

Scholarship/Education Tournaments - 2019

We have our dates and locations! Protect these dates on your calendar and watch for more information at a later date. A variety of hole sponsorship opportunities will be available.

August 13: Paradise Valley Country Club, Casper, Wyoming, John Roth, Superintendent. **September 17: The Club at Spanish Peaks**, Big Sky, Montana, Ryan Blechta, Superintendent.

Last Call for Directory Updates

Our annual membership directory will be going to print soon. Please take a moment to review your personal or company profile and make any needed changes by clicking on "your profile" under the members only tab. All changes are made live to the data base, except for email addresses - which must be changed by Lori.

As a reminder, to access the members' only section of our website, you must be logged into the site. *Note...* your user name is the email address the association has on file for you... and if you have forgotten your password, or if you have never set your password, click on "forgot password." You will receive an email (check spam) and just follow the prompts to reset.

Montana and Wyoming Represented at National Golf Day

Dane Gamble, Bridger Creek Golf Course, Bozeman, Montana, and Jeff Jensen, Jackson Hole Golf & Tennis Club, Jackson Hole, Wyoming, were part of the We Are Golf coalition, advocating for the golf industry in Washington, D.C. In addition, the coalition took part in the third annual Community Service Project to

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PPGCSA Events:

Scholarship/Education Golf Events see above
PPGCSA Fall Meeting & Trade Show October 15-17, 2019, Billings Hotel & Convention Center, Billings, MT
 For more events, visit ppgcsa.org

GCSAA Announces Logo Refreshed

Rhett Evans, GCSAA CEO, recently announced a refreshed version of the GCSAA logo has been introduced.



The changes are subtle, moving the text to the right, making it easier to render in our modern, digital world. In the coming weeks and months, you will see a refresh of not just the primary GCSAA



logo, but also updates to the logos of all GCSAA programs and all related entities, as well as chapter logos based on the

GCSAA brand, including the Peaks & Prairies GCSA.

Hathaway Attends Symposium

Thank you to Rick Hathaway, Rock Creek Cattle Company, Deer Lodge, Montana, for attending the March 2019 GCSAA Chapter Leaders/ Executive Symposium, GCSAA, Lawrence, Kansas. Two of the many learning objectives of the program include how to be a highly successful team leader for your facility and your chapter, and understand how to provide a more meaningful chapter experience, through the engagement of members and volunteer involvement.

Pictured below are Joe Aholt, IDGCSA; David Phipps, GCSA; Mike Bednar, IEGCSA; Lori Russell, and Rick Hathaway PPGCSA.



“Peaks & Prairies Golf Course Superintendents Association is dedicated to furthering the education of our members for the betterment of golf and its environment.”

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Peaks & Prairies Golf Course Superintendents Association

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President's Message



Danny Renz

Douglas Community Golf Course, Douglas, Wyo.

As I sit here on May 1 and watch it snow and blow (which is the only reason I'm taking the time to write this), I question if this moisture is worth the loss of income at the golf courses in the region.

The snow in the mountains is important for our water sources, and, of course, there is value in the moisture coming straight from the source. Isn't it amazing how you can have a dry spot for days and it only improves a little, but one little timely rainfall with measurable rain can make it disappear overnight? But, again, is it all worth it? We have crews we still have to pay. Sure, there's always stuff to do, but most of our shop work is finished during the winter. Is today's snow/moisture worth it when our irrigation is up and running and you get more out of it in the spring? There's obviously no golf on these snow days, which means there is no income from the course or restaurant to cover any hourly wages. I don't have that many employees at this time of year, unfortunately, but, I'm thankful on days like this. I can't imagine those of you who have to pay ten or more employees at a time in the season when both income and better weather conditions are normally expected.

We're all used to these challenges living in this area, but, it never makes it easier. We plan for such losses every year in our budgets, but is it still better to have a milder spring with little to no moisture? I guess that also depends on whether or not you pay for water. We all save some money on electricity using our pumps less, but most don't have a savings on water. It would be interesting to weigh the differences, but there's also some things that are hard to measure beyond the visual difference. We can somewhat figure out the daily cost for our pump electricity and water usage on those days or weeks that are unusually warm and dry, and weigh them against weeks or months that are unusually cool and wet, where we lose most, or all, of our

income. The hard part is weighing that against the overall better results you receive from good ol' Mother Nature. I never like to complain about moisture. We have all had those years where we need it to stop snowing or raining so we can finish the days work and get some income, as well as those years where we wish we could please get some kind of moisture because our courses are dryer than a popcorn fart. I wish we could ask God to give us snow or rain when we need it, and take it away when we don't, but it doesn't work that way. I know because I have tried, and I'm sure most of you have also tried at some point.

