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## THRU THE GREEN

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Northern California

## From The President

**S**o, I am making the final plans for attending the State meeting in beautiful Ojai. I am looking forward to renewing friendships with fellow professionals, hopeful that I will come away from the educational program with things that will make my job better for myself and my staff. Instead I find myself at the Stanford Hospital emergency room being processed for surgery on a finger that was somewhere it shouldn't have been. Now I know there is a large contingent of the membership tracking down my phone number so they can call, check on my condition and wish me a speedy recover. Thank you in advance but that is not the purpose of this message.

There are times in all of our careers that force us to evaluate what we do. This brief incident was a great reminder to me of the dangers that we face each and every day. In the work place we have equipment, power and hand tools and chemicals that all pose a threat to our health and safety. There are golfers and golf balls, golf carts, lakes and rivers, hills and valleys that can with no warning present threats of serious injury or even death. Let's not even go into the traffic to and from work. Constant vigilance in staff safety is one of the most important things we can put into our daily work schedule. Making our workplace safe is the responsibility of everyone. We challenge ourselves and our staff to push the limits of productivity, always striving for the best conditions we can provide. How does that perspective change when you lose someone to injury or illness. The impact to a staff can be devastating.

Now in my case we have had some

## Office Notes

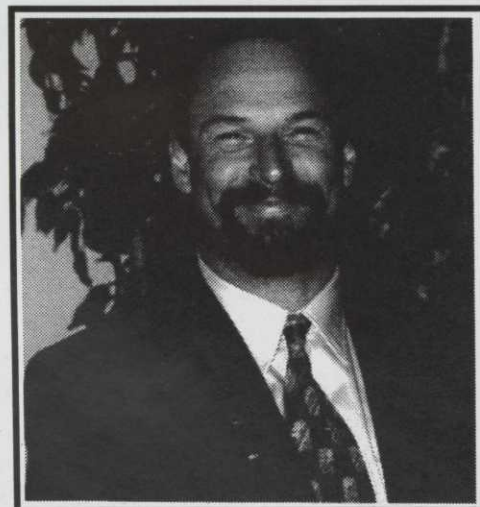
*By Barbara Mikel*

Maybe by the time this newsletter is out to the membership, some golf has begun to be played in the Norcal region. I can't believe this year! Snow May 26 at the office?

No, I didn't forget to take the first sentence out of last month's article, yes we did have snow up here in May. The vacation was great! Surprise, Utah was sunny and clear.

Thanks to the help from newsletter publisher, Jo Harlow, Past President Rich Lavine, Past President, Clifford Wagoner, and Past Executive Secretary, Myrtle Wagoner the 1998-1999 directory proceeded on schedule and is in the mail to members.

You can help make sure the information is accurate and up to date by notifying the office of changes to employment and residences. We



## Dave Davies, CGCS

laughs. There have been more comments about the boss staying in his office than I would prefer. There is no huge scar to present for sympathy, although I was able to play the big bandage up for about 36 hours. I have, however, learned a great deal about the affects of hydraulic fluid on nerve tissue and now have first hand knowledge on how the workers' compensation process works. All of this can be passed along as lessons learned. How we deal with the lessons long term will determine their value.

Plans are being made for the Superintendent/Pro at The Course At Wente Vineyards, July 21. For those interested in beautiful scenery and wonderful food put the date on your calendar. Oh, there will also be 18 holes of golf. The site is magnificent and the staff at Wente is anxious to hose us. Be aware of the calendar as the dates are set for the rest of the year's functions. Have a great spring, oh, it's almost summer, and remember, let's be careful out there.

can only put in the directory information provided. If you have inaccurate information please let us know. Unfortunately the time to let us know is past for this directory. The membership renewal questionnaires are the primary means to update your membership information. If things change more often, please take the time to fax or mail us the updated information. You will continue to get a lot of your association mail thanks to forwarding by the post office. Those forwarding orders do eventually expire, and one day you haven't seen your newsletter in along time and haven't attended any meetings and low and behold, you didn't get your renewal notice and our find yourself out of the association!

