Start communicating, reap rewards

Isn’t it a shame that we have to be constantly reminded about the importance of the human element in business.

Why do we so easily forget that communication is probably the most crucial element to making a business run? Not just co-workers or inter-organizer banter about an upcoming company function. Sure, there are a few in any operation who feel as if they can’t be bothered with such idle nonsense, but I’ve come to learn that the more I learn about the people working around me, the more I understand how to work with them — and work more effectively.

As Terry Buchen’s “A case for non-traditional employee relations” (page 21) points out, nothing can be accomplished without people. Ask any employer and they’ll tell you that personnel is the number one issue on any day of any week.

If you manage or supervise a maintenance or course construction crew, my advice is to keep Terry’s piece first and then take a few active steps:

• Go from employee to employee and ask them how they’re doing.

• Ask if they had a chance to change something in the standard day-to-day operations, what would it be?

• Plan a company event for no reason but to get together — munchies, food, maybe even a keg of beer (away from the mowers, of course).

• At the event make the announcement that you plan to get together with the crew once every other month to go over operational plans.

Sound silly? Think again. We hear about building business-to-business relationships as the key to growing business, but you can’t do that unless you have a sound business to grow.

Granted, some of you may have an established and proven program going right now. But for those who don’t I don’t care: Increase your inner-office communications then write us and tell us the results. I personally guarantee rewards.

One quick note: Mark Leslie did an excellent job putting together our special Safety by Design section (see cover & pages 31-34). Safety is yet another issue we don’t take into consideration until it’s too late. Plan ahead, study that section.

Golf Participation Statistics

Oh, Canada: Study shows golf at new high among our northern neighbors

A n estimated one million Canadians have taken up golf in the last seven years, according to the Royal Canadian Golf Association’s (RCGA) latest survey, giving our northern neighbor one of the highest participation rates in the world.

The survey report shows that 4.8 million Canadians age 12 and over were playing golf in 1996, an increase of 28% from the 3.9 million total that was recorded in 1990 when the NGF conducted Canada’s first golf participation survey in conjunction with the Canadian Golf Foundation.

Golf participation in Canada is probably the most comprehensive ever undertaken on golf participation in Canada.

While the numbers show an overall increase, says Paul MacDonald, RCGA director of membership development, “the study highlights certain areas that need continued attention, particularly women and juniors.”

MacDonald noted that, while approximately 200,000 more Canadian women are playing golf today than in 1990, the percentage of all women who play golf has only increased less than one percentage point from 1990 to 10.8%.

This, he adds, contradicts the widely held belief among many of those involved in the country’s golf industry that the game’s popularity has grown significantly among Canadian women.

In total, there are many more Canadian women playing golf,” says Tony Jarvis, the researcher who directed the study for the RCGA.

“While there’s almost no significant difference in their participation rate. From the national perspective, there just isn’t a surge in the popularity of golf among women, although this may vary greatly by region.

The study also indicates little growth in Canada among junior golfers. While there are currently 359,000 of them in Canada (up from 325,000 in 1996)
Cart-path rule
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Far away," said Andre, who advised the University of Kentucky ag school and from the University of Georgia that cart traffic could damage the course. We were looking at five to seven years to allow the turf to mature.

"We have two courses in the county," he continued. "The older course allows golfers to go off the cart paths. Both the ADA Resource Center and the Department of Justice said that this accommodation was under the letter and spirit of the law."

In a mid-October conversation with Boone County attorney Larry Criger, he advised that, "The matter is probably going to be settled. The course will close for the year in two weeks and the course will be made accessible to Mr. Duckworth when it reopens in April 1998." He went on to explain that the date of compliance, 1999, originally stated by the county, was "a typographical error."

Duckworth feels his cause has finally been vindicated. "I went to the papers with all the correspondence," he said, "and I think that, and the fact that it is an election year coming up, along with the threat of action by the Justice Department is what got the county to agree." He is skeptical about the typographical error.

Jones is happy with the outcome as well. "We are not in business to promote the handicapped," he noted. "We promote the game, and are advocates for full inclusion of everyone who wants to play golf."

Canadian participation
Continued from page 8

1990] their participation rate has remained flat at 15% and is heavily skewed toward higher income families.

The survey reveals, however, that Western Canada, which has long established junior programs, enjoys extremely strong participation among 12-17 year olds, with the Prairie provinces showing a 28% participation rate and British Columbia 21%.

"The game and the overall [Canadian] industry has enjoyed a solid participation rate over the past seven years," says MacDonald. "Our challenge now is to increase the [current] 19% rate to 20% or 25% by creating national junior golf development programs that are accessible and affordable like the RCGA's Future Links. Without programs to introduce and keep people in the game, the industry will have trouble maintaining or increasing what it has right now."

Among other findings in the 1990 Golf Participation in Canada Survey report:

• Annual rounds played in Canada increased between 1990 and 1996 about 26% from 33 million to 42 million. In the U.S. over the same period, they've remained level at about 480 million a year.

• Canadian golfers average 14 rounds per year ... as compared to 19.3 for U.S. golfers.

• 347,000 Canadians started playing golf in 1996 ... vs. 2 million in the U.S.

The RCGA, the governing body of men's amateur golf in Canada, determines national policies and standards relating to the game on behalf of its more than 235,000 members.

Copies of the report can be purchased through the RCGA's membership development department at 905-849-9700.

However, the activists admit that the recent economic downturn in Asia has had more to do with the lack of development than with their ability to convince the public that golf course development is not viable.

While this may mean bad news for perspective developers and the existing golf courses, it also means that the anti-golf activists have for the most part ceased operations since they sense no impending crisis. It is their belief that Asian economies have no more room left for golf development.

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While there may be certain elements of truth in their arguments, their rigid ideology does not allow for compromise—so their arguments get lost amongst their rhetoric of hysteria and misinformation. Following these discussions, I began to have nightmares that the courses I was planning to visit were being taken over by pitchfork wielding farmers seeking to reverse economic injustice.

Fortunately, after a mind-cleansing visit to a local Bangkok driving range, I was once again able to dream of lush Asian courses in natural surroundings.