This may not be the most exciting topic, but as I watched the weather and considered what to write about, I decided to write about what I was thinking. There is stress with what we can't control, but that doesn't mean we don't constantly think about it – and any end cost. We all have different situations, expectations, budgets, concerns, crews, and ways we earn our golf course income, but one thing we all have in common is Mother Nature affects everything we do in one way or another.

I know I'm over the moisture right now, but there will be a point sooner than later that I will be praying for it. I wish you all the best of luck this summer. I hope you all get moisture when you need it and warm sunny days when you need it. However, don't hold your breath.

Peaks & Prairies GCSA Extension/Resource Service

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4 T's to Improve Your Golf Course that Won't Cost a Dime

Dan Tolson, CGCS, 3 Creek Ranch, Jackson, Wyo.

Do more with less. We've all heard the axiom? It's tossed around so regularly, it seems like a fad. It usually precedes notification from a board member that your budget has been cut, or a rant by a superintendent who is dealing with shrinking resources.

In a "do more with less" industry, and when dealing with factors outside of your control like Mother Nature and a fickle economy, success can be found regardless of budget size. No matter if your operating budget is six digits or seven, growing or shrinking, there are certain things you CAN control unrelated to finances. By implementing a few common sense tweaks, you can do more with less and make huge improvements...for free!

Tune your Culture

Ever worked for a screamer? How about the negative 'Eeyore' who is convinced the glass is half empty? No one likes working in a negative environment. Unfortunately, those managers still exist and the attitude you project will be reflected in your staff. In the modern world, if we are going to successfully recruit staff in a highly competitive market, we don't have much choice but to create a culture where employees enjoy coming to work and feel valued.

In the book, *DRIVE, THE SURPRISING TRUTH ABOUT WHAT MOTIVATES US*, Daniel Pink dissects how three intrinsic motivators can do more to create an outstanding workforce than any external motivators like salary or benefits. By offering autonomy (the ability to be self-directed), mastery (continual improvement) and purpose (working for a transcendent cause), we can lead our staff from robots who are working for a paycheck to 'think-for-yourself' partners engaged in pursuing the success of the operation. It is not always easy to apply these three motivators to a golf course maintenance staff because the problems we're trying to solve just aren't that complicated. Crafting a unique mission, vision, values statement and holding your staff accountable to it can lead them towards these three intrinsic motivators without even trying.

As you consider what you want your culture to be, start with core values. What are you passionate about? What is your automatic default that you can't compromise even if you wanted to? The answers point to who you are and what is most important to you, your core values. Distill those down into a

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4 T's to Improve continued from page 4

few concise words or a statement to define your department. As you LEAD and your crew follows, they will begin to share those same core values and it will define your culture. From there you can establish a mission statement (why you are here) and a vision statement (where you are going). Workers will enjoy their work more when they know what they are there to do and why. Once you know what your vision is, you can begin to set tangible goals. Once goals are set, turn your staff loose to accomplish them and boom! you've created autonomy, mastery and purpose AND the resulting intrinsically motivated employee!

This topic is the subject of untold dozens of leadership books and I have

just skimmed the surface here. The most important thing to remember as you begin to tune your culture is that the sin-

employees on their first day, and then buried in the bottom of a locker never to be seen again. So, how do you get your



A banner hangs prominently in our break room to communicate our mission and core values

gle biggest improvement you can make to your operation is to become a better manager of people. Personally, I have a long way to go in this regard, but I've attempted to become a student of the subject. Find some books that move you, study them and put them into practice.

Teach your Standards

Standards of performance make it possible to hold employees accountable, creates a consistent product and streamlines training. A maintenance staff working without written and clear standards is like flying an airplane with your eyes closed.