## News From The Land Of Oz

GCSANC Vice President, Gary Carls, CGCS, recently traveled to Lawrence, Kansas site of GCSAA Headquarters and birthplace of Toto, to participate in the annual Education Committee meeting. Gary had the courage, brains and heart to report the following proposals:

- Expect a streamlined Conference and Show with less evening educational activities planned.
- The Etonic program, sampled by GCSANC last January will return in a more chapter friendly format. GCSAA will assume a great amount of the up-front costs associated with the meetings. Also the number of available programs will be significantly reduced.
- The popular USGA program is scheduled to be moved to Sunday afternoon at the upcoming Conference and Show hosted by the City of Orlando.
- As has been done regularly at conference and show, expect several new seminars to debut in Orlando.
- Plans are in the works to offer an annual directory, professional development catalog, and merchandise catalog in a binder format with annual updates mailed to the membership.

### In Other GCSAA News . . . . .

- The endowment campaign "Enhancing the Beauty of Golf" has currently raised 2.4 million dollars representing 2/3 of the June goal of 3.5 million.
- The agenda for the chapter delegates meeting this fall has been developed and includes; candidate presentations, a summary of a study on what employers expect from their golf course superintendent, a summary of the status of the proposed membership standards initiative, and a presentation of the quality improvement plan.

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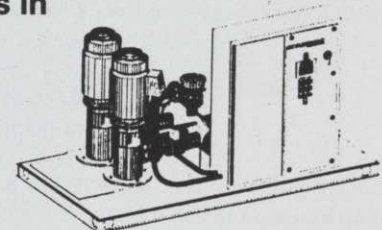
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## Effective Employee Orientation

By: Brian K. Linhardt

Most every year superintendents are faced the need to hire staff members. A well-planned employee orientation can do much to help make this transition as painless as possible and get new employees off on the right foot immediately.

The essence of effective management is to get the job done right through other people. Business success depends on the quality of performance that managers get from their employees, which in turn hinges upon not only the workers' abilities, but also the instructions they receive, the standards the organization sets for them, and the company rules under which they function. The work environment created by the employer and the performance pattern that an employee establishes during the first few days will have a strong influence on that person's attitude, productivity, and team spirit for weeks, months and even years to come.

A former personnel manager and mentor taught me a valuable lesson: Once bad habits are developed, and unacceptable standards of performance tolerated, they are hard to change. Workers tend to fall into good or bad patterns very early in their employment.

Steering new employees on desirable paths and monitoring success is a primary responsibility of management. If it is not done well, one likely result is high employee turnover that disrupts work and raises costs associated with recruiting, hiring, training, some payroll taxes, and workers' compensation. Golf courses need stable, productive workers to operate

efficiently. If managers want to mold workers' performance from the beginning, they cannot afford to treat the orientation employee process casually.

In many organizations, however, the orientation process is either short or nonexistent. The best way to begin cultivating committed, high-performance employees is through an organized introduction to the values, culture and expected work ethic of the business, as well as to their particular jobs. Ideally, it includes filling out personnel forms, having the job duties explained and maybe reading or listening to job descriptions, reviewing the company handbook, if there is one, taking a tour of the new surroundings, meeting coworkers, and starting the work day. All of these activities are important.

What else can be done to prepare employees for a new work environment? It helps if company rules and standards are clearly communicated in the orientation, including management's expectations that workers will perform to a specified level after being trained. New employees should be given explicit goals and work performance standards to meet or exceed in definite time periods. Fewer conflicts will occur if rules are evenly enforced over time and across the workforce. If after some time it is necessary to terminate a problem employee, it is best if others in the workplace see that the termination is deserved.

Employers can help new workers learn the job and can improve the firm's bottom line by stressing the importance of safety from the start. Reinforcing safe work behavior will help to reduce the frequency

of accidents and cost of workers' Compensation premiums in the future. Eighty to ninety percent of all injury incidents are reportedly caused by human error. Recently hired employees are involved in a disproportionate number of accidents and in general file a greater number of workers' compensation claims. By providing workers with safety information, scheduling regular safety training, and calling attention to specific safe and unsafe acts, managers and coworkers alike can increase safety recognition at work.

### What To Do On The First Day/Week

Initial impressions are often lasting ones, so special care should be taken to provide the employee with a helpful introduction. The following are suggested elements to include in an orientation

### Pre-hire

Realistic job previews are a good tool to open communication lines with employees, manage initial expectations, and begin to set work standards. When given ample information about the job, uninterested or unqualified applicants may walk away, and hired employees are likely to provide a better fit with the organization. Explain how to perform the essential work tasks and responsibilities of the job, and give an idea of what an "average" day on the job might entail, both positive and negative aspects. The common result from using a job preview is reduced turnover, which could save substantial money and time.

