Unleashing Innovative Ideas
THE USE OF **CHATGPT** IN THE TURFGRASS INDUSTRY

Written by Marco China, Superintendent, Deer Ridge GC.

In our meticulous world of managing turf on golf courses, precision, efficiency, and expertise are paramount. Maintaining a golf course demands continuous attention to detail, proactive problem-solving, and innovative solutions. In recent years, advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) have revolutionized various industries, and the field of turfgrass management is no exception. One such groundbreaking tool is ChatGPT, an AI-powered language model developed by OpenAI. Matt Legg Professional Solutions Technical Lead with Syngenta Canada led a very informative presentation at this year's Ontario Golf Course Management Conference in Niagara Falls enlightening the audience on this powerful new tool. During Matt's presentation "Unleashing Innovative Ideas: Redefining Turfgrass Management with Digital Technologies," the general response from the audience indicated that the potential value Chat GPT could offer the turfgrass field has so far been underestimated.

In the world of turfgrass management, we are not new to adopting and adapting to new technologies and practices to enhance the quality of our work and make our lives a little easier. The term "AI" has been floating around media outlets more and more recently, and I can personally say I never thought much about how it could be applied or relevant to our work, after all, we spend most of our time outdoors, maintaining golf courses; how would this help us? Matt's presentation made a clear case for AI as an impactful and valuable tool for the turf industry.

In his enlightening presentation, Matt walked the audience through what Chat GPT is and how it works. To do this, Matt provided a live demonstration by asking the tool the following: "how does Chat GPT work?" and having it describe itself to the audience. Chat GPT provided the concise and reader-friendly response below:

"Imagine ChatGPT as a super-smart computer program that's been trained on heaps of written material—like books, articles, and websites. This training helps it understand human language really well. When you type something to ChatGPT, it takes what you said, analyzes it using its training, and then comes up with a response that makes sense based on what it learned. It's like having a conversation with a really knowledgeable friend who's read a lot of books. The more you talk to ChatGPT, the better it gets at understanding and responding to you. It's always learning from our interactions, so it keeps improving over time. It's a bit like teaching a computer to be a great conversationalist by showing it lots of conversations and letting it learn from them."

As the presentation continued, Matt shared how turfgrass managers can integrate this technology into our daily work on the golf course. One suggested integration was to leverage AI to improve how we communicate on the job. Think of how much time you've spent tweaking and reading over a message to send out to members... For example, informing the members of restricted cart use on the golf course that day. Many of us could agree, that the time taken to craft a clear, succinct, professional, and error-free message is time that can be better spent managing the golf course. AI can offer support in this task. Simply type or speak into Chat GPT the message you are trying to convey, and it will generate a response that you can review and tweak to your liking. It's important to note that AI is different than a typical Google search. Unlike Google and other search engines that use specific key words or phrases, to use ChatGPT, input your question or topic as if you're having a conversation with a person. ChatGPT can interpret broader inquiries and provide more nuanced answers and respond to follow up questions. Out of my own curiosity, using Matt's tips of asking clear questions and giving Chat GPT parameters for it's response (i.e., the number of words to use), I asked the following question:

Help me craft a message to membership explaining that due to heavy rains last night golf carts will not be allowed on the golf course. In 150 words.

Chat GPT's Response:

Subject: Temporary Suspension of Golf Cart Usage

Dear Members,

Due to heavy rainfall last night, golf carts are temporarily prohibited on the course to prevent damage and ensure safety. We apologize for any inconvenience and appreciate your cooperation. Walkers are welcome to enjoy their rounds. Updates will follow as conditions improve.

Thank you,

[Your Name]

[Your Position/Title]

Now, that you have the generated response it is at your disposal for customization. This response may not be perfect or sound natural to you, but it is a great starting point to build from. You can add more info or simply ask it another question to enhance the response.

The ease and user-friendliness of this tool led me to reflect on those early morning instances when important decisions and communications must be shared promptly with all relevant parties. The efficiency and time-saving potential of this tool are truly exciting, improving your ability to communicate effectively and placing you in a stronger position.

The potential applications of Chat GPT extend far beyond just communication with our membership; its versatility makes it a strong asset in our business, capable of tackling diverse tasks. Matt's presentation title aptly captures the essence of Chat GPT's potential impact on our industry. This program is not only poised to redefine, but also reimagine how we approach turfgrass management. It's important to recognize that Chat GPT doesn't replace our expertise; rather, it supports our skills and our industry's resilience in a rapidly evolving technological landscape. By embracing Chat GPT and similar AI services, we can better position ourselves at the forefront of innovation, ensuring our ongoing adaptability and effectiveness in an era where technology continues to transform the landscape of our operations. ■