

Managing STAFF

Duncan McGilvray, Course Manager at Letchworth GC, continues his series on effective golf course management.

Managing staff – easily said – easily written about – extremely difficult to carry out successfully and effectively.

In every advertisement for the post of Golf Course Manager, you will read the words “must be capable of managing/motivating/leading staff”.

Without doubt, your employer views this aspect of a Course Manager’s work to be by far the most important – so we have to get it right.

It has often been said to a newly appointed Course Manager that the staff which he/she is about to inherit, are lazy/untrainable/stupid or ever worse!

In my experience, I have found very little fault with the staff – the fault lay more with the way they had been/were being treated.

To the Apprentice/Assistant Greenkeepers who are at present working in this sort of working environment, please do not despair. Remember how you are being treated and learn from those experiences – you will then know how not to manage staff when you are in that position yourself.

You do in fact learn a great deal from bad, as well as good, managers.

I do not believe that there are any secrets or hard and fast rules in managing staff, but what I hope to convey through this month’s article is what I have learned so far through personal experiences, advice from colleagues, relevant management trainers, and even psychologists.

SUPERVISING AND ASSISTING IN THE TRAINING/DEVELOPMENT AND RECRUITMENT OF STAFF

The “supervision” of staff is so often mistaken for “watching over” staff, which I have already stated in a previous article to be a total waste of the Course Manager’s time and, therefore, the Golf Club’s resources.



Staff at Letchworth, from left, Barney Wright, James Sherwood, Paul Hoffer, Peter Deazley, Gary Hyde and Brian Allonby

Supervision is about ensuring staff carry out tasks successfully, safely and within the limits/restrictions the Course Manager sets.

It is important to remember that all Green staff are under the Course Manager’s supervision and responsibility at all times, including periods when the Course Manager is not there for whatever reason – that is why it is vital that staff are managed in a way that encourages them to be self-motivated.

This reflects very well on the Course Manager, but is still not fully understood by some.

TRAINING

The training and development of all the Green staff is the responsibility of the Course Manager.

It is his/her duty to ensure that there exists sufficient funding and provision for “on course” practical training, as well as supplying the theory or “underpinning knowledge” (using approved Colleges where necessary) so that each member of staff can advance to his/her maximum potential and capabilities.

It is not fair to the staff or to the Golf Club not to do so.

The favourite excuse not to train staff is “why train them – they will only leave for a better job”.

This is an extremely blinkered and narrow-minded view which is thankfully being said less often these days.

The advantages of good training are numerous in terms of staff commitment, self motivation, enthusiasm, good working atmosphere and work output, which all combine to give a better maintained golf course – it is therefore very cost effective!

With the Government’s directive on National Vocational Qualifications (please do not believe the sceptics – NVQ’s are here to stay) and the recent Education Authority’s official recognition of the Greenkeepers’ Training Committee as an Assessment Centre, the GTC’s network of assessors (D32/D33) and advisors (D36) will ensure that the training of Greenkeepers will be much more secure, relevant and industry specific in future.

RECRUITMENT

Having been involved on both sides of the table, as well as being trained in interviewing techniques, I feel I have some relevant suggestions to pass on in ensuring this important aspect of the job is carried out properly.

When recruiting Green staff from Deputy Course Manager down the Course Manager is the most important interviewer – he/she will, after all, be the successful applicant’s future Department Head.

I do not believe, however, that the Course Manager should interview and recruit on his own.

Following the selection process, three people should inter-

view (fewer than three is thought to be not enough for accurate assessment, and more than three to be too intimidating).

These three would ideally be:
1. Course Manager (Department Head) – Technical Detail /Education and Candidate Capabilities.
2. Secretary/General Manager (Head of all Staff) – Employer Conditions and Golf Club input.
3. A.N. Other (Suggest Liaison Officer/Chairman of Green/Committee Member, etc.) – General Questions of a more personal nature and should help to put the interviewee more at ease.