### Initial Welcome

- ◆ Introduce yourself and find out what

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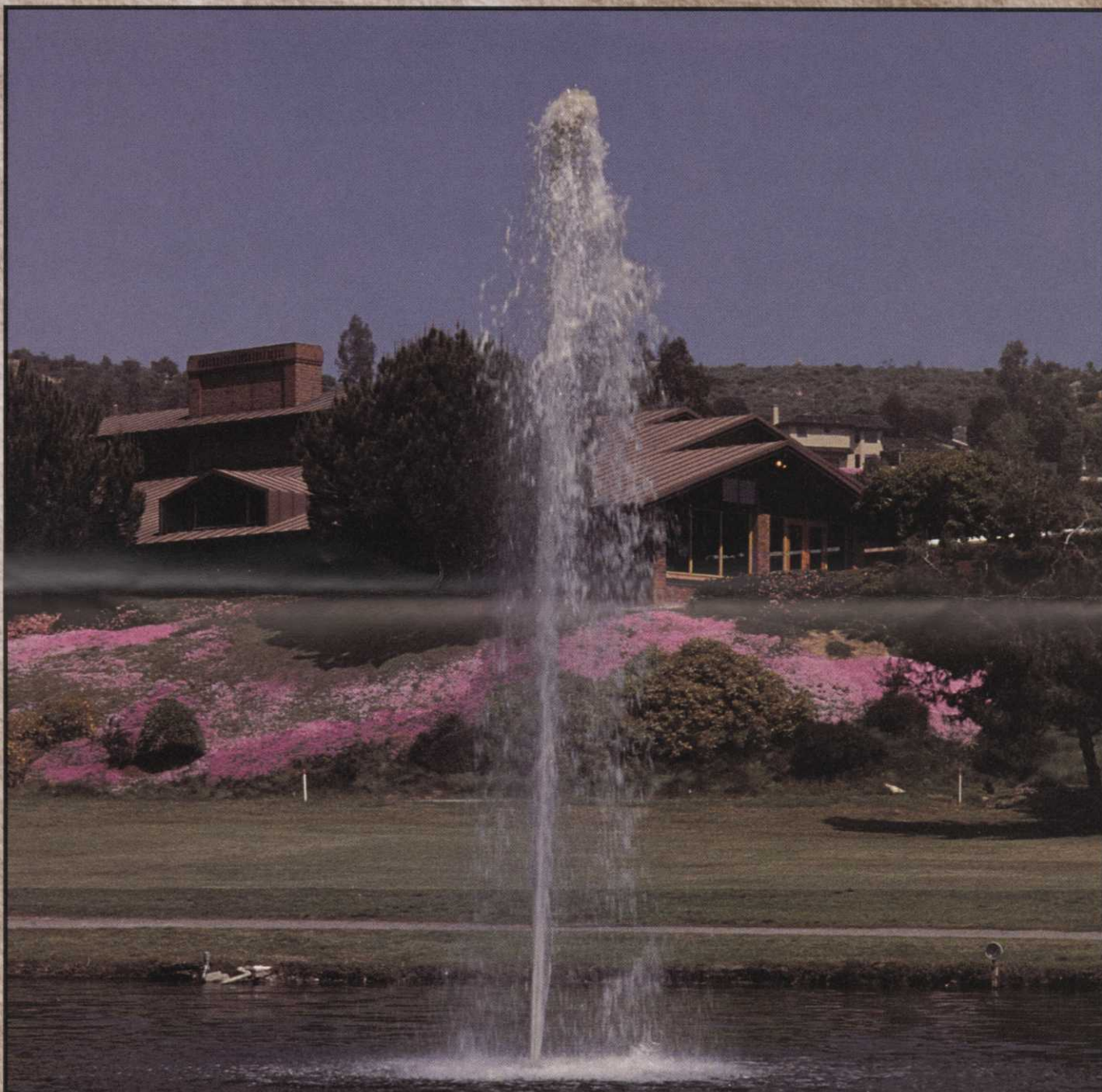
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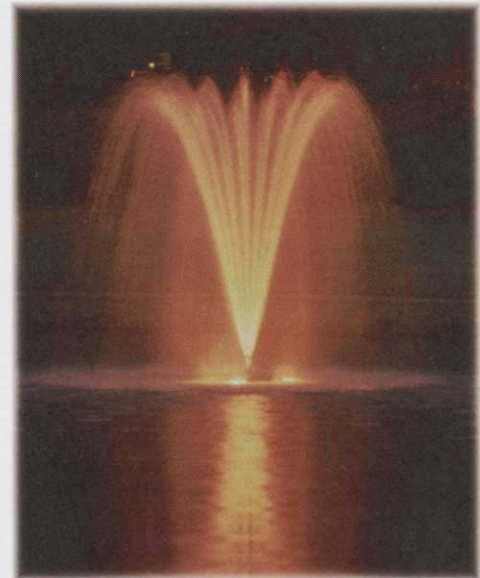
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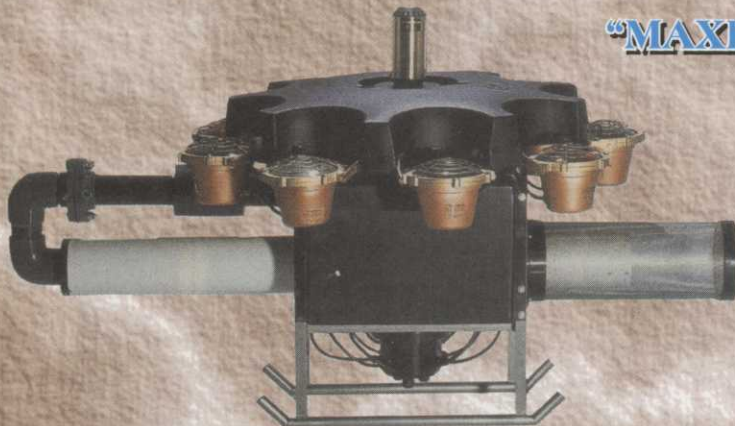
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## Effective Employee Orientation (Cont'd)

