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make more money, if used correctly.

"A lot of people are making money, but they can't tell where they're making money," he says. "Then it's time for a computer, because they may be growing in areas where they're not making money. And that will eventually catch up with them."

Side benefits

Besides the obvious benefits of being "on-line," there are some side benefits.

"You become looked upon as the leader rather than the follower," notes Thornton, "the professional rather than the bush-peddler—not only among your peers, but also among your clients and

prospective clients."

With the many computer systems available on the market, it is up to the individual landscape contractor to explore the differences between each, and then determine which might be best-suited to his or her particular operation.

WT&T

The computer and the green industry: advantages—and a dilemma

by John B. Calsin Jr.

The golf course superintendent must make the same daily decisions as the manager of a small business: preventative maintenance, inventory control, personnel scheduling, and budgeting.

With a computer, he can organize preventative maintenance (PM) schedules, labor/cost accounting, asset management (looking at each piece of equipment and its repair record to determine new equipment purchases), and inventory control.

Along with PM scheduling, the superintendent has a system that can produce work orders. He can also track fertilizer and chemicals in the ground—even the weather.

Lou Ockey, manager of Centennial Systems Inc., of Wayne, Penn., discussed the advantages of using a computer in the grounds maintenance industry for WEEDS TREES & TURF. Here is what he said:

Q. What is the Grounds Management System (GMS) supposed to do, and how did it come about?

Computers are having more and more impact on golf courses. Grounds superintendents are being exposed to them and are beginning to understand what they can do to manage their shops.

Some leading companies are bringing the personal computer (PC) to the grounds superintendent as a part of their product; for example, Toro and Rain Bird with new PC-driven irrigation controllers.

Also, as software matures, it is moving from the accounting function to operation functions such as grounds management. Superintendents coming out of better turf/agronomy colleges are aware of high tech advances.

Centennial Systems, relying on previous experience, put together a set of programs, using four grounds superintendents out of the Penn State University system as advisors. From those programs came an educational session to show other superintendents how they can apply the computer to their trade.

Q. What is a good golf course computer program supposed to do?

A. Allow the superintendent to manage his shop better than he did without it, through the use of a very fast and efficient clerk called the computer.

Q. What must golf course superintendents know before purchasing either hardware or software?

A. Computer concepts and the basics of the computer. We think the machine they should be looking at



Lou Ockey, Centennial Systems manager, points to a special screen configuration on the IBM personal computer as David Downing (seated) of Kennett Square and Michael Smith, Gulph Mills, look on.

is the PC. So they should know its components so they know what it is in generic terms, and therefore don't buy something they're not expecting.

They should know generic-type programming aids that they can use, or get started with: word processing, spread sheets, data-based systems, report writers, and graphic packages.

You find you can master the computer much like you master a new piece of turf equipment.

Q. How does the computer help track chemicals in the ground?

A. Right now, every time a superintendent applies a chemical, he puts it into a hand-written log book. The computer can automate that so he will still enter it, but the log book is a computer. It can sort and print the entire report with little effort.

It saves labor and time. He doesn't have to go through the pages of the book and see on what date he applied what chemical to what area and end up making a report of it. The computer generates the report after the data has been entered. It records the days a chemical was applied on the fairways, the temperature, the year-to-date total of the chemical.

A. What kind of guidance from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) is nec-

continued on page 58

John B. Calsin Jr. is a business-oriented freelance writer based in West Chester, Pa.

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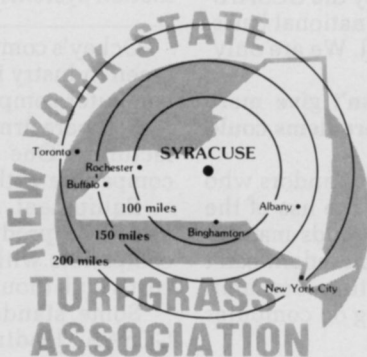
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COMPUTER from page 52

essary for the superintendent, and how will that guidance be helpful to businessmen like yourself?

A. The GCSAA has the resources to point the superintendent in the right direction.

People like Centennial Systems, who supply software, are providing only their perspective based on a background of writing software for country clubs, ag/chem companies, and other horticulturally-inclined businesses, and from my own background in running a small turf management business.

Another perspective can be provided by the GCSAA. It should point the superintendents on a national basis in a uniform direction. And I think it will. We are only one of GCSAA's resources.

