

Bridges of Poplar Creek Country Club

Best Management Practices in the Industry

Audubon

- Clean and maintain equipment in ways that prevent wash water from draining directly into surface waters (e.g., lake, pond, and stream). We currently do not have a wash bay and our wash water drains into a storm drain that is tied into the creek that runs through the golf course. There are many different types of wash bay that can be purchased and we have the ability to use our irrigation water to fill these wash stations.
- Incorporating more naturalized areas. Define more out of play areas and establish them as natural areas to promote more wildlife. We are always looking for ways to encourage wildlife, last year (2013) we put out 10 birdhouse through all of our tall grass areas and this fall we have planned to clean-out the Arboretum next to number eight tee box and bring that back to a naturalized tree nursery. The course is set tight the way it is and finding more ways to introduce wildlife can be very tricky.
- Scouting Reports. Golf courses use scouting reports to track pest and turf health issue to determine when and where chemical application are needed. This is a practice that at the Bridges we have been doing on a history basis and not a daily scouting basis.

Water Conservation

- Watering based on evaporation transpiration. We are currently water based ET rates put out by the weather channel from their local weather station. If our ET rates for the previous say that we lost .2" of rain then we will water our greens, tees and fairways accordingly to make sure they have proper moisture.
- The use of moisture meters. Moisture meters are used to measure the moisture in the soil through the root profile. Over time you establish what the optimum moisture number is to keep the turf healthy while not over watering. This allows golf course to water specific areas of the golf course while not over watering other areas. We are currently just using a soil probe and checking the moisture with our hands. Moisture meter range from \$1200 to \$3000 per unit and this is the main reason we do not employee this practice.
- Use of weather stations to maximize every drop of rain that Mother Nature provides. A weather station will shut your irrigation system off during rains, provide you with exact ET rates for your property and have the ability to predict moisture levels. When you set your irrigation system you set it to run based on inches of water you are putting out. So if you set the irrigation to run 0.15" and its starts raining that evening the weather station will shut off your programs as soon as 0.15" of rain has occurred. This allows golf course to water based on ET and not run irrigation while it is raining and over saturating the golf course. A new weather station will cost an estimated \$15,000.

Cultural Practices

- Most all golf courses employee the practice of aerification. Aerification has many benefits to the grass plant as it provides air space for roots to travel, relieves compactions and improve water infiltration. This is a practice that we already employee at Bridges Of Poplar Creek Country Club.

- Vertical mowing of greens, tees and fairways. Vertical mowing is the process of removing the thatch layer from the turf. Thatch is the buildup of grass clippings in your current stand of turf. By removing the thatch layer you allow water and fertilizers to penetrate directly to the roots providing a healthy plant. We currently vertical mow our greens every three weeks, but do not have the ability to vertical mow our tees or fairways. This requires a fairway unit mower (5 reels) with vertical mowing reels attached. We do however have an extra mower and for an estimated cost of \$3500 we would be able to purchase the necessary equipment to vertical mow tees and fairways.
- Topdressing is the third most popular practice among local golf courses. We have been topdressing greens every two to three weeks for the last six golf season, but that is the only area of the course that we follow this practice. Many courses are have recently started topdressing fairways as a normal maintenance practices stating that they are able to maintain a firmer playing surface, improve roots, reduce worm casting and a reduction in water use. At Bridges of Poplar Creek Country Club we have not started this practice due to the cost of sand to top-dress fairways and inadequate equipment. With a recent purchase of the proper equipment we can now start this process but the cost of sand to make this a regular practice is an estimated \$5300 per topdressing of all fairways.

Golf Diversity “Jr, Sr, Ladies”

- Several area facilities have developed a “Short Course” is made up of three - six holes that range in length from 35 to 100 yards. It is complete with teeing surfaces, bunkers, and greens. The Short Course has been a place for senior adults who are unable to physically play a regulation course, to get exercise and play the game. It is also regularly used by parents with their children playing together.
- FootGolf is a combination of the popular sports of soccer and golf. The game is played with a regulation #5 soccer ball at a golf course facility on shortened holes with 21-inch diameter cups. The rules largely correspond to the rules of golf. FootGolf as a game is played throughout the world in many different forms, but as a sport, it is regulated by the Federation for International FootGolf (FIFG). Soccer is one of the most popular sports for youth. The main concept is to bring more Jr’s to the course setting to help promote the game of golf.
- According to recent statistics, 5 million golfers have left the sport in the past decade, an exodus which is forcing courses to scramble for new ideas to bring young people back into the game. One of those ideas, developed by Adidas and TaylorMade, is to quadruple the size of the hole to a 15-inch diameter. That’s big enough to fit a basketball, with ease. The idea is that the larger holes would hasten the pace of play, bring lower scores and attract interest as a result.

Key Performance Indicators

- Tracking rounds by time of day, day of week, and month of the year. Slow days or slow times of the day with few sold rounds require implementing marketing strategies to bring in more people. Before drawing conclusions from analyzing this KPI, weather needs to be factored in. If spring arrives particularly late, the number of rounds played in the early weeks of spring will be lower no matter how effectively we marketed the facility.

- Tracking the percentage of golfers who come back to the course after playing it for the first time. Repeat business percentage is a KPI that reveals the overall customer satisfaction. A high repeat business percentage shows that the green fees are priced fairly and competitively. It also indicates that course maintenance is meeting a high standard. Golfers return to courses they judge to be well maintained. Smooth greens and healthy turf grass in the fairways and rough are two components of good maintenance golfers seek.
- Monitoring Food Cost and Beverage Cost will help maximize your profits. Analyzing these items monthly and in some cases weekly is a great tool to make sure proper pricing and no excess waste of product. This will also bring to life any potential theft issues with accurate inventory control.

Dynamic Pricing

- A shift is occurring from what has been largely a best guess approach for setting green fees to using pricing algorithms and demand based. Dynamic pricing engines can factor for variables that can impact a green fee and can be used to auto set a competitive rate for golf. Currently the problem of too much supply with too little demand is seen at golf courses worldwide. Morning tee times are generally in high-demand, rapidly reserved and often consumed due to underpricing. Afternoon times often go unused and perish due to overpricing. Courses are losing revenue due to mispriced green fees. Integration of a Demand-Based, “Dynamic Pricing” Engine can drive green fees and reduce perishable inventory.

References:

PGA of America, Chicago District Golf Association, PGA Magazine, National Golf Foundation, Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents, Illinois Turfgrass Foundation, National Audubon Society