name the employee wishes to be called.

- ◆ Give a brief history of the company.
- ◆ Introduce the employee to the lead person and coworkers, and ask a worker to join the new employee for lunch during the first few days.
- ◆ Provide a document discussing the nature of the employment contract, such as at-will.
- ◆ Give new employees a handout detailing orientation information that they can refer to later.

### Hours of work, pay policies

Discuss work hours, starting and stopping times, tardiness and absenteeism policies, and the call-in procedure if any employee cannot make it to work. Give information about the work schedule and its variability.

- ◆ Explain time card or other timekeeping procedures.
- ◆ Discuss any overtime requirements.
- ◆ Tell the employee about the lunch and break periods.
- ◆ Disclose the starting pay rate, including incentive wages or bonuses based on quantity, quality, or employment duration, and the piece-rates if applicable. Also discuss any fringe benefits available.
- ◆ Describe paycheck distribution — when, where, how.
- ◆ Tell the new employee what to do and whom to ask about any pay discrepancies.
- ◆ Outline performance review and appraisal procedures.
- ◆ Explain whether pay increases may be expected as a function of merit, longevity in job, cost of living, or a combination of these.
- ◆ Discuss vacations, holidays, and sick/personal leave procedures, as well as pregnancy and FMLA leave, if appropriate.

### The Job

Closely supervise the employee's first efforts, immediately correct errors, and reinforce successes until performance standards are met. Allow more independence as competence grows, and keep a record of the employee's progress for future reference.

- ◆ Give a tour of the work site.
- ◆ Discuss the organizational structure or chain of command.
- ◆ Describe the job duties and scope.

See Effective Orientation page 7

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## USGA

### Seeing The Forest For The Trees!

#### Developing A Program For Tree Maintenance

By: Michael Huck, Agronomist, USGA Green Section

There is no argument that American golfers love the trees on their courses. It would then stand to reason that most golfers would want to provide excellent care for their "loved ones," but often this is not the case. The reality is that there is always money available in the maintenance budget to plant additional trees, but there is never enough money in the budget to properly maintain the existing tree inventory. I often find myself telling green committees that unless an adequate tree maintenance budget is already in place, there is no justification for planting additional trees on their course.

During my travels, I tend to find that tree inventories are one of the most neglected components of golf facilities and when superintendents ask for adequate funds for tree care they are often denied. Why? Perhaps it is difficult for golfers to understand the scope, cost and value of a comprehensive tree management program.

Here are a few suggestions that may help you develop and convince your superiors of the need for a tree program.

