

How Are You Going to Make the Job Better for Your Staff in 2010?

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I read an interesting article in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* just after the New Year. On January 5, 2010, AP writer Jeannine Aversa wrote an article about how Americans are growing more disenchanted with their jobs. That shouldn't shock anyone since the recent economic problems have affected almost everyone and their jobs. If you are still employed, you probably know more than one person who has lost his or her job. You have most likely had a conversation with someone about being glad to have a job and hunkering down to weather the economic downturn. You most likely have had a conversation with someone about freezes on wages and promotions and having to wait for things to "get better." This is reality for now.

The article mentions some interesting statistics. People's satisfaction with their job is at a 22-year low. Only 45% of people are satisfied with their job down from a whopping 49% in 2008. Only 51% of people find their job interesting. That is down from nearly 70% in 1987! 51% say they are satisfied with their bosses, down from 55% in 2008. Clearly, we as supervisors would be well served by staying ahead of the curve with our employees as we head into the coming season. I think this is particularly true in the business of golf course maintenance. That's because we have several things working against us even in a good economy. Lower wages, especially entry level, is one thing. Seasonality of our labor staff is another thing. Working weekends, holidays, in the rain, in the heat, around equipment with any number of dangerous moving parts, etc. makes it even more amazing that we are able to retain employees for more than a year or two.

So what are your plans for the coming season? Have you used the off season to create a plan and develop ideas that can make that job for each of your employees just a little bit better than last year? We all know the importance employees put on raises and pay scale. Now, in this economy most companies and businesses have reduced or eliminated raises until the economy improves. That is no different in the golf business, but there are things that can be done to improve the working conditions, the work atmosphere, the teamwork and the job satisfaction of employees. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Develop a good recognition plan. This not only means a program that may include monetary or gift rewards for good work, but what about working with your key staff to insure they understand the value telling someone they are doing a great job. Key staff members are so important in this effort and unfortunately have the least amount of training or experience in this area to be really effective.

2. Make sure your employees know how important their job is and how much they are appreciated for taking an interest in their job and performing at a high level.

3. Would your club be willing to pay for, or partially pay for, tickets to a Twins game for golf course maintenance employees this summer?

4. Could you have a picnic off site for employees with maybe a staff softball game?

5. Photographs are a great motivator. Take random photographs of your staff while they are at work. You can display them in the break room. Put them on a digital picture frame on the wall or put them on a DVD and play them through a TV. Employees like to look at them and they usually have great fun

doing it. Remember to update the pictures regularly for the best results. Do you have a wall or entry where you can hang a framed picture of each employee with their name, title, length of service? If so, it goes a long way to instilling pride in the work place.

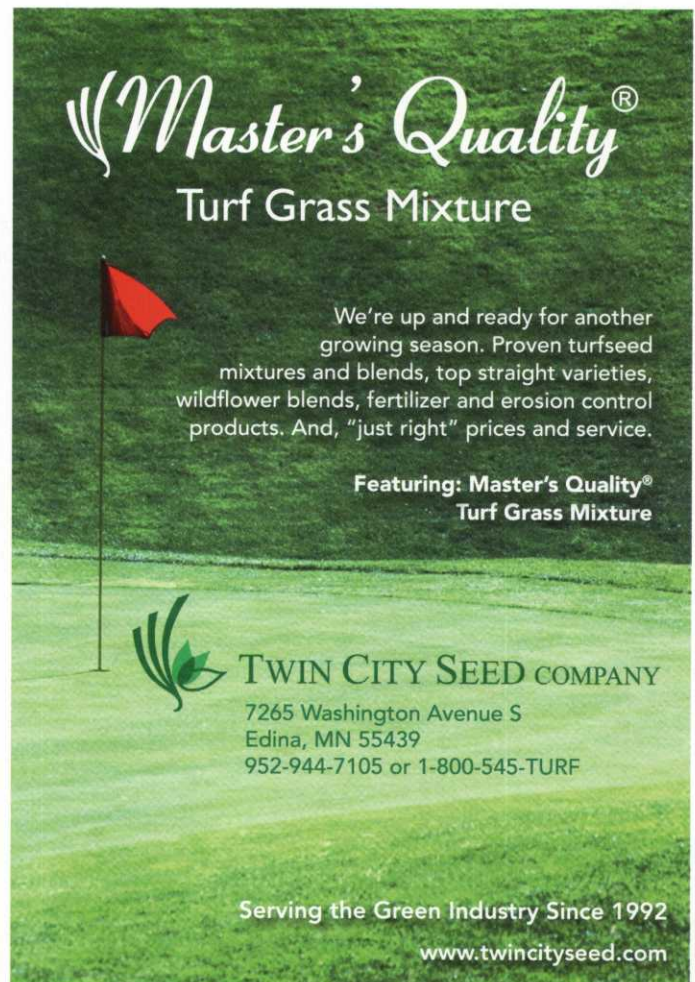
6. Schedule some simple barbecues throughout the year.

Think about things like Pay Day lunches. Maybe you can get some help from your F&B department. Cook the hotdogs and/or hamburgers on a grill for lunch. You and your key staff do the cooking.

7. Golf course maintenance putting contest with small prizes or trophies. Bragging rights are huge!

8. Have you thought about a GCM website for your staff?

These are all good ideas that many of us already have utilized to show our appreciation for our staff. I recently watched an episode of *Undercover Boss* and one of the employees said about working with her undercover boss "I appreciate the fact that he had an interest in finding out what it takes to do my job." The lesson here is take an interest in your employees, work beside them occasionally, help them learn and remember to say thank you. I guarantee that you will be surprised how much it means to the people who work for you.



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