

JUDGING THE EFFICIENCY OF YOUR PLANNING PROGRAM

You've implemented a planning program and it's in full gear.
Now you need a tool to judge the plan.
Two techniques from industry may be of help.

by Rudd McGary and Ed Wandtke

In recent months we have written about planning and the necessity for any organization to have a clear objective in order to achieve its goals. One of the questions we've been asked is "how do I judge the effectiveness of my planning?"

To do that, let's examine some evaluation techniques which have been used in other areas of American business.

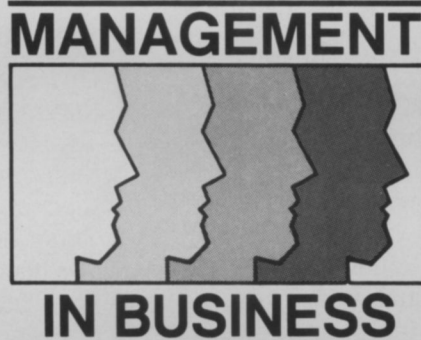
Two of the major models in use in production industries are the Critical Path Method (CPM) and the Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT). Both are applicable to the green industry.

(In this short space, we will examine only general concepts.)

The PERT technique was first used in the defense industry, specifically in designing the Polaris submarine. At the same time the DuPont company designed a scheduling tool, CPM, for use in the industrial world.



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Both evaluation techniques are applicable to the green industry.

The key to both models is the ability of management to assess a critical path of accomplishment. This deals with the actual tasks to be completed, the sequence in which they should be completed, and the expected completion times for each major task.

With the PERT model, estimates on the time needed for completion of critical activities is given in three ways: the best possible, the worst possible, and an average length that the task will take.

PERT is a model run by statistical methods and there are many major texts available for better understanding.

An example of using the PERT technique in golf course work would be to start the planning for the year by determining the major tasks to be done over the season. These could include hole redesign, major sod replacement, equipment preparation, tournament planning, and new underground sprinkler installations, and would be scheduled for an entire year.

After assessing the jobs, you then consider the question of costs, labor,

and critical timing.

As each one of the critical tasks is accomplished, it would be reviewed based on the original plan and the time needed to actually complete the tasks.

This analysis would give you an idea of how effective your plan was in addition to the effectiveness of the management of the tasks.

The keys are to plan the entire season, to break the season into critical tasks, to have clear-cut evaluation techniques, to make the time to compare the results to the plan, and to look at the final evaluation to see if the overall management function could be improved.

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These techniques are considerably more complex than the descriptions used in this column. With full application, the techniques can be useful for those in the green industry who are interested in better planning and evaluation of the organizational efforts for the year.

Although it appears these techniques are limited in application, they can assist the advancing firms in all areas of their business including accounting, operations, personnel, and marketing.

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