

FROM GOOD TO GREAT

FIVE LESSONS EVERY GM AND BOARD MUST KNOW ABOUT GOLF COURSE MAINTENANCE



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After more than four decades in golf and club management, including hosting four USGA Championships, I've worked with hundreds of clubs facing the same challenge: maximizing their operations and capital budget while meeting the rising expectations of their members.

Through my Second Impressions Report consultations, I've identified the key differentiators that separate good clubs from truly great ones. The distinction isn't about bigger budgets or more staff—it's about strategic leadership alignment and operational excellence.

Here are five critical insights for GMs and boards seeking operational excellence:

1. Your Superintendent Manages More Than Turf—They're Managing Your ROI

Superintendents oversee your club's largest operational cost center, often representing 40-60% of your annual budget. Yet many boards view them solely through the lens of course conditions rather than as financial stewards of a multi-million-dollar asset.

The bottom line for boards: When your superintendent understands their broader financial impact—from resource allocation to cost management—they become strategic partners in protecting your club's biggest asset. However, this requires clear communication from GMs about business objectives and financial expectations.

The communication gap: Many GMs assume superintendents inherently understand their role in the club's financial picture. They don't always. Bridging this gap through regular financial reviews and strategic planning sessions transforms maintenance from a cost center into a value driver. It also enables the superintendent to comprehend the broader financial operations of the Club.



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2. Equipment Strategy Directly Impacts Your Financial Performance

Your equipment fleet represents a significant capital investment—often \$2 million to \$4 million for an 18-hole facility. More importantly, how it's managed directly affects your operational costs, labor efficiency, and course quality.

What boards need to know: Emerging technologies, such as GPS spray units, robotic mowing systems, and autonomous equipment, aren't just "nice-to-have" innovations. They're strategic tools that can reduce labor costs by 15-25%, minimize chemical usage, and improve consistency while reducing long-term operational expenses. The use of 4-5 year leases for fast-moving equipment (such as mowing equipment, vehicles, and sprayers) allows the course to take advantage of the latest technology while avoiding the need to dispose of old equipment when new equipment is purchased or leased.

The decision-making challenge: Many boards lack the technical expertise to evaluate these investments properly. This creates a dangerous gap where either outdated equipment drains resources or beneficial technology gets dismissed due to misunderstood ROI calculations. Your GM should be facilitating these technology assessments with precise financial projections.



3. Operational Efficiency Drives Profitability

The most successful clubs don't achieve excellence by increasing budgets—they achieve it through operational efficiency. Intelligent workflow optimization can improve course conditions while reducing costs, creating the dual benefits boards demand.

Real-world example: Daily drone flights and precision mapping technologies can reduce water consumption by 20-30%, translating into significant utility savings while improving playing conditions. These aren't just maintenance tools—they're profit enhancement systems.

For GMs: The key is identifying and eliminating bottlenecks in daily operations. Often, minor process improvements yield outsized returns. Your role is to ensure these efficiency gains are documented and communicated to the board as concrete ROI achievements.



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4. Financial Stewardship: Protecting Your Club's Largest Asset

Your golf course typically represents 60-70% of your club's total asset value. Yet many boards manage it reactively rather than strategically, leading to costly emergency repairs and inefficient resource allocation.

Strategic approach: Successful clubs implement comprehensive asset management plans that balance immediate needs with long-term sustainability. This includes:

- Capital planning: 5-10 year equipment replacement schedules
- Infrastructure investment: Irrigation, drainage, and facility improvements
- Technology integration: Systems that reduce long-term operational costs

Board responsibility: Ensure your GM provides annual asset assessments with precise financial projections. Deferred maintenance isn't savings—it's compound interest on future problems.



5. Alignment Creates Championship Excellence

The finest outcomes emerge when superintendents, general managers, and boards unite behind a shared vision. Strong communication builds trust and provides superintendents with the advocacy they need to deliver championship-level conditions consistently.

This alignment has never been more critical. Today's course conditioning demands are at their highest levels ever, and superintendents need unwavering support from their leadership team to meet member expectations. **A true alliance between all three parties isn't just helpful, it's essential for success.**



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From Insight to Action: The Second Impressions Report

After four decades in golf and club leadership, I've learned that the difference between maintaining a golf course and managing a club asset comes down to one thing: vision. The Second Impressions Report transforms that vision into a concrete action plan.

In a focused, day-long evaluation, I take a deep dive into the heart of your club's golf operations, leadership alignment, equipment strategy, maintenance practices, and financial systems—to uncover the opportunities that are often hidden in plain sight.

You'll walk away with a prioritized roadmap to:

- Protect your asset with disciplined planning
- Elevate conditioning using proven, data-driven methods
- Streamline operations and eliminate waste
- Strengthen alignment between the GM, Board, and Superintendent

This isn't about making short-term fixes. It's about building a course, a culture, and a leadership team that performs at a championship level for years to come. Supporting your Superintendent with clarity, resources, and advocacy is key to unlocking that success.

Ready to elevate your club from good to great?

Contact DENEHY Club Thinking Partners to schedule your Second Impressions Report today.



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CTP'S SECOND IMPRESSIONS REPORT

Enhancing Operations, Empowering Leadership, Elevating Excellence Of Your Course