Standards set the bar to get everyone on the crew shooting for the same goal, and they give a clear communication tool for your golfers on what they should expect to find on the golf course. Most courses have some kind of written standard, usually within the pages of an employee handbook given to new

High quality framed prints communicating the standard for each area of the course remind the crew daily what is expected

standards translated off the page into actions by everyone on your staff day in day and day out?

Standards should be as short and concise as possible while still getting the point across. We have our standards broken down by area with a short bullet list of expectations for those areas and a picture of what we expect them to look like every day. A picture speaks a thousand words and should be incorporated into your daily training. With the pictures in our manual, a new employee can understand what our expectations are for every area of the golf course in less than an hour.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, a video is worth a novel. Don't overlook the power of the video recorder in your pocket. Years ago, the SVW videos were available to help train course staff on the various facets of golf course maintenance. I remember the VHS tapes droning on in the break room, and how



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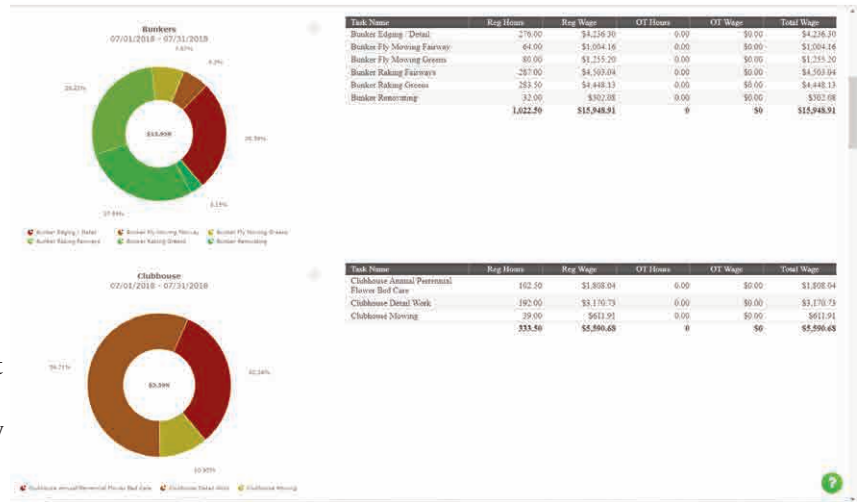
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we used to have to pause the tape to explain how our course was different from the Florida course in the video. Nowadays with an abundance of video editing apps, you can shoot a clip from your own golf course on your cell phone, throw it into a short video and have it posted to YouTube in 15 minutes without ever leaving your cart. iMovie is a good one that is easy to use and it comes free with every iPhone.

Some people learn by reading, but very few in my experience. There is a reason for the explosive growth and success of "YouTube University." Most people learn by watching others. Videos communicate through language barriers and save you time by not having to show different people the same thing over and over. If you have a chronic problem with some aspect of your training program, try making a video of someone doing it the right way and see if that problem goes away.

Track Data

Goal setting and goal accomplishment is much more difficult if you aren't keeping track of data. Knowing data like payroll numbers, chemical usage, mowing frequency etc., helps you make educated and confident management decisions. I admit, I'm guilty of being a data-head. I have files full of records that I haven't looked at in years. But I save them...just



in case some day I need to compile a report. Collecting data is important and, if done right, can greatly improve your operation. If you have a certain area you want to improve, start with gathering intelligence about that area. Maybe you think you need a new irrigation system. Do you know exactly how much you spent last year repairing breaks and hand watering? How many gallons of water did you use? Was that less than the year before or more? What is the five-year trend of irrigation costs? Without clear and accurate answers to those questions, it would be very difficult to convince your owner or board to drop \$2

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4 T's to Improve

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million on an irrigation system. And maybe when you discover those answers, you realize you don't need one as much as you thought you did.

In the old days, tracking data like this was done with a pen and a yellow tablet. It took an OCD mind to keep track of it, file it and compile it into something useable. Thanks to modern technology, we can gather metrics on just about anything automatically and use apps and computer programs to compile it into beautiful graphs and charts. For the do-it-yourselfer, Google offers an



Twitter is a great tool for promoting whatever need to set yourself apart. I use it to communicate our wildlife and environmental initiatives

abundance of tools. In Google forms, you can create an easy form for your crew to fill out (they all have a phone in their pocket, capable of anything) to track everything from greens moisture to bunker sand depth. At the end of the week, export it to a spreadsheet and filter out the pertinent info. And best of all, it's free. All you have to do is create a Google account.

