

# Every Picture Tells a Story

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**W**ITHOUT QUESTION, communication is one of the biggest keys to unlocking a successful career as a golf course superintendent. Verbal and written skills are most commonly thought of in this category, but Tommy Witt, CGCS, of Bent Tree Country Club in Dallas, Texas, has added another dimension to his ideas and presentations to bring them more clearly into focus. Each day he carries a camera with him to take advantage of a wide range of photographic opportunities. The slides and/or pictures depict a range of topics, including routine needs (such as replacing a broken valve cover) or major golf course renovation projects.

Although many superintendents take pictures, few organize them as well as Tommy. They become part of a permanent record system in his office, currently comprising over 4,000 pictures. Each photo is numbered and then put in an album. A description of the work and/or problem is documented in a log book for easy access whenever questions arise. The benefits of having an organized library of photographs are numerous. Consider the following scenarios at your course.

## Before and After Photographs

Pictures of every problem area throughout the course can be taken and posted in an album with accompanying descriptions. As these areas are renovated, pictures of the corrective action should also be taken and the work accomplished described (beneath the photo), including the cost of the project. The pictures not only help identify needs for improvement, but they also document the efforts of the superintendent and his staff.

Frequently, projects such as drainage are identified during one time of the year, but the improvements cannot be made until a later date. Pictures provide the documentation to map the area to ensure that the location of the problem is not forgotten.

## Master Plans

Every club should have a Master Plan or Long-Range Plan. Photos can be used throughout every stage of the plan, from conception to completion. These visual aids help golfers chart the progress the course makes over time and give a better understanding of the work load involved.



*"Before" and "after" shots document the efforts of Tommy Witt's maintenance staff.*



## Budget Reviews and Proposals

At the end of a budget period, have you ever been asked, "Why are you so far over the budget?" Have they forgotten the flooding, hailstorms, or high winds that hit the course? Do the players really remember the severity of the storm? Pictures can quickly refresh one's memory by documenting and justifying the overtime spent for cleanup.

Green committees are constantly changing. Individuals who are not familiar with the superintendent's needs or operations may be placed in charge of approving the golf course maintenance budget. The use of accompanying pictures can help clarify the needs of the course and the staff.

## Meeting Presentations

Armed with a carousel of slides, the superintendent can easily make presentations to

green committees or at general membership meetings. Herein lies a tremendous opportunity to showcase the contributions, efforts, and accomplishments of the golf course maintenance staff. At least once per year, take the opportunity to both show and tell your golfers the progress that has been made and the challenges that lie ahead.

## Employee Education

Pictures provide an excellent vehicle for training new and old employees. Excessive wear can take place as mechanical rakes go in and out of bunkers in the same area. Disease symptoms on the greens can be photographed to educate those who mow and/or change cups. This type of training develops pride in the crew as they begin to gain confidence in identifying problems throughout the course.

## Resume vs. Portfolio

When new employment opportunities arise, don't just mail a cover letter and a list of your qualifications. Send a portfolio of pictures documenting your accomplishments. This will set you apart from and give you a clear edge over the many other applicants vying for the same job.

## Conclusion

Photography is a great tool that everyone can utilize to his or her own advantage. Use it to motivate employees, document problems, and record successes you achieve throughout the year. Every picture really does tell its own story; make it a part of your communication skills.

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# Mobile Office Trailers as Interim Offices

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**M**OST golf course superintendents need a better office. Unfortunately, many courses are not in the financial position to upgrade these facilities. This creates an impasse between the recognized need for a better work place and the financial realities of spending the money to solve the problem. What can be done?

Basically, there are two options. The first is to do nothing and be patient until the construction/improvement project can be completed. That is, do what you can to keep computers and disk drives dust-free, and improve lighting, ventilation, heating, and air conditioning. The second option is the subject of this turf tip: That is, the use of prefabricated mobile office trailers as interim offices.

## Why Trailers?

Among the reasons for golf courses to use trailers as interim office space are their reasonable cost, ease of acquisition and setup, and the fact that they work so well! Many people are surprised at the relatively inexpensive cost of mobile offices, either to rent or buy, and perhaps this is why several golf course superintendents in the Baltimore area utilize trailers as temporary or semi-permanent offices. Trailers "work" and are easy to



*Prefabricated trailers provide a viable option as interim office space.*

"sell." The success in utilizing mobile offices at one golf operation can be used as an example for another facility.

## How Inexpensive?

Costs can vary, but trailer options include several relatively small or used units that can be purchased for as little as \$5,500 (Country Club of Maryland's choice) to a larger, re-

conditioned unit like the one at Woodholme Country Club that cost approximately \$8,500.

Most trailer companies have many other models, up to and including new, larger and more expensive units. In some cases, mobile office trailers can become permanent or semi-permanent, depending upon the individual needs of each golf course. The point