



COMMITTEE: INPUT FROM THE SECRETARY/MANAGER

How much input should the Secretary/Manager contribute to the committee meeting.

Secretary At Work: April 2002 *(Revised April 2010)*

Over the past years I have been asked this question not only by a number of secretaries but also by Club Officials. The latter has more often been stating the fact that they wish their Secretary/Manager would contribute more to the meeting in view of his experience in actually doing the job. In a few cases it has been that the club feels the Secretary/Manager takes a somewhat dictatorial attitude and possibly the view is that he has taken over the club. I do not think this is very often the case, but is invariably one of the symptoms of a weak committee and management.

It is difficult to give a direct answer to the question because not only do clubs vary in the way they operate but the job specification for the Secretary/Manager varies from club to club.

Many times in the past I have been told by golf clubs that they seek a Secretary/Manager only to discover in discussion that the one thing they will not allow that person to do is to manage the club. In another case you will get someone who is called the Secretary/Manager who has all the powers of a managing director or chief executive. Often the job specification and guidelines set for the Secretary/Manager are hazy and are often decided by members of the committee without any reference to the Secretary/Manager or any person who has some idea of what the job entails.

Over the past 10 to 15 years there has been a change in the way many golf clubs operate. Those that have made progress are those that have recognised the status of the job and have adjusted the club accordingly. These secretaries are expected to play an active part in the meetings and bring forward the necessary expertise to be able to advise the committee along the right lines to making decisions. In most cases the Secretary/Manager is regarded as the top person and treated and paid accordingly. The committee must always make the final decisions on the majority of matters but they expect and get a substantial input from the Secretary/Manager.

Generally at these clubs once the parameters have been set the Secretary/Manager and staff are left to carry them out subject to overall control of the committee. This means often that the Secretary/Manager can make day-to-day decisions on management without having to constantly refer back to the committee and endless meetings as occur at many clubs. The Chairman of the committee will keep a watching brief and be in regular contact with the Secretary/Manager who must keep him fully informed of happenings at the club. This is the ultimate in club management

and usually the end result is a well-managed course and clubhouse plus a balance sheet that shows the club has adequate funds to operate without living from hand to mouth each year.

The Secretary/Manager will report to the committee at either bi-monthly, or quarterly, meetings and present management accounts, which show the state of the club's finances. A five-year roll over plan will be in operation, which means the committee will be well aware of future requirements well before they are needed. In clubs run like this the Secretary/Manager will have a considerably input at meetings and along with the heads of departments will be paid a sensible salary and other benefits.

Many of the clubs which operate in this fashion have done away with the traditional sub-committees such as Green and House and operate on a smaller committee with each member having a specific responsibility. The Green Committee will consist of the Secretary/Manager, Course Manager and Committee Member responsible for the golf course. Meetings are held as required but often on site or invariably during working hours. The endless sub-committee meetings held each month by some clubs are a thing of the past.