

CRYSTAL BALL

Using computer imaging to enhance project proposals.

by PAUL VERMEULEN



Addressing the fear of the unknown with computer imaging can be a very useful tool for presenting project proposals. To show golfers that lowering the sod line on eroding bunker faces will not significantly alter their appearance, digital images can be downloaded onto a computer and easily manipulated.

SELLING a renovation project to a group of golfers can be as frustrating as holding back the tide with a teaspoon. In many cases, the frustration is related to a lack of available funds or a perceived lack of justification on the part of the golfers. In time, these situations tend to resolve themselves through a turn in the economy or the gathering of additional information that makes for a more convincing argument.

In other cases, the frustration can be connected to an almost invisible origin — the fear of the unknown. When golfers have a difficult time visualizing how the landscape will look after a renovation has been completed, they tend to fear a renovation proposal and consequently vote against it. Moreover, rather than discussing their true fear of the unknown, golfers rely on weak excuses, such as they just did not like the idea in the first place. It is in

these latter cases that computer imaging can be a valuable tool.

Computer imaging is the manipulation of digital images to show how the landscape will appear after making proposed changes. Manipulating digital images is relatively easy and can be accomplished by pasting portions of one image on top of another. With a little bit of practice, anyone can produce a manipulated image that appears real.

A simple example of how computer imaging can be used to quiet golfers' fears of the unknown is to remove from a landscape non-essential trees that negatively affect putting surfaces. By taking a digital image of the affected green from a distance of 100 yards or more, individual trees can be completely removed from the picture on a computer screen. After the digital image has been appropriately manipulated, it can be presented to the course

officials along with other data that justify tree removal. With sound justification and a clear image of how the landscape will appear after the tree work has been completed, the odds of gaining approval can increase dramatically.

The list of possible uses for computer imaging is almost endless. New trees can be added to the landscape just as easily as they are removed to ensure that they will not infringe on the line of sight between a tee and green, aging bunker faces can be restored to assure golfers that renovation will not seriously alter the architectural theme of the course, etc. In short, one need only unleash one's imagination to discover the numerous potential uses.

Using computer imaging to enhance project proposals can have pitfalls. First, computer imaging clearly establishes in golfers' minds what the project should look like upon completion. Not meeting these preset expectations can spell trouble for those who recommended the project in the first place! Second, computer imaging can become intoxicating and one can succumb to the temptation of remodeling the entire course. Such a virtual reality may never be attainable in the real world and can forever frustrate the keyboard author.

To get started with computer imaging, the basic requirements are: a Pentium-based computer (\$2,000 - \$2,500), image manipulation software (\$35 - \$100), a means of generating digital images, such as a digital camera (\$350 - \$900), and a means of producing presentation materials, such as a color printer (\$400 - \$600). It also is possible to use existing pictures of the course by having them scanned and converted into digital images. Furthermore, digital images can be reproduced as slides, color copies, or prints at specialty media centers located in most communities.

In conclusion, computer imaging can be as powerful as the mythical crystal ball by allowing golfers a look into the future without ever disturbing the present. For assistance with computer imaging or any turf-related issue, contact any of the regional Green Section offices located across the country.

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