



Was I Trained for This?

The Many Hats of a Superintendent

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crossing department lines and thinking outside the box. I came up with this list of jobs that have little or nothing to do with actually growing grass. If GOLF

COURSE SUPERINTENDENT was an acronym, here are some of the jobs it could represent:

Do you ever get the question, “What do you do in the winter? You grow the grass, right? So, you must have winters off.” I usually smile, give a little laugh, and then come back with some sarcastic remark. But hey, that is me. Lately, I’ve had some time to think about what all my career entails. At my club, I take that little line in my contract, “Whatever other tasks deemed necessary,” to a higher level. Most of us in our profession do whatever has to be done to make the facility a success. This usually means

- G Grease Monkey**
This is a major part of winter projects, getting equipment ready for the coming season. But it also includes service on hood fans at the restaurant, heater blowers for the clubhouse and any other small mechanical issues that may arise.
- O Office Manager**
This is a full-time job, and not just in the winter. Trying to sift through all of the mountains of magazines, regulations and other paperwork that accumulates on a daily basis can be overwhelming. Many times it ends with a full 32-gallon garbage can for recycling.

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L **Logger**

We have a plethora of trees on half of the course. Many were planted too close together, too close to greens or simply have pruning and trimming issues. Many people have an unusual attachment to trees, even dead ones. I like to share these two nuggets of wisdom that were passed on to me. The definition of a weed is a plant growing out of place. This stands true for trees also. If they are too close to greens, tees or other areas, they need to be dealt with; many times this can be remedied with a well-placed pruning cut about 8" off the ground. The other piece of wisdom: do you pay to play golf on the greens or in the trees? If you have to choose greens or trees, greens usually win.

F **Forecaster**

Weather!!! Mother Nature has the single largest influence on our career's success or demise. The better we get at forecasting our local weather, the better.

C **Chef**

Be it the crew barbeque or helping cook during a busy lunch shift in the clubhouse, it is good to have cooking skills. Normally, I am delegated to making salads or bussing tables during these times, but every little bit helps.

O **Occupational Therapist**

An occupational therapist uses treatments to develop, recover or maintain the daily living and work skills of people with a physical, mental or developmental condition. It is a daily task to fit each job to each employee's skill set or work around the person's ailment of the day.

U **Undertaker**

AKA, the burier or remover of dead things. With the amount of wildlife on our course there is always the dead critter, bird, squirrel, snake and occasional deer that needs to be removed. This also may involve the state entities and the paperwork that follows.

R **Repairman**

This goes beyond golf equipment. Superintendents are often the best equipped at the facility to repair all sorts of appliances, ovens, water heaters, vacuums, etc. If it breaks, we are the ones called upon to fix it or dispose of it.

S **Salesman**

In our jobs, we always should be selling what we do and how valuable it is to the facility. But, I also find myself selling merchandise in the pro shop. Whether it is watching the desk because they are short-handed or helping a member find the correct size of shoes or shirt as I am passing through on my way to the restroom or for more coffee, this is a very handy skill to have.

E **Engineer**

The planning and design of projects normally falls squarely in our laps. We are engineers of our courses every day. What decisions and projects we make on a daily basis have a huge impact on the playability of our facilities.

S **Scheduler**

It seems we are always checking the schedule to see how we can make everything fit. Be it fertilizing, aerifying, mowing, top-dressing or simply scheduling the staff. We

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must often move things to fit an outing or event, only to have the weather lay waste to our best laid plans, which goes back to forecasting.

U Unplugging of Toilets- This job sometimes amazes me the most. How can someone in good conscience leave that kind of mess for someone else? But, it also shows that no job is too big, small or unimportant to be addressed. Also, it proves there is no job beneath any crew member, including the boss.

P Plumber- Not excluding the above-mentioned toilets – and the irrigations system goes without mention – there are the leaks in water lines, ice makers, water-cooled freezers and many other things made out of PVC or copper that may need our expertise.

E Electrician- Some of this is irrigation. But it is also light switches, timers, cooler compressors and member's golf carts.

R Roofer- This may range from simply loose sheets on the clubhouse roof, to installing snow breaks as not to bury the entrances when the snow shifts to building a roof over your new office.

I In-house Contractor- I think this one is pretty self-explanatory. We do a lot of projects simply with the normal crew. This not only saves money but also is great team building.

N Nursemaid- Everyone of us has those employees and days when you feel you are simply an overpaid babysitter.

T Team Player- It makes you an invaluable member of the facility when you are able and willing to step across those department lines and help for the betterment of the club. This may mean stepping back from the boss position you are used to, and saying, tell me

what you need. Little things like washing dishes, picking the range or watching the pro shop, may seem small, but it is the details that can make a lasting impression.

E Educator- We, as superintendents, are teachers every day, not only to our staff but also ourselves. I encourage you to try to teach yourself and crew something new every day. You will never run out of things to learn or teaching moments.

N Negotiator- Some days this career feels like a constant negotiation. Working with board members, the event coordinator or pro shop staff, trying to accommodate the course needs while satisfying golfers is a constant challenge.

D Disciplinarian- My crew says I am a very fun boss. It is my philosophy that if work is fun whenever possible, it becomes more than just a job. That being said, there is definitely a serious side to our work. When someone needs to have the swift hammer of justice come down, be sure to use the appropriate sized hammer. What I was always taught: praise people in front of a crowd, and reprimand or discipline in private.

E Efficiency Expert- We should constantly be open to new thoughts and ideas of doing the same old job. With new technologies and research, we should always be evaluating our procedures. But try to avoid paralysis by analysis. Don't overthink.

N Network Administrator At my club I am the computer guy. This ranges from buying new computers, setting them up and fixing them when they break, to answering questions

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from employees and members when their home systems have issues. It started as a hobby but has morphed into something else altogether.

Turf Man- Finally, we get into the part I went to school to learn. The growing of the grass opens up a whole other set of jobs, but that is for another article.

There are many other jobs that can be listed such as: Shoveler of Snow, Operator, Uniform Police, Leaf Sweeper, Painter, Drug Tester, Paper Pusher, Flower Planter and Translator.

However you look at it, as superintendents we wear many hats. In my opinion, it is what keeps our profession interesting. So, the next time someone asks you, “What do you do in the winter?” or says, “You just grow grass,” perhaps you can think back to this article, and just smile and give a little laugh.



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