**Strictly Business**

*By Bob Costa*

The most common form of harassment in the workplace occurs between a supervisor and a subordinate. But what about the actions of co-workers. As hard as you may strive for teamwork and harmony amongst your staff, some form of employee confrontation is inevitable. As a manager, you may be held responsible not only for your own actions and behavior, but also the interactions of those employees under your supervision.

Harassment, whether motivated by discrimination or some other form of conflict can result in arguments and disputes in the workplace. When it involves co-workers, your responsibility as a manager is to respond quickly and attempt to diffuse the situation. Failure to do so may result in future issues of liability for both you and your golf club.

As I mentioned, the key is to respond quickly as soon as you become aware of a conflict amongst employees. All members of your staff have a right to work in an environment that is safe and non-threatening. It’s your responsibility to ensure that those conditions exist.

Disputes among employees can often be resolved before any formal disciplinary action needs to occur. Here are some suggestions about how you can mediate disputes before they escalate into major conflicts, or even lawsuits.

♦ **Speak to Each Employee Individually** — It’s important to get each side of the story.

♦ **Meet privately with other employees who may have witnessed a confrontation or dispute** — This can be helpful to help sort out the facts. You may find that other employees may not be willing to provide information simply because they don’t want to be involved.

♦ **Gather the disputing employees in a private location to talk**

Privacy is important because it generates trust. Set rules for meeting. Such as, allowing each individual to speak uninterrupted. Allow each individual to state his, or her version of the conflict. Summarize your understanding of the problem. Make it clear that the behavior which resulted in the dispute is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. A solution must be reached.
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- State your neutrality — Be certain that each individual understands your role. You are not concerned with assessing blame but, simply to identify the problem and resolve the conflict.

- Carefully manage the discussion — Make sure only one person speaks at a time. The goal is to gather the facts. Ask each individual to summarize their views and the views of the other party. Try to direct the discussion so there is some agreement among the employees as to what the problem is. This will go a long way toward a compromise and lead to a solution. More often than not the individuals involved will find the problem is simply one of poor communication.

- If the parties can’t agree on a solution be prepared to impose one — Try to make it as equitable as possible, so one individual doesn’t feel as though he is the only one losing. Usually in these types of disputes fault can be found with each party. Once a resolution is agreed upon, declare the dispute over with and thank the employees for their cooperation. Remind them of the fact that a continuation of this conflict will not be tolerated and suggest that further disputes may result in disciplinary action.

- Follow up — After a few days, check to see that the resolution is working. Monitor the situation every few weeks and be quick to respond if you sense the conflict is heating up again.

Nothing Happens Fast (Cont’d)

or rebuilding a problem green will often offer faster, longer lasting results than any “over the counter” bottled cure. Golfers would rather you throw thousands of dollars away on snake oils and additional chemical “fixes” than address the real agronomic issue, right? Unfortunately, it’s true in some cases. As Dr. Joe Vargas once said, “Golfers would rather get rid of a superintendent than a tree.”

Sorry, folks! I just don’t think the magic potion in a bottle will ever be found. If it is, you can look for me to be selling it, because the payoff should be better than winning the lottery. Nothing can replace good agronomy and good growing environment. Nothing in a bottle, bag or box. The formula to keep turfgrass healthy is simple, provide adequate water, soil aeration, ample sunlight and good air movement with a little N, P and K on a regular basis. Each of these ingredients is essential in proper amounts, omit one, add too much or too little of another, and a weak link develops. That weak link leads to the one thing that does happen fast in agriculture . . . crop failure! So, always remember, nothing happens fast in agriculture, except crop failure. ✦