a computer?

The simple answer is that it is a BETTER WAY! Who still uses a shovel to topdress? Who still adds columns of figures in their head with only the aid of paper and pencil? The computer is as much of an improvement as these transitions.

Time Saver? The answer is a qualified, yes. Computers do require time, but

once mastered the savings will be real.

Improved quality! While this is hard to convey, it may be the most important aspect of a computer. By definition quality is a degree of excellence. The definition implies that there are different degrees of quality. We all understand the difference between low and high quality. But I submit that as an individual you will not produce quality beyond what your tools easily allow. At this point the computer is the ultimate tool to communicate in printed form.

Multiply your capacity! You will do things that you can't do now for lack of time or information. I'm sure you feel you have gotten along fine up to now without a computer, but how long can you afford to get by given the increased demands of your club, and regulatory agencies.

Its part of the information age! They are not a fad, they will not go away. I believe as professionals we must lead the field and not be forced into using a computer by others.

Future developments in turf uses! The day is coming when computers will be tied into data points that predict, monitor, and recommend procedures for our courses. We must be ready to understand and except these changes. We have limited examples today, the USGA project and the pestcaster type programs.

Why don't I have one?

Most of us would answer dollars, but that is just not valid. The main reason is fear. Fear from a lack of understanding of the machine or to do something different. The fact that the commands are easy to understand and available immediately on screen greatly reduces the learning curve. This does not mean that the IBM family is not a good selecton. In fact, if your situation requires frequent data exchange with other computers, if you are using it for irrigation, or if you are an experienced IBM user it may be your best choice.

This raises the next question; will I receive enough benefit to justify the expense?

If you do not do anything but use a word processing program and improve the appearance of the documents and reports that you generate, I can promise you it will be worth whatever you choose to spend. Speaking from experience, one of the greatest image boosters that you can have is a computer and the documents that you can create! This is not entirely due to the mystique of the computer but the fact that you will improve the quality and content of the documents by having more and better information and the ability to quickly change and adjust that information.

How can I convince my club to purchase one?

MONEY. We can justify the expense strictly on improved management information. If you can keep better records easily, you can make better decisions whether it applies to equipment replacement, parts inventory or any other decision you make. Better, more timely decisions will reduce the costs to maintain the course. In addition, you will be actually able to free up time from certain recordkeeping tasks to concentrate on your primary function,

a well maintained golf course.

What can I do with it?

Let's examine some of the very real and benficial applications that you can begin quickly and easily. We will look at types of categories and some general expectations.

WORD PROCESSING

From memo's to the great American novel and everything in between. The improvement in speed and quality just from being able to easily edit and correct what you write is amazing. I can't even imagine doing a handwritten report again. In the past, reports would be of reduced quality, on occasion, just because improvement was too much effort. Never again. All you need is some basic typing skills and a Mac. I can't convey the benefits you will receive from just this one application.

GRAPHICS

These are fun and the results astounding. Combined with word processing, graphics add interest and understanding to reports, improve newsletters, and make it easy to analize numbers visually. Here again changes are easy because you enter the change and the computer re-draws the chart to your new specifications in just a few seconds.

SPREAD SHEETS

These programs are rows and columns of "cells" into which information can be entered and manipulated mathmatically. Budget is the first thing that comes to mind. How many times have you spent hours just adding columns of figures on a calculator only to have to do it again and again to find errors or to re-add changes produced by the budget review. Never again. Once the budget spreadsheet is constructed, any change is recomputed instantly. You can play "what if" and see the effects of various decisions.

DATABASE MANAGERS

A database is a filing system for storing and organizing information or records. Employee records, equipment inventories, fertilizer applicatons. Then you can manage the records from different points of view by selecting the information needed. In fact how many of us actually conform to the pesticide record keeping requirements, here is a simple way to retain them for the required time with the added advantage of analysis.

Hardware options and costs

To take advantage of a computer, you should have the following:

>   The computer itself; or central processor.
>   A hard disk for data storage
>   A printer

All of these can be purchased for less than $4,000.

Software Choices

The options are unlimited, however, I would recommend a simple integrated package that combines Word Processing, Spread sheet, DataBase, Graphics and Communications. In addition, a drafting program like Superpaint, and MacGolf will add interest your your options.