Q. But what if the association doesn't give more guidance and direction? What kind of problems could there be?

A. Fragmentation. Presently, there are vendors who are pointing the superintendent toward the use of the accounting systems computer to run grounds maintenance functions. It won't work. A superintendent can't drive a sprinkler system from an accounting computer. It is a matter of compatibility, depending on computer manufacturer.

For example, we base our software on IBM computers, and IBM has solved the compatibility conflict. IBM has said the S36, a popular mini used in country clubs as

a central processor, will be compatible with IBM PCs. So it doesn't matter if you have an S36 in your accounting office or a PC, as long as it's IBM-compatible.

With the right base, a PC can be put in the grounds superintendent's office so it will work well with his irrigation system. It will work well with his preventative maintenance, his inventory, and his budget systems.

Some guys can't do it, so they'll try to bend the superintendent in another direction.

But someone is going to have to take that bull by the horns and get that message out. The age of fragmented application solutions is over—the dawn of club information systems is here.

Ockey's comments bring up an interesting point: the green industry is facing a potentially costly dilemma—computer compatibility.

Software firms are lining up behind hardware manufacturers. One manufacturer's hardware is often not compatible with another.

Equipment manufacturers are incorporating PCs into their product line. Their PCs just might not be compatible with a club's mini computer, which could cost a club thousands of dollars and endless headaches.

Some standard should be decided upon by the GCSAA, leading software development firms, and equipment manufacturers. If it isn't, the new territory will be a barren moonscape rather than a beautiful landscape. □



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Communication and feedback

Communication is vital in building any team. A manager's job is to string lines of communication for both positive and negative feedback.

by Rudd McGary and Ed Wandtke

Communication is the keystone of team management.

Poor communication leads to fragmented, disjointed efforts. Good communication skills build teams.

It's a manager's job—his primary job—to build efficient teams. This determines a manager's effectiveness, ultimately the limits of his or her career.

There are no secrets, and it takes some work because developing communication skills looks easier on paper than when you use them in a team setting. Take heart. They can be learned.

Mastering those skills involves learning just a few basic techniques. But first let's look at some problems you'll encounter.

Directional communication

Most communication systems focus on upward and downward communication. Downward communication is when a manager communicates with subordinates. Upward is the reverse.

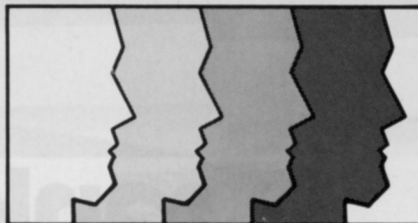
The key to downward communication within a team is how well the information is amplified at each new level.



Wandtke and McGary are partners in All-Green Management Associates, Columbus, Ohio.

PART 3

TEAM MANAGEMENT



IN BUSINESS

For example, when you instruct your maintenance crew chief to "make the greens look good for the weekend," he will probably do everything he can to accomplish this. A problem arises when he doesn't have enough information to amplify your instructions to his workers (perhaps the greens are cut when you want them watered). You know what you want to pass to your crew, but the crew chief doesn't get the exact message to his workers. This is common in American business. It frustrates and slows team building.

Be specific in passing information down the chain of command. Allow room in instructions for amplification so exact tasks are performed.

Equally harmful is the "good news syndrome" in upward communication.

Subordinates, particularly new employees, often filter bad news as they pass it to the manager. For instance, you ask one of your men about the condition of a green. He says, "we've got it under control." He might be meaning "we cut it too short,

burned the grass with a hot application, and the mowing tractor dug up all the greens."

The employee may have the situation under control, but what he's telling you isn't what you need to know.

The "good news syndrome" occurs in almost all forms of business. Be aware of this with new employees. They don't want to look bad. That's human. They may not know what you expect from a communication standpoint. That's your fault.

Take time to establish communication procedures so everyone—from the manager to the grounds workers—speaks the same language.

A feedback system

Many communication problems can be solved with a feedback system. Managers who don't have the time to give feedback to their employees deserve whatever they get.

Here are some general thoughts on

Take time to establish communication procedures so everyone—from the manager to the grounds workers—speaks the same language.

feedback that might help in putting a real team together:

- Feedback isn't good or bad—it's simply a process. Some managers make the mistake of thinking feedback is given only when something

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