Video an important component of crew training

By DARREN DAVIS

On my first day of turfgrass school at Pennsylvania State University, Dr. J. M. Duich, the professor, whom I had heard so much about, stood in front of a class of eager “turfers” and drew a circle. Inside the circle, he sectioned off a “slice of pie” representing the “Duich Pie” theory. Dr. Duich wrote the word “people.” Inside the remaining 85 percent of the pie, he wrote the word “people.”

As new students, we were confused about what we had just been told. But it didn’t take long after graduation for many of us to realize how accurate this statement was. I will never forget that day and the “Duich Pie” theory.

As turf managers, a major key to our success is the people who work for us. The quality of a golf course frequently reflects the ability of the turf manager to attract and hire quality employees, then provide them with the training to perform their duties correctly and in a productive manner. A method I have found extremely valuable is the use of VHS videos in training all my employees.

Instructional videos can provide a thorough means of training that is both visual and audible. How many times have you given instructions to a new (or veteran) employee only to receive a blank stare in return, or perhaps a head shake assuring you that he understands? Oftentimes, you find out later that he had no clue what you were talking about.

Or, how many times have you taken the time and sincere effort to go into the field to train an employee, spending a large amount of time explaining the correct method for accomplishing the task, only to realize later that you forgot one major point?

A fellow superintendent recently told me a story that highlights this very well. He had hired a new employee that had no previous golf course experience and did not understand the intricacies of the turf maintenance equipment. So, in an attempt to break the employee in slowly, the superintendent trained the employee on a riding rotary mower. After some instructions and demonstrations around the maintenance facility, the employee had given directions to the clubhouse so he could mow the clubhouse.

However, on the way to the clubhouse there was an obstacle the employee was unfamiliar with: a putting green. When the supervisor arrived later, he noticed the damage to the putting green and asked the employee if he knew how it got there?

"I guess those are my tire tracks, why do you ask?" the employee responded.

After the initial shock wore off, the superintendent realized he had not taught the employee as fully as he should. Similarly, what if the one point you forgot to explain was "Always keep a watchful eye for hydraulic leaks," and you now have streaks of dead grass on all the back nine putting greens.

These are some of the reasons I use VHS video tapes religiously to train and educate employees. The use of video allows me to thoroughly educate an employee, first in the office, then through a hands-on demonstration in the field. I have found a good video ensures that vital points are not missed in the training process. However, the videos do not replace the need to provide hands-on training, frequent supervision, or the operator reading the owner’s manual. Beginning the first day of employment at my course, before the new employee even sees the golf course, the employee views an introductory video tape to golf courses. Then, before any of my employees get on a piece of large equipment like a triplex, walking greens or tee mower, they sit down and view the video on the assigned task. When using videotapes, I’ve found it helpful to provide written material for an employee, such as a workbook, to accompany the video. This workbook gives an employee or

GUEST COMMENTARY

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GOLF COURSE NEWS

Darren Davis is the golf course superintendent at Olde Florida Golf Club in Naples, Fla.
Employees can only perform to your standards if they fully understand what is expected of them. A well-trained employee is able to do his or her job effectively and will feel rewarded by a job well done. If employees are not thoroughly trained and told what is expected of them, the job they perform will most likely be unacceptable. An employee who continually performs unacceptable work will probably be continually disciplined and will never feel a sense of accomplishment. The employee's morale then goes down and productivity decreases. No training method will ever be fool-proof, but I have found videos to be a valuable tool in the training process.

Leslie comment
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Mark Leslie, general manager of the Merion Country Club in Haverford, Pa., pointed out, "Most of the people under stress don't realize that they're under stress until it's too late. They are under stress because they don't have the training they need." He said that superintendents who continually perform unacceptable work will probably be continually disciplined and will never feel a sense of accomplishment. The employee's morale then goes down and productivity decreases. No training method will ever be fool-proof, but I have found videos to be a valuable tool in the training process.

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