



Photo by Bruce Mathews

Good record keeping is essential to good organization. Keep business cards from dealers, vendors and other superintendents and file them by subject.

Start your fall cleaning with a look at how to improve organization around the maintenance facility.

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Indoor organization

All businesses need it. Some people are born with it; some people learn it; others never really quite get it. It's organization.

It can be defined as "strategic planning to create a functional whole." Based on this definition, disorganization can be defined as "random acts to create a collection of dysfunctional groups." So which one are you doing?

The point of organization is to find out what you have and where it's located, then to arrange it so it can serve its future need. Another function of this process is that once you have organized a specific area, it should stay organized. An area that deteriorates rapidly was not organized

properly in the first place.

Suppose you just accepted a new position, but you didn't have the opportunity to really inspect the maintenance facility during your interview. You left a golf course you knew inside out and arrive faced with a situation that has some familiar aspects, but certainly a number of strange ones. It's clear organization was not your predecessor's strong point.

If you're lucky, you may have a little time to sort things out before you hit midseason. Regardless of when you arrive, you've got your work cut out for you. Although no two superintendents will have the same method of organizing a golf facility, there are a number of steps that can help you get on track and maintain a consistent system.

File it

Much of our work involves the great outdoors, but the preparation necessary to make things happen in a positive sequence requires information and the ability to locate it, process it and then move on to the next task.

Although all information may someday be on CD-ROM, the need to orga-

nize written information will still be with us for some time. Your desk, file cabinets, trays and shelves need to have some kind of order. Usually, files will make up the bulk of the material you need to store and locate.

The hanging-type files that slide on rails in your file cabinet are far superior to the old standard type. They come in various colors and work best if they are cut in "fifths" for the attachment of a label.

Once you've sorted everything in a typical operation, you may easily have several hundred files, depending on how precisely you like things divided. The problem is, it's difficult to sort things until you've assigned a place for them. The key is to separate items into large categories and then sort the large

categories down to the level of detail you require.

For example, take a large category such as personnel. Personnel information is usually fairly consistent from one organization to the next. You'll need a file for each current employee, seasonal employees, payroll records, payroll forms, current applications and possibly even a file for those "hall of fame" employees you don't want to forget. The

As for organizing the rest of your information, label the files before you start storing information. Each piece of equipment will need a file. You'll also need files for fungicides, insecticides, herbicides, fertilizers and soil amendments. Most products are better sorted by subject rather than brand name, but you may still want a file for each major manufacturer.

In addition, make files for seminars,

over time and need attention. It's better to keep business cards sorted by subject rather than by name. Have separate sections for equipment dealers, chemical dealers, university staff, superintendents, sand/topsoil vendors, etc. These cards do stack up, so you may want to combine the information on them from time to time to keep the number of cards manageable.

If you are new to an area, solicit

How you manage facility operations certainly affects your professional image.

necessary level of detail will become apparent, and large files can be divided later when time allows.

KEY POINTS

- n A well-organized maintenance facility gives you more time to devote to the golf course. Up-front organization and planning improve employee productivity, purchasing procedures and record keeping.
- n Filing business cards by subject can help you keep track of vendors and other service providers. Create separate sections for equipment dealers, chemical dealers, university staff, superintendents, sand/topsoil vendors, etc.
- n When parts and supplies are organized, a quick trip around the facility with a clipboard should produce a fairly complete list of needed items. Superintendents can also save by stocking up on supplies and running off the "top half of the tank."
- n Taking employees on a tour of the golf course and training them to see the course as you do will save time and effort in the long run.

conferences, certification, educational materials, newsletters and the major organizations to which you belong. You'll need vendor files for invoice records, budget files by year, photo records by year, monthly reports, memos and maps.

If you still have a pile of material, try creating files for accessories, drainage, environmental information, engines, greensmowers, golf cars, greens construction, irrigation, landscaping products, safety equipment, trees/shrubs, warranties, etc. Add a few miscellaneous files and you've probably made a good dent in organizing the information.