If you have a little cash to spend to track labor and other metrics, there are some great companies offering internet platforms for a small monthly fee. At my course we use ASB taskTracker. In my humble opinion, it's worth every penny. I'm not endorsing them over others, but it's a perfect fit for us to beautifully merge a daily digital job board with labor tracking for every job on the golf course. We now have five years of accurate data for every area on the course. Come fall budget time, my board receives concrete numbers of payroll details from the prior three-five years, supporting the labor numbers I'm requesting. It makes budgeting much easier and gives credibility to the requests for increases.

Take Inventory

Every golf course is unique and has something to offer no other course can. Whether a beautiful stream flowing through the middle, a compelling historical past, the 'best' greens in town, perfect bunker sand, or environmental significance. If you want to make your course better, set it apart from the competition. Take an inventory of what makes it unique and special, then leverage that difference for your benefit. Lots of superintendents across the country do a wonderful job at this. Through social media

outlets and in their communities, they loudly tell the story that makes them special. When you think of golf in Northern California, what comes to mind? The 7th hole at Pebble Beach! When conversation shifts to wildlife on the golf course, usually Paul Carter's 'Eagle Cam' at Bear Trace comes up. Granted, those examples are outliers and not the norm of Montana and Wyoming golf courses, but when your golfers are sitting around the breakfast table talking about your canvas, what do you want them to talk about? Wouldn't you rather they focus on an asset or something positive than complain about the slow greens or bunker sand? As the superintendent, you have the greatest influence to leverage your best assets. Take an inventory of what makes you special and maximize the impact that can benefit your clients. If the asset you want to leverage isn't quite where you want it to be, set some goals to make it better...see above.

Despite popular opinion and in contradiction to most of the grumblings heard at the bar on Friday night, it doesn't take more money to improve your golf course. As a manager in charge of the most valuable asset at your facility, you have the power to create a positive culture with a clear mission. Once you have everyone headed in the right direction, use photos, videos and clear standards to teach your staff what is expected. Tracking data will allow you to set and accomplish smart goals while leveraging the assets which make your club special. Before you know it, golfers will be flocking to your course, business will be booming and the growth in the budget you've always longed for will follow.

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Golf Industry Show 2019

I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the National Golf Industry Show 2019 in San Diego, California. If you ever have the opportunity to go, I would strongly recommend it.

When I was at the Peaks & Prairies GCSA Fall Meeting & Trade Show in Billings, MT, Dave Phipps told me about the Bayer Scholarship to be able to go to the GIS. He encouraged me to apply. I came home and filled out the application right away. In January, I was very surprised and honored to find out that I was one of the ten winners from across the U.S. The scholarship paid for my airfare, lodging, conference entry fee and two educational classes. The Bayer Foundation staff was very helpful to me in planning my trip. The list of educational classes was very hard to select from, because they all sounded very interesting. I ended up attending four classes in the two days. The instructors were all very knowledgeable about their topics and I learned a lot in each class.



Suzy Batie, Superintendent Ponderosa Butte Golf Course Colstrip, Mont.



The Trade Show was very impressive. It took two days to look through all of the booths. I was able to get a lot of good information and new ideas.

San Diego was a beautiful city to visit, even though it rained almost every day that we were

there. I was able to take my husband and two teenaged sons with me on the trip. My sons had never seen the ocean, so we all had a great time.

I hope to be able to attend the GIS again sometime in the future. It is such a great opportunity to learn and to network with other superintendents from all over the world. I am so honored and thankful to Bayer for the opportunity to go to the conference.



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THE TURF LOOKS GOOD

Clark Throssell, Ph.D.
Turfgrass R & D, Billings, Mont

Despite a long, snowy and cold February, turf has come out of winter in good shape, at least in the Billings area. Preventive snow mold fungicides applied in late fall again proved their value. At least in the Billings area, the last few winters seem to have more snow cover and longer periods of consecutive days of snow cover. This means that snow mold is more likely to occur. If you haven't already done so, it may be time to reevaluate the snow mold control strategy at your golf course. As you know too well, the real challenge with snow mold damage is turf recovery in spring when the temperatures are cool at best. There are no good options for turf recovery during a cool or cold Montana or Wyoming spring other than patience while waiting for consistent, warm temperatures. The turf often doesn't fully recover until July or later and this is a problem, since we have a short golf season. Use the opportunity now to discuss snow mold damage and how it can be prevented from occurring in the future.

