

# Learning & Development

## TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF GOLF COURSE STAFF

By Stewart Brown

**Staff are the most dynamic of all a golf club's resources. They need considerable attention from management, if they are to realise their full potential. Motivation, leadership, communication and pay are all included in the issues faced by management today.**

However, it is necessary to consider the role of training and development activities in the golf club. A question frequently raised by many is: What is the difference, if any, between 'training' and 'development'? Another is: What is the difference between 'education' and 'training'?

It will be useful to examine these three terms and compare their meanings. Principally they are as follows:

**Education** – usually intended to mean instruction in knowledge and skills designed to enable people make the most of life in work and in society generally; personal and broadly-based; focuses on knowledge acquisition.

**Training** – normally implies preparation for an occupation or for specific skills; narrower in conception than either education or development; job-oriented rather than personal.

**Development** – usually suggests a broader view of knowledge and skills acquisition than training; it is less job-oriented than career-oriented; concerned more with employee potential than with immediate skill; sees employees as adaptable resources.

Generally, education is a matter for government. Training and development, however, are matters for individual golf clubs. This article looks at how golf clubs can set about meeting their own specific internal training and development needs.

### Training and Development

The scope of training and development activities depends on club policies and strategies. Many commercial clubs carry out the minimum of staff training and development; instead preferring to invest in recruiting trained or professionally qualified staff.

However, the majority of golf clubs do have a positive policy on training and development.

The first priority is to establish the club's training and development needs. This will involve using job descriptions, employee appraisal records and other such data. Planning the training needed entails setting budgets and timetables, and deciding on objectives, content and training methods to be employed.

Implementation of plans is usually a joint affair between training specialists and their line and functional colleagues. It is important to evaluate results, so that changes to content and methods can be made, if necessary.

The benefits of systematic training include:

- Provision of pool of skilled manpower for golf club
- Improvement of existing skills
- Improvements in job performance, resulting in improvement in overall productivity
- Improved service to players
- Greater commitment of staff (ie, increased motivation)
- Increased value of individual employee's knowledge and skills
- Personal growth opportunities for employees
- Compliance with appropriate legislation such as Health and Safety



Greenkeepers must be trained to ensure their competence for Health and Safety and the achievement of golf course standards of maintenance and presentation.

### The Role of the Trainer

The role of training manager, or staff (often undertaken by the Course Manager or deputy) depends considerably on a club's style or culture. If training and development is actively encouraged, then trainers have an exciting and important role to play; the opposite is true for trainers at clubs wishing only to pay lip-service to training.

The training staff's own competence and professionalism is the other major factor in deciding what kind of role can be played. Where trainers are highly skilled, they normally enjoy a good reputation in the golf club; where they are not, reputation and effectiveness will be proportionately less.

In performing their direct training roles, training specialists are intimately concerned with (a) the identification or assessment of training needs, (b) the design, content and methods of training to be employed, and (c) the evaluation of training.

## Identifying Training Needs

A training need is any shortfall in terms of employee knowledge, understanding, skill and attitudes against what is required by the job, or the demands of golf club change. When managers conduct a comprehensive training needs' analysis in their golf club, they may seek the basic data for this process at three different levels, as follows:

**Golf club level:** Data about the golf club as a whole – e.g. its structure, services, manpower requirements, etc.

**Job level:** Data concerning jobs and activities – e.g. job descriptions, personnel specifications, on the one hand, and leadership and communication activities on the other.

**Individual level:** Data about individuals – e.g. appraisal records, personal training records, test results, notes made at counselling interviews and results of attitude surveys.



Training should be geared towards the needs of the individual and their job role

Picture Lely UK/Toro

Data obtained in this way enables training staff to draw a comprehensive picture of the areas of current, and potential, shortfall in requirements. The collection of information for a training needs' analysis is carried out by one or more of the following methods:

- Analysing recorded data relating to the golf club, jobs and to individuals
- Analysing questionnaires and attitude surveys issued to employees
- Interviewing managers and supervisors about their own or subordinates' training and development needs
- Observing job performance of individuals
- Monitoring results of group discussions relating to current work problems, etc
- Analysing self-recording diaries, etc, kept by managers, specialists and others.

Most popular of the above methods are those which utilise existing records, and those which involve interviewing managerial and supervisory staff.

One particularly important document contributing to the analysis of