



INCENTIVES

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 Editor

Upon the staff dining table set two boxes. Awaiting the contents of these packages is my crew, sitting in a semi circle; quiet, fidgeting, perhaps even reflective. The morning meeting is about to begin.

With happy heart I praise my team for their hard efforts over the past few days.

Box number one is opened and passed around, its content of donuts with sprinkles, frosting, glaze or even bare naked, distributed as a thank you for a job well done and incentive for future positive performance. A jelly-filled Bismarck for super cleaning the bathrooms, a gooey caramel bun for killing a pesky varmint or perhaps the coveted Bear Claw is grabbed in thanks for catching a potentially destructive mechanical issue. Well received, our discussion broadens to encompass a wide variety of topics.

Equipment maintenance and driving habits, safety, player respect, community courtesy, gas-mixing ratios and cleanliness take top priority during the beginning of the discussion. For the most part all is good and the moderation easy as I enlighten my crew as to the expectations I have for the season ahead. Unfortunately, the discourse takes a dramatic turn for the worse.

The previous week was very hard upon the trees at North Oaks Golf Club.

Trees planted by God long before the course was built as well as new material installed just last summer, complete with beautiful wood chip mulch. It wasn't a storm that caused this arboriculture aberration. It wasn't insect, disease, drought or excessive moisture that negatively impacted the woody specimens, many of which I planted myself over the last 26 seasons. Nope, the mutilation was done by my staff of wonderful yet sometimes inattentive green keepers.

The new Triumph elms placed strategically along the driving range were lined trimmed harshly, new bark removed and hard wood exposed. Destructive examples of weed whipping were also apparent on holes seven, nine and sixteen. In the eight rough, one of my larger pieces of equipment was driven through a woodchip ring and tore 33 percent of another elm tree's bark away while altering its vertical

appearance. Since none of these is normal maintenance practice implemented to encourage healthy tree growth, nor I am sure was the injury caused in malicious intent, the pattern of destruction could only be attributed to a lack of judgment or perhaps forgetfulness on the part of my staff.



To remedy any future harm, box number two was opened and the contents placed upon the table for display. Six, 180-degree fully adjustable Wolfgarten hand operated grass clippers were laid in a neat row, much to the chagrin and astonishment of my employees. Model number Ri-LL, these exceptionally sharp manual tools were discussed as a new type of incentive program to be implemented in the following days should any more trees be rammed, line trimmed or mysteriously injured by the green staff. If my capable Assistant, Justin Bicek, or I bore witness to any staff created anomaly, everyone on the crew will have a turn at hand clipping around our ponds, trees, hardscape and flower beds for a minimum of three hours.

Having employed this practice in the past I knew that this disincentive was a very, very effective tool in motivating my crew into positive action. My equipment mechanic interjected at this point that anyone pulling a cord from any machine could also expect a few hours of manual grooming of the turf. Hmmm, another excellent idea.

With incredulous comprehension, donut muffled questions were asked:

Q: Will everyone have to suffer for the mistake of just one person?"

A: Yup! All for one and one for all!

Q: I know who did it, why not just punish them?

A: If you knew who did it, why didn't you correct the problem, educate the individual or at least bring it to our attention?

Q: This sucks, what if I get blisters?

A: Your tender mitts won't get any blisters if you just follow the directions.

With a hearty laugh I moved onto the final topic of the meeting.

The following week we would begin our Super Star shirt program. In 2010 we purchased enough extra polo shirts to be given to those on the crew who worked above and beyond average expectations. Last year's style bought at a discount and embroidered with the club logo resplendent with a very distinguished Super Star above the sleeve cuff and handed out weekly, this incentive program was a very positive and successful manner to reinforce good conditioning practices.

The summer of 2011 would bring a new twist to the initiative... four shirts would be given away each week to individuals chosen at random based upon the performance of the whole team during the previous week. All for one and one for all, right? You bet! Not only is the message being delivered that I expect a fantastic finished product, those doing the job will be self monitoring and thus reduce my need to over manage. Rewards will be given for hard work... hard work performed by the whole team. Nothing will be gained if the end result is substandard. Camaraderie will reign.

Chaka, chaka. Chaka, chaka. With clipper in hand I looked around the room and shared a final deep thought. "If we all work together with pride in an exceptionally finished product we can have a great summer. Those with experience help the rookies. Those new to a job ask questions often. Through a common goal, diligent attitudes and clear communication we can

create an amazing golf course and have a whole lot of fun in the process."



The meeting ended well, except that is for the powdered sugar remaining on one of the lad's

cheek. Funny, nobody told him to wipe it off, or maybe he was saving it as a savory reminder of our discussion on positive incentives!