Ants

It is hard to believe, but it has been warm enough for ants to be active. The telltale sign of activity is mound building. As I have traveled about the Billings area, I see ant mounds in turf and along

sidewalks.

Start scouting for ant mounds in the collars and within the cleanup lap of greens. As soon as you see mounds, start your treatment program. Insecticides used to control ants are only effective on the workers that come in direct contact with the insecticides. The queens are below ground in protected chambers and do not come in contact with the insecticide. Therefore, the queens continue laying eggs, resulting in more worker ants.

The only option for successful prevention of ant mounds on greens is regular scouting for ant mounds, followed by treatment with an insecticide. You must be persistent in applying control measures. The good news is that insecticides can be spot applied if only a few mounds are present. If numerous mounds are present, it is only necessary to treat the collar and perhaps three to five feet from the green perimeter into the green.

Broadleaf Weed Control

Mid-May to mid-June is a great time to control broadleaf weeds such as dandelion and white clover. If you have broadleaf weeds in fairways or rough, make plans to control them in the next few weeks. There are numerous broadleaf weed herbicides labeled for use on cool



season grass fairways and rough. They all work well when applied according to the label directions and when meeting the suggestions below:

- Apply the herbicides to green, actively growing weeds and turf.
- Apply the herbicides when the forecast high temperature is 75° F or less. This will help reduce the likelihood of herbicide volatilization.
- The turf and weeds should be sufficiently watered and show no signs of drought stress.
- Apply the herbicides on a sunny day so the broadleaf weeds will take up and

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Greg Baer

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The Turf continued from page 12

translocate the herbicides.

- Follow the label directions for the ideal amount of water to use when applying the herbicides.
- Avoid application on windy days, and if the wind should come up during application, stop the application and finish on a calm day.
- Use care when applying broadleaf weed herbicides near the backyards of homes that border the golf course. Grapes, tomatoes and other desired broadleaf plants that are found in some backyard gardens are sensitive to broadleaf weed herbicides, and, under the right conditions, can be damaged. If in doubt, avoid application near backyard gardens.

Crabgrass Control

While not a major problem in our area, a few golf courses do have crabgrass in fairways and rough that needs to be controlled. The most effective method of crabgrass control is the application of a preemergent herbicide. Depending on location and weather, a preemergent herbicide should be applied no later than May 31 and preferably earlier in most locations in Montana and Wyoming.

A guideline to help time preemergent herbicide application is that crabgrass begins to germinate when soil temperature at a two-inch depth is 55° F or greater for three consecutive days. Ideally, the preemergent herbicide should be applied about two weeks prior to the expected date of crabgrass germination to allow the herbicide chemical barrier to become established and also to provide a margin of error in case crabgrass seed germinates earlier than expected.

Dithiopyr, pendimethalin and prodiamine are all effective preemergent herbicides. To get the best control from all of these products, apply before crabgrass seed germinates, make a uniform application with no skips and water in the herbicide as soon after application as possible, ideally within an hour or two after application. Dithiopyr does provide postemergent control of one - three leaf crabgrass so it can be applied at crabgrass germination time or slightly after.

Dithiopyr, pendimethalin and prodiamine are not labelled for use on putting greens.

Cool Season Turfgrass Growth

As I write this article on May 8, turfgrass is about to enter its period of most rapid leaf growth of the year. Cool season grasses grow best when air temperatures are between 60 – 75° F, which is most of May and June. During this time period, it

can be difficult to keep up with mowing.

We all know that fertilizing turfgrass with nitrogen stimulates leaf growth. And we also know that, in May and June, turfgrass grows well naturally, without any help from us. Therefore, make your life easier by being careful with the amount of nitrogen applied in May and June.

Apply small amounts of nitrogen and observe the turf response before fertilizing again. On greens, collars, approaches and tees, apply 0.1 to 0.2 lbs. nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft., observe the turf response and wait until growth slows before fertilizing again.

