

Building a Better Toolbox - Tools you can use!

By Don Savard, CSFM

(Editor's note: In the next few issues, I will be reporting on some topics that I have found helpful making my job easier. I use these ideas and actions as tools which help make the job easier. For example: COMMUNICATION TOOLS-building an understanding with all of the people we work with so that we all know what we are trying to accomplish; INFORMATION TOOLS-gathering the facts so we plan or make informed decisions; PRACTICES TOOLS- actions we do, or techniques we use to get an outcome; INPUTS TOOLS-materials we use to get an outcome.

Remember that that like the hardware variety, no one tool is useful in every application, but these tools do work. Use these tools to save time, money and get better results. The toolbox is open, help yourself, and if you like them and they work for you, pass them along.)

Communication as a tool

The growing season is coming to an end. As we prepare out sports fields for winter, it is the time to enjoy a change in the seasons, and think ahead towards the next. Now is a good time to consult with the people we work for and try to find out what their ideas and expectations are. What was good in the past year, and what might be better in the next? All of these people (employers, associates, colleagues, vendors and clientele) have expectations of what you are trying to deliver. So do you. Frequently, these might differ from your own. For example, I recently took the decision maker where I work on a tour of our sports fields. This decision maker commented favorably on the appearance and improvements of our site. I asked him if he was interested in upgrades for our facility. After hearing some options (and finding out how much they would cost), he said that our facility was more than adequate for our needs at this time, but he would consider upgrades in the future.

This was a very productive conversation! As desirable the idea of bringing our facility to a higher level was to me, after discussing his ideas with him, I now have a clear understanding of the "big picture" and his vision of the

facility for the coming year. It will be easier for me now to create a strategic plan and a budget for the next year. My communications with my clientele, vendors and the people who work for me, will be more effective because I know exactly where I stand. Rather than wasting time, writing proposals that might never be considered (and feeling resentful), I can move ahead.

Properly set expectations are a great tool for everybody (including me). By discovering what the expectations (of all of our people) are and setting them at realistic levels, we increase our credibility with those around us. Customer satisfaction will be maintained or increased.

Learning to set realistic expectation begins with listening to what the other person is saying or asking for. People sometimes have difficulty communicating what they want. By asking some probing questions, we can uncover what they are really mean. Empathize with that person and respect

what they want and why.

Know what your capabilities and limits are. Sometimes it is good to understate your predictions. Remember you can only promise what it is that you can control. Be honest with your clientele (and yourself). Deliver on time what you say you will deliver.

Documentation is a tool. It protects you and your credibility. Document everything that you do, keep notes of conversations, record important data, expenses, time spent, weather data. Create a history, a paper trail and definitely take before and after pictures. Neatness counts. Ask how your customers want to be kept posted and how frequently, then do it.

Credibility is also a tool, much like personal credit. Credibility must be earned; it needs to be maintained and it can move mountains for you.

When the time to upgrade our facility finally comes, if I use the tools, I will have an easier time developing a credible, workable plan. ♦



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