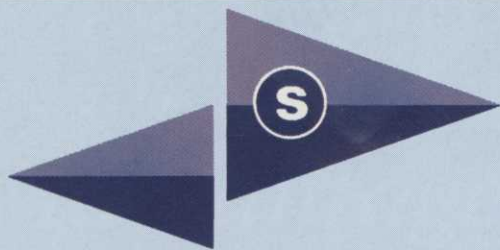
In this way, the right person for the position offered is more likely to be selected, and when the successful candidate takes up their position, they will have a clear understanding of how the Club is managed and to whom they will be responsible.

ENDEAVOURING AT ALL TIMES TO IMPROVE SUPERVISOR AND STAFF RELATIONS

On Golf Courses, small groups of staff varying from 2/3 to 7/8 are very often the situation.

This in itself seems to create problems which large groups do not experience, for whatever reason.

The Course Manager must be continually aware of this, and indeed set in place systems which will lessen the chance of underlying friction/tension becoming a serious threat to the

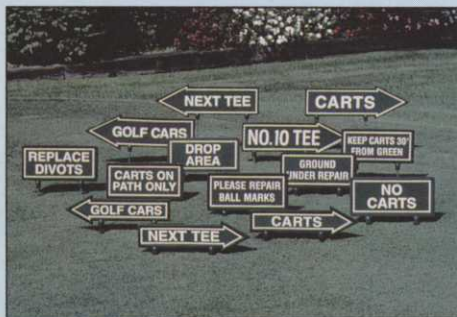


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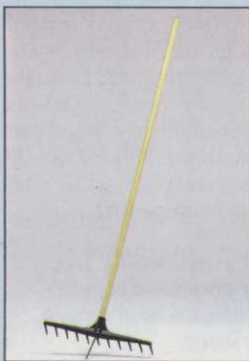
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efficiency of the Green staff as a whole.

A Staff Appraisal System (not to be confused with an assessment system), which has been brought in to many industries over recent years, works extremely well in small staff group situations, and in my view should be a requirement at every golf course.

In short and simple terms, an appraisal is time set aside for Managers and staff to communicate in a positive way, in an atmosphere such that both parties can speak freely without fear of intimidation.

Usually held on an annual basis, appraisals are extremely valuable in improving many things including a good staff working atmosphere which reap rich rewards in work output, which in turn improves golf course conditions.

I have always found the working atmosphere following such appraisals to be very positive because everyone has had an opportunity to air his or her views.

Although staff and Managers will never agree totally on every issue, there is a general acceptance to whatever is discussed/decided, and a way is found to move forward together.

PLEASE NOTE - Staff Appraisals should only be carried out by suitably trained Course Managers - advice on training may be obtained from the GTC.

DELEGATING EFFECTIVELY

How effective you are as a Course Manager will depend largely on how successful you are at delegation.

Let me first start by stating what delegation is not.

DELEGATION IS NOT - passing on work to others which you choose not to do yourself, because you cannot be bothered.

DELEGATION IS - to entrust or assign a duty or responsibility to another member of staff, who is suitably qualified.

Those who are able to distinguish between what is, and what

is not, delegated enjoy a great working relationship and understanding with both employer and staff.

In using delegation effectively, staff visibly rise to meet new challenges and tasks, and the Course Manager is released to do what only he/she is capable of doing, as well as staff operating efficiently when the Course Manager is not there.

Delegation is a management tool which if handled badly leads to disaster, but if handled properly, has a profound effect on the staff and the way they view their position, which helps to create a good positive working environment.

To conclude, I have put together a list of various truisms aimed at Managers in general, which I have collected over the years from various sources.

They make, in my view, a good deal of sense which is what managing staff is all about, especially in the natural and practical setting of a golf course:

Management tips

- Always lead by example.
- Respect has to be earned.
- Never ask anyone to do what you would not do yourself.
- People are not machines - they should therefore not be treated as such.
- Involve all staff in relevant decision making and problem solving.
- You cannot motivate staff - you can only create an atmosphere in which staff choose to motivate themselves.
- The stick or carrot method only ever works in the short term.
- You are only as good as your staff allow you to be.
- Take the time to listen.
- Never blame staff for any deficiencies - you are after all the one who is responsible for managing and training them!