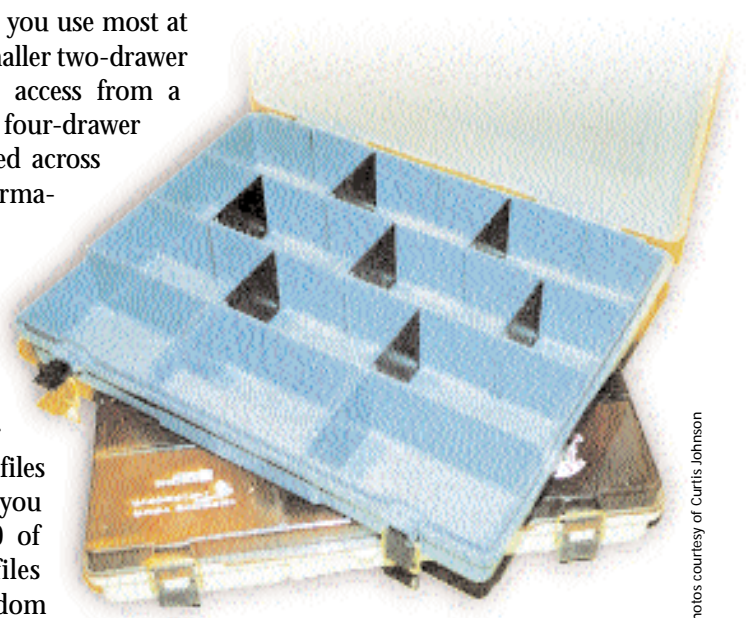
You'll want the files you use most at your fingertips. The smaller two-drawer cabinets are easier to access from a chair, and the larger four-drawer cabinets may be located across the room to store information you use less often.

Keeping contacts

Business cards are probably the best way to keep track of vendors and other services. Business card files are available to allow you to slide in nearly 100 of these cards. These files tend to get a bit random

other superintendents' cards. This may strengthen your foothold and save time when you need someone specific to help you.

Any time you look up and use a number in the phone book, highlight it. After a few years, however, you won't want to throw out the old phone book for the new one. The highlighted book I have is about seven years old, and I recycle the new one. You may want to periodically update a list of all the numbers you've highlighted. Computers are great for helping keep your phone lists current.



Photos courtesy of Curtis Johnson

Don't skimp on proper storage containers. Have plenty of parts bins, trays, shelves and hooks to keep parts and supplies conveniently organized.

Parts and supplies

This article can't teach you how to organize an entire shop, but there are a few simple things that can be done to keep important items at hand with a routine system.

Most golf maintenance operations involve 10 to 20 people using various supplies daily. It would be nice if everyone could simply write down what needs to be ordered or purchased, but that usually doesn't happen.

One method of keeping track of what's needed is to place several boxes or barrels in various locations and have



How you organize your office and maintenance facility reflects on your professional image.



Everything in a shop needs to have its proper place. You and your staff should not have to waste time hunting for items or discovering too late when items need to be ordered.

employees toss in anything that would trigger an appropriate response for the next supplies trip — boxes that previously held bearings or seals, blades, a piece of trimmer line, a broken rake handle, a wrapper for paper towels, chemical labels, various fasteners, etc.

Everything in a shop needs to have its proper place. If an area is truly organized, a quick trip around the facility with a clipboard should produce a fairly complete list of needed items. Most golf courses will be around for many years, so superintendents need to stock up and run off the “top half of the tank.”

Proper organization allows you to

spend more time on what your “customers” see: the golf course. It also makes purchasing procedures more efficient so the work load will flow rather than moving in starts and stops — allowing your mechanic to be a mechanic, rather than falling into the “need to go to town” mode.

Space, or lack of space

All shops have a limited amount of space. Evaluate your available space and find the best location for each item. Take a critical look: Are the items stored where they really belong? Are low-priority supplies being kept in high-prior-

ity areas? Your needs will change with the season — don't keep the ice melt in the middle of the shop all summer.

Good record keeping is essential to good organization. Clipboards need to be in convenient locations to monitor chemical use, items on loan, items to be billed to another facility, etc. It usually only takes a few minutes to set up these routine systems, but it also requires that employees take time to use them. You may have to designate people to monitor certain areas.

It's also important to have proper storage containers, including parts bins, trays, shelves and hooks. Purchase professional storage supplies — keep the jars and baby-wipe boxes at home in your garage. Seldom-used items need to be stored appropriately. The clubhouse may be able to store some things for you.

Get things off the floor. Are your shelves actually full, or are they filled with boxes that are almost empty? Build a loft or hang some storage from the ceiling for lighter-weight items. Can some items be moved outside and covered with a good tarp? Look critically at what you have to work with and visit other maintenance facilities to get ideas. Space you think is full may actually only be half-used or full of materials that belong somewhere else.