Due to the large acreage, it is difficult to apply 0.1 to 0.2 lbs. nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft. to fairways and rough, but the concept is the same. Apply smaller amounts of nitrogen rather than larger amounts of nitrogen, especially if using 100% quick release nitrogen sources. If the nitrogen source is a combination of quick and slow release nitrogen, a slightly higher amount of nitrogen can be applied at each application without overstimulating leaf growth.

Big picture, modest amounts of nitrogen in spring will provide sufficient growth without excessive leaf growth and frequent mowing.

Take a few minutes each day to enjoy the golf course and the setting. The views in our part of the world are pretty spectacular.

Clark Throssell, Ph. D., is a turfgrass scientist and works with the turfgrass industry on technical and scientific issues. He serves as the technical resource for Peaks & Prairies GCSA members. *(This article can only be reproduced with written permission of the author).*



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National Golf Day *continued from page 1*

beautify areas between the historical landmarks, Lincoln Memorial and Washington Monument. The volunteers laid sod, raked, edged, overseeded, aerated, mowed, and more. The 17 projects in four hours of work along the National Mall saved the U.S. National Park Service nearly four months of labor costs.



Above Phipps, Gamble & Jensen (also on tractor)



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Gone Fishing

My wife and I were eating dinner at a Chinese restaurant the other day and she was given a fortune cookie that said, "If you give a hungry man a fish, you feed him for a day, but if you teach him how to fish, you feed him for a lifetime." For some reason, I thought that was a quote from the Bible. But, upon a quick Google search, I found the basic premise has been attributed to many people and cultures over the years. For some reason, it also made me think about a conversation I had the same day with our dining room manager about delegating. In that conversation, we agreed we needed to improve our delegation skills, which in turn would benefit our employees and our employer. Upon reading my wife's fortune, I realized that by delegating, in some respects, you are teaching a man to fish.

When I look back upon my early career as a superintendent, I remember not trusting anyone else with the job of hand watering. One particularly hot and windy day, as I was chasing ring bases as well as hand watering, one of our investors asked me why I was the only person watering and intimated that by training a few others we would be able to cover more of the course. This would improve the quality of the course and also free me up to do other things. To say a lightbulb went off in my head that day would be an understatement. It took me a while to train a couple crew members, and I realized the course wouldn't be getting EXACTLY the same amount of water I would apply. But, I also realized the more I delegated, the more efficient we became. Most of the crew learned how to break into a head and to identify moisture stress. We now had an entire crew of people looking out for wet spots and dry spots. Eventually it also meant I was not hand watering until dark. It meant I was going home earlier in the day and that I was not going home every day with soaking wet feet! Most importantly, it meant the golf course looked and played better.

By giving up a little control and spending a little time training people I learned that we could accomplish so much more. I

also learned how much more people are willing to give. I found out that by delegating I was actually empowering my staff. People want to learn and grow in their job and delegating is a great way to facilitate that. As you delegate, you can discover your staff's strengths and weaknesses, and you can utilize your knowledge about their strengths and weaknesses to develop a stronger crew. As a result of delegating, I know on a calm, overcast day we can put a few inexperienced staff members in the field and coach them up. On a hot, sunny, windy day, I know I need to put my best people on the end of the hose.



**Mike Kitchen, CGCS
Teton Pines Resort
& Country Club
Jackson, Wyo.**

Unquestionably, accountability must increase as you delegate, but I have found people also yearn for this. If you have attended our last couple of Peaks & Prairie meetings, you will recall the conversations we have had about millennials and how to increase their productivity. I believe delegation with accountability is a great way to accomplish this goal. Kids want to know what the end game is and they generally are willing to put in the effort if given some autonomy on how they get there.

If you use delegation to get out of something you don't like to do, your staff will see right through it. If you come visit Teton Pines you will see me working right alongside our staff. I am as likely to be on a greens mower or doing trash and coolers as anyone else on our staff, and the staff recognize and appreciate that I don't consider myself to be "above" any job. As a result of learning the art of delegation, I have found I have time for other things. I am a better boss, as I have more time to really get to know my staff and I have more time to focus on our members. Most importantly, I have more time for my family and for myself. Delegation has made me a better boss, father, and husband. With any luck, someday it will also make me a better fisherman!