- Develop a hole-by-hole inventory identifying each specimen by genus, species, DBH (diameter at breast height), approximate height and general condition of health. (More often than not the total number of trees on the property shocks the course officials.)
- Estimate a current replacement value for each specimen and the total value for the entire inventory. This will help your superiors understand the value of the inventory and justify the importance of maintaining it!
- Identify specimens with poor structure and/or poor conditions of health that should be immediately removed or replaced to avoid safety and liability concerns.
- Utilize the services of a local certified arborist to provide an impartial opinion of the specimens that require removal due to poor structure or health.
- Identify species undesirable for golf courses, (i.e., litter or fruit dropping, surface rooting, etc.) for future removal and replacement with more appropriate varieties.
- Estimate pruning frequencies and costs to trim each specimen based upon the inventory data. Calculate a dollar amount to include in the annual maintenance budget and then implement the program!
- Take the program a step further and have a golf course architect develop a long-range tree planting/removal plan to identify strategic tree locations from both a safety and playability aspect. The golf course architect should also recommend removals where shade and root influence in key playing areas (identified with the aid of the golf course superintendent) are determined as detrimental to turfgrass growing conditions.

Developing a comprehensive tree program will take an investment of time and money but in the long run it will benefit the golfers, the trees and the golf course.

Help your course officials see the forest for the trees. /

### Did You Know?

California superintendents are pushing a bill to fund research to eradicate and control the pitch canker fungus that is wiping out pine trees, many of which are used in golf course settings. The bill would provide 2 million dollars for research and is also supported by state golf associations and several environmental groups.

### Merchandise Release

Merchandise with GCSANC logo was introduced at the general meeting at Castlewood CC on April 6th with good success. At our next meeting in June, new merchandise will be on display as well as improved labeling of current displayed items. Please take the time to stop by and examine our new line of clothing at the next meeting you attend. If you have any questions regarding the new merchandising program, please contact Barbara Mikel at the GCSANC office.

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## Effective Employee Orientation (Cont'd)

- ◆ Talk about the employee's job as it relates to the customer.
- ◆ Explain specific performance expectations, work standards, and any promotional opportunities.
- ◆ Outline disciplinary procedures, the grievance process and any probationary periods.
- ◆ Discuss how or to whom you would like employees to make any suggestions toward improved work procedures.

### General Information and procedures

- ◆ Show the employee where restrooms, personal storage areas, and phones are.
- ◆ Discuss personal use of telephones and other company equipment or facilities.
- ◆ Have foremen introduce special policies or procedures that are unique to working under them.
- ◆ Provide information, special policies or procedures that are unique to working under them.
- ◆ Provide information, special forms, reference materials, and any other details the employee needs to know immediately.

### Safety

Involve workers in safety management by encouraging them to submit suggestions. Also, allow employees to take turns presenting tailgate safety sessions, and reward contributors.

- ◆ Proper use and care of equipment.
- ◆ Identification and location of all common job or workplace hazards.
- ◆ Use of fire extinguishers and emergency procedures.
- ◆ Location of first-aid/medical care.
- ◆ Training in CPR assistance and identifying pesticide illness and heat stress.
- ◆ How to report and document accidents and illnesses.
- ◆ Requirement for use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and eye protection.
- ◆ Wearing and the proper care of protective clothing and foot wear.
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### Checkpoint to Evaluate New Employees

After a specified period of time, it is a good idea to evaluate the new employee to decide whether he or she is performing adequately and making adequate progress in learning the job. The evaluation is more beneficial if it also gives the employee developmental information, suggestions for improvement, and praise for what he or she is doing right.

- ◆ Use standards previously explained during the orientation. It helps if work standards are specific, mutually agreed upon in advance, realistic, clear, objective, and consistently applied to everyone.
- ◆ Assess the performance, not the person. Be as descriptive as you can, not heavily evaluative when talking about the employee's performance. Be sure that appraisal comments relate directly to the established standards.
- ◆ When presenting your observations, ask for and listen carefully to the employee's comments. You may learn a great deal from them about the orientation process as well as about the person. Good communication at this time is key to more successful work performance later.

### Final Words

These employment practices may seem time consuming at first glance, but they generally cost less time and money than damaged equipment, mishandled crops, large medical bills, high workers' compensation premiums after frequent or severe injuries and governmental fines. All employee orientations and safety training sessions should be documented in writing. A well-conceived and reinforced orientation can help set the stage for high employee productivity and positive work attitudes.

Knowing and using efficient golf course maintenance methods often are not enough to make for a successful operation. The ability to lead, manage, and structure work practices comes with experience, knowledge and the use of appropriate management tools and techniques. It helps if lines of communication are opened at the outset of employment. Make sure that rules and standards are adhered to while encouraging employee participation in some decisions. A reliable, productive, and conscientious employee is a valuable asset to any business. ↗

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