



MANAGER TRAINING

In this month's article, David Golding, GTC's Education Director, gives us his honest appraisal on the current situation within the profession of Golf Course Manager and Head Greenkeeper...

Regular readers will know of my passion and also that of the GTC, for professionalism within the ranks of Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers and why so much focus has been put on the specialist training required to ensure that we can provide sufficient competent managers when golf club employers seek that leader to maintain and manage their prize asset, the golf course.

It has been said for many years that Head Greenkeepers have to be multi-talented with a range of skills within their portfolio and that is certainly true today as the demands on golf club management have never been greater.

We at the GTC have anticipated the change within golf clubs and the need for Course Managers to truly be competent MANAGERS and must not leave themselves vulnerable by not engaging in the types of training courses, workshops and conferences aimed at ensuring that they have the tools to carry out the work to maintain and manage the course.

There are clearly developments within many golf clubs where budgets are being tightened and this will put more pressure on all the managers within the facility, but we must rise to this challenge.

Any employer looking not only to survive this difficult period that more and more golf clubs are facing, but to have business growth, cannot avoid the simple fact it will be the skills of the staff that can raise the bar for the competition.

Golf clubs are currently trying a variety of options to attract members and visitors but in the majority of cases golfers whether they want to join a club or just be a nomadic golfer, regards the condition of the course as a major factor in their decision to return for another game or to consider joining.

I know there are other considerations including the off course facilities but again these often will be judged by the friendliness and competence of the staff. So often in everyday life, especially the High Street and Restaurants, you can tell where training is top of the employer's agenda.

Sadly, I have become a little paranoid about this subject and actually make a point of thanking a friendly, helpful member of staff for their assistance when really it should be the norm.

I actually remember these small but so important attributes and return to these establishments.

It is the same at golf clubs, the staff are so important in the marketing and promotion of the facility.

It is close on 20 years since the R&A circulated a discussion document of British Course Management, The Way Forward and even then one major

issue was that there should be advanced training in management skills as "many Head Greenkeepers and Course Managers feel this is the greatest deficiency in their training."

Since that day there has been a concerted effort to provide training opportunities for greenkeepers aspiring to be supervisors or future Course Managers and this has reflected in the development of sports turf qualifications, both vocational and the work related range of awards.

I see an ongoing success story with the informal type of management training courses often available at local level. They prove such a valuable opportunity to those Head Greenkeepers who never entered the profession to be involved in paperwork!

Add me to that list and while computers have thankfully taken some of the demands for paperwork away from the modern day manager, the advent of Information Technology (IT) has required us all to learn new skills if only to understand how important the delete button is on a computer keyboard.

At this stage I feel I can once again clarify that the GTC is not wanting to detract the sector priority for Course Managers to have the agronomic knowledge to carry out their job but merely to ensure that they have the skills base to not only carry out their current job successfully, but continue to develop and possibly develop their career opportunities.

The all-rounder is the future and while we hear that there are some very talented and skilful Course Managers out there we must also provide everybody, employer and learner alike, the opportunity to progress the business with competent managers at the helm.

We also have an increasing number of Course Managers moving into roles such as Directors of Golf and other such positions where management skills are so vital.

We will ensure our Training Provider network continue to provide the courses to ensure both the technical and management aspects of the job are available.

BIGGA, through its sections and regions, will continue to develop its provision and for all the skill sets as approved by the industry see the GTC website www.the-gtc.co.uk Careers in Greenkeeping link to Industry Skill Sets.

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