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It is All Part of the Job

Jeff Jensen, Superintendent
Jackson Hole Golf & Tennis Club, Jackson, Wyo

Many of us golf course superintendents take pride in the idea that we are Jacks, or Janes, of all trades. We do many things for our golf courses. While the general public may think we are simply cutting grass on a daily basis, we all know

that is a small slice of the workday pie.

A typical day for us can entail many job functions. From accountant to meteorologist, agronomist to psychologist, we try our best to know a lot about a lot. In doing so, we grow our knowledge base and skills. As a result, our facilities and, hopefully, the communities around us are better for it. Sometimes we are able to grow in areas of our interests. I think of the superintendents who have become proficient beekeepers or woodworkers.

Still other times, we develop a skill because we are confronted with a new problem or question. Most of us work at facilities in which the golf course exists alongside the pool, tennis courts, restaurant, or other amenities that our guests and members enjoy. We host golf events, of course, but then there are the tennis tournaments, cross country meets, banquets and weddings.

With many of these functions, I usually take a behind-the-scenes role. Especially with weddings, the checklist is relatively short: does the place look neat and tidy? Does the banquet staff need setup help? Is the irrigation schedule adjusted so we are not soaking the late night reception guests? However, last season I added some lines to this list: did the witnesses sign the marriage license? Are the bride, groom, and parents pleased with the ceremony? In short, I went from the background to

front in center as the wedding officiant.

It all began in the fall of 2017, with a phone call from my sister. She and her fiancé had been engaged for a couple of months and I was expecting the eventual call to be groomsman. Much to my surprise, she called one day to ask if I would perform the ceremony! I was taken aback. When my initial shock subsided, excitement and honor took over. For superintendents, a lack of experience does not typically discourage us. More often than not, it even provides a boost in motivation to tackle a new challenge.

Fast forward to end of summer 2018. I had performed the ceremony for my sister and her husband in July. That September, I also performed another wedding ceremony for friends whom I have known since elementary school. When they got word I would be a licensed by their wedding date, I became their only choice for an officiant.

In October 2018, two other friends were getting married. This time the ceremony and reception was to take place at my golf facility. The couple was planning on having a family friend of the bride perform the ceremony. I was simply excited to attend a wedding at my facility. It was my first opportunity to get the wedding guest's perspective. All summer I had joked with the couple that my credentials were acceptable in Wyoming, and I could be their back up.

Well, as it happens, less than two weeks prior to their ceremony, the couple learned that their officiant had a family issue and would be unable to travel for the ceremony. At this point, I happily accepted another role at my golf facility, but it took me until the following staff meeting to inform the general manager or any of my co-workers.

You all know that October weather in our region can be a mixed bag. This particular wedding day, the weather forecasts were calling for a cold, windy day with a possible mix of rain and snow. With this in mind, much of our Thursday



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inter-department staff meeting was dedicated to weather related contingency plans regarding the ceremony. Our primary wedding site is also our practice tee, which provides for great mountain views and ample seating, but not much protection from the elements. Given the large number of guests, our secondary sites were less than ideal. We agreed that it was worth the risk to continue to plan around our primary site, "so long as the officiant keeps the ceremony short." In this moment, I realized that in my rush to prepare for the ceremony, I had yet to tell anyone at the golf course I would be officiating!

Never missing the opportunity to have a little fun, I offered this in the meeting: "I guarantee the ceremony will be short and sweet. It's what the couple asked for..." Most of my co-workers, aware of my travels during the summer, knew what this meant. They had a decent laugh and let out a sigh of relief with one less unknown for which to account.

That Saturday came, along with the cold wind. The moisture held off, save for a few snowflakes in the breeze. The father of the bride, a self-proclaimed "hack" who enjoys the game, got a good kick out of the superintendent performing the ceremony. The family was grateful that I could fill in on short notice. Many folks joked that I had called in some divine greenskeeping intervention to keep the worst of the weather away. The bride and groom were more than pleased with the ceremony. However, in my opinion, it was not my best performance of the season. A bridesmaid got off track on her way to the altar; in doing so, she walked across the practice green in high heels which threw me off my game a little. But why did it? After all, we do a lot of solid-tining in October.

In the end, 2018 made one thing clear to me: never be surprised by the roles you will assume on your golf course. It is all part of the job.



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