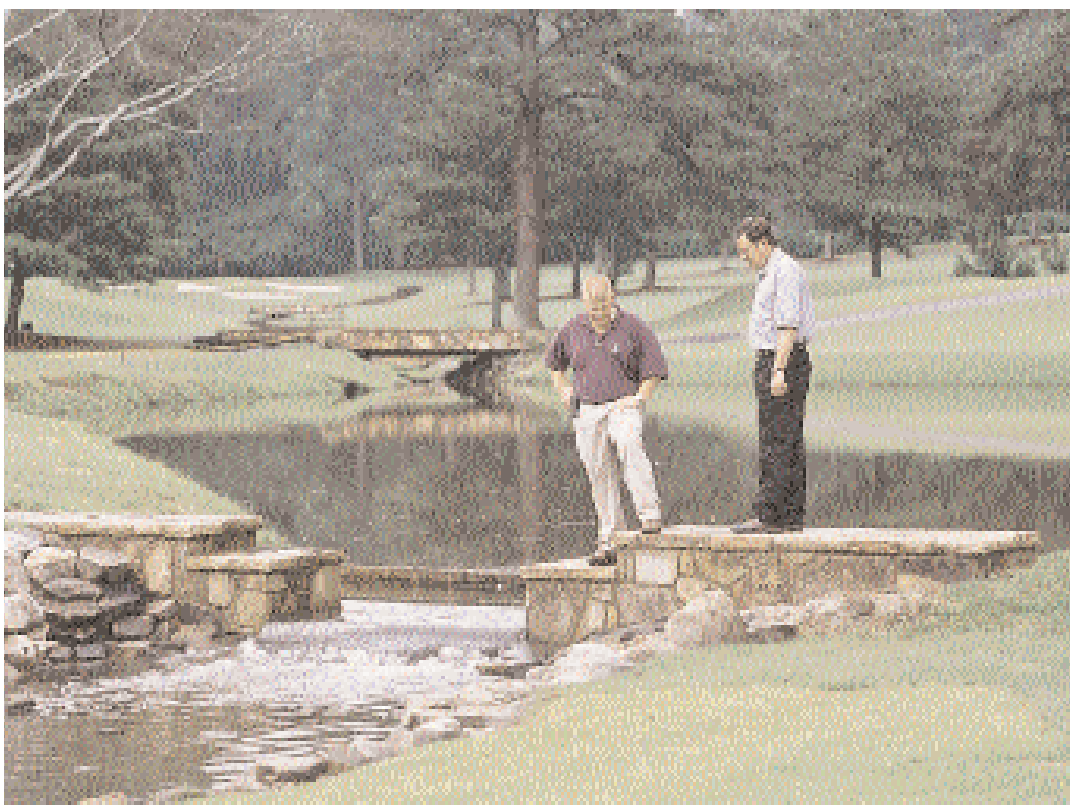


Photo by Bruce Mathews

Individual contact with staff members is one of the best ways for superintendents to build a cohesive maintenance staff that has similar goals for the golf facility.

Your golf course may be immaculate, but what does your manager think when he visits your maintenance facility? How you manage facility operations certainly affects your professional image.

Employee organization

There's a saying, "Life is one darn thing after another." But it's really the same darn thing over and over.

Many tasks on the golf course remain the same month after month, year after year. The key to employee productivity is to "line them out" with adequate tasks so they can function for long periods with little supervision. We've all had that ideal employee who always seems to keep busy. Precise, long-term assignments can help mold more of your staff into that ideal.

Outline tasks for the various days of the week — Monday duties through Friday duties. Give employees assignments that will create a full load every day. You may find it better to work 30 minutes with an employee and organize his or her time for several weeks, rather than spending five minutes at a time with 15 employees over and over. You can't beat taking employees on a tour of the golf course and training them to see the

course as you do. Eventually, you'll end up with a staff that thinks more like you.

Remember to plan for rain long before it rains. Outline your irrigation work, drainage work, long-term projects, short-term projects, clubhouse work and mechanical needs. Keep materials on hand in order to begin these various projects at the proper times.

Keep up the effort

There is a law of physics that states that nature tends to become more random unless there is an input of energy. To handle the constant bombardment of new information, set up a couple of "to file" trays so you can take care of that material later. Add new files as necessary.

Continue to clean house and move the low-priority items to low-priority locations. Move information down the line as quickly as possible. Be sure your critical communications have a formal location so they are not misplaced. Spring-loaded binder clips are great for those "hot files," and they can be used to easily hang the information in various locations.

Your efforts to stay organized can certainly fill some of the slow time around the facility. Superintendents

want the golf course to appear in basically the same condition day after day, so there is little reason why the office and shop area should not have a consistent, expected condition.

No time for organization? If you organize things well, you only have to do it once. It's the "over and over" part of your work that takes time. Delegation is definitely part of the process, especially if you are working with a large operation.

The overall idea is to make as many areas as possible run on autopilot. You still can't sleep at the controls, but you will have more time to solve the difficult problems and work on what is truly important.

GCM

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2000 Leo Feser Award candidate

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