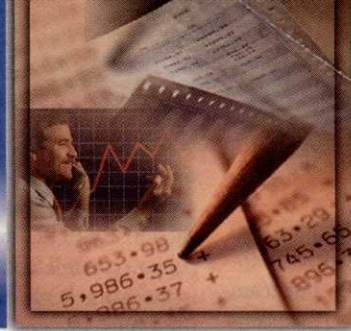


# MANAGEMENT



## BRIEFS

### INVESTORS COMPLETE NGP, AGC ACQUISITION

NEW YORK — The investment group led by Goldman Sachs and Starwood Capital Group completed its nearly \$1 billion acquisition of National Golf Properties (NGP) and American Golf Corp. (AGC) last month. Holders of outstanding shares of NGP received \$12 per share. The total compensation paid to shareholders was \$160 million, with the remainder of the purchase price going to assumption of the two companies' debt. The new owners plan to complete the merger of the two Santa Monica, Calif.-based companies into a privately held entity. As such, NGP shares are no longer trading.

### TROON ANNOUNCES TEAM TROON INITIATIVES

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Troon Golf has created a company-wide initiative to attract and retain group golf business. This initiative, called Team Troon, includes a nationwide referral program designed to reward sales managers who keep business at Troon facilities. Troon will also team with its resort partners to offer special incentives for travel golf groups.

### PALMER NAMES THREE GMS

ORLANDO, Fla. — Arnold Palmer Golf Management recently named new general managers at three of its managed courses. Chip Hierlihy will take over at Crofton, Md.-based Walden Golf Club, Donald Zauner at Hackettstown, N.J.-based Minebrook Golf Club, and Justin Lauer at Fenton, Mich.-based The Preserve Golf Club.

### BCG NAMES REHANEK VP

CHICAGO — Billy Casper Golf (BCG) appointed William Rehanek Jr. regional vice president based in the company's office here. In his new position, Rehanek will manage everything from agronomy to marketing and public relations at the 10 golf courses and driving range BCG operates in suburban Chicago.

## NGF touts new tools, customer loyalty awards

By DEREK RICE

ORLANDO, Fla. — Seeking to help golf courses better understand both their current and potential customers, the National Golf Foundation (NGF) introduced its InfoNet service and handed out three Customer Loyalty and Satisfaction Program (CLASP) Awards at the PGA Merchandise Show held here.

The CLASP program is a method of evaluating facilities based solely on responses from their customers. By viewing the results, courses can tell what areas of their operations need improvement, which should, by extension, lead to more rounds played.

The NGF presented the new awards to facilities in three categories — premium daily-fee, a daily-fee and a municipal facility — based on consumer responses to NGF surveys.

The winner in the premium

daily-fee category was Silverstone Golf Club in Las Vegas, which is operated by ChampionsGate, Fla.-based Meadowbrook Golf. The daily-fee winner was Lago Vista Golf Club in Lago Vista, Texas. The municipal award went to Painted Dunes Desert Golf Course in El Paso, Texas.

"As an organization, we really embrace the CLASP program and could not be happier with the award," said Cindi Feingold, public and media relations director for Meadowbrook Golf. "We are really proud of our properties and their efforts."

More than 400 facilities participate in the CLASP program, which has generated more than 58,000 surveys in the system.

The NGF's InfoNet allows fa-



Meadowbrook Golf's Silverstone Golf Club in Las Vegas took top honors in the premium daily-fee facility category of the NGF's CLASP Awards.

ilities to confidentially share and compare key financial and operations data with other local, regional and national operators. NGF members can access the

compiled information free, while non-NGF members may receive a free monthly report for participating or unlimited access for \$149 a year.

### Editorial Focus: Hiring and Training

## Taking the guesswork out of hiring

By HARRIS M. PLOTKIN

Putting forth the time and effort to hire the right person for a job costs time and money. However, not spending that initial time and effort can often cost a club much more money in employee theft and turnover costs, and in negligent hiring, sexual harassment and wrongful termination lawsuits. These lawsuits are on the rise because too many clubs are not aware of what techniques are legal and available to use in the hiring process.

If you don't select the right person to start with, no amount of

training is ever going to make that person right for the job. You can't train a frog to be a prince. Too many

managers and superintendents make hiring decisions based solely on an interview, and that hiring decision is usually made in the first 3.4 minutes of the interview. The interview, while a necessary and informative aspect



Harris M. Plotkin

of the hiring process, should not be the sole basis for candidate selection. The key to improving your hiring process is to pay careful attention to the steps to take before the interview. Pre-interview screening will not only save you time and money, it can be the difference between just hiring a candidate and hiring the right candidate.

Gerald Graham, dean of the W. Frank Barton School of Business at Wichita State University, wrote that the three most important factors for success in management were

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### Editorial Focus: Hiring and Training

## Owners lose two personnel cases

By JOE DEVANNEY and DIANNE SUMMERS DEVANNEY

In two cases that demonstrate the importance of good pre-hire screening and education, the Tenth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against golf course owners. While the issues in each case were different, the rulings should serve as lessons to other course managers about the proper conduct of hiring and training.

In the first case, Teresita J. Dumais was employed by the Paradise Hills Golf Course in Albuquerque, N.M. Eventually, American Golf Corp. (AGC) assumed ownership of the course and subsequently required all course employees, including Dumais, to execute new employment applications. The employees were required to sign two separate documents. The first, titled "We Can Work It Out," was an agreement that required them to litigate certain claims, including harassment, discrimination and wrongful discharge, through a binding and final arbitration process instead of



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## Keyonix finds success with Ratcliffe Golf

GREENVILLE, S.C. — Keyonix LLC recently celebrated the six-month anniversary of its first multi-course installation.

Ratcliffe Golf Services in Charlotte, N.C., implemented Keyonix's Smart Key System of accountability for golf car use last summer. The technology is similar to that which has been used in the hotel industry for years. The Smart Key enables course owners and managers to regulate and account for all car use and revenue.

The Smart Key works with a

golf car's ignition system to allow the car to be used only by people who have paid to use it. The Smart Key also allows for a time limit, which prevents players from playing extra or unauthorized rounds.

Del Ratcliffe, president of Ratcliffe Golf Services, said the cost of the Smart Key system pales in comparison with revenue lost on unauthorized rounds.

"Keyonix has provided us with a reasonably priced accountability system that gives unprecedented control over our golf car operations," Ratcliffe said. "This is the first sys-

tem I have seen that firmly places the control of the fleet in the hands of the course manager."

Bobby LoVine, national sales manager for Keyonix, said the success of the Ratcliffe installation should lead to more multi-course installations in the future.

"We have always thought that our system was tailor-made for the multi-course operator," LoVine said. "This system enables owners and operators to focus more on their business, rather than worrying about missing revenues."

— Derek Rice

## Hiring decisions

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“selection, selection, selection. Employee selection is so crucial that nothing else – not leadership, not team building, not training, not pay incentives, not total quality management – can overcome poor hiring decisions... The aim of selection (to find the best person for the job) may not have changed. But today’s consequences of making a bad hire can be severe.”

Key factors to help identify whether candidates will be successful at a job include: the ability or aptitude to do the work; attitude and motivation to utilize their talents to do the work; experience the job requires; education and training for the job; and most importantly, compatibility with the organization.

### RESUMES AND EMPLOYMENT APPLICATIONS

The first thing many employers receive when a job is advertised is a resume or employment application. Resumes are time-consuming to filter through, but they can be effective first screens for candidates. Resumes should be compared against specific selection criteria to see if the candidate has the necessary education, training and experience. It is important to keep in mind, however, that 50 percent of resumes contain fabrications or exaggerations of pay, position and responsibilities.

### TESTS

The most important step in developing a hiring process is to do the least expensive, most accurate step first. Most people think this is the interview, but very rarely do they take into account how much time and money is spent interviewing up to three people.

Results of a study done by Michigan State University’s School of Business revealed that tests were rated four times more accurate than interviews. In designing your hiring process, you must look at the various tests that are available to you, and select those which will measure the qualities you want the applicant to have, so you can compare them to your criteria and make an accurate hiring decision.

Tests are legal and they have been for many years. There are some exceptions. For example, in Rhode Island you cannot use an honesty test as the sole reason for rejecting an applicant; there must be other considerations. In Massachusetts, you cannot use an honesty test at all, but in the remainder of the states you can.

### REFERENCES AND BACKGROUND CHECKS

Many background checks can be conducted. However, the primary purpose of a background check is to reduce your potential liability for negligent hiring lawsuits. It is important to note that background checks will not tell

you if an applicant is honest. Too often, companies have relied on credit checks to do this because of their insurance companies’ wishes. All you can tell from a credit check is that somebody has been paying their bills, but you can’t tell if they stole the money to do it.

Tests, background checks and reference checks must all be put into their proper contexts. They, along with the interview, are tools to give

you information. While none of those tools alone will provide you with all of the information you need, collectively they provide you with a piece of the candidate selection puzzle that will help you make a more accurate and informed hiring decision. ■

*Harris M. (Hank) Plotkin is the founder of The Plotkin Group, a management consulting and training firm located in Carlsbad, Calif.*

## VGM Club, Yamaha

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sign other car manufacturers.

Yamaha joins a stable of close to 160 vendors who have signed on with VGM, spanning golf course operations from the clubhouse and dining room to the maintenance facility. The company has experienced a great deal of growth in recent months, Ellis said.

“In just the last six months, we’ve gone to another level. Our membership has grown to over 3,000, and we have 150 to 160 manufacturers,” he said.

Ellis said VGM has recently added services such as agronomics consulting and financing for its members. In addition, the company could add several other maintenance-related manufacturers to its stable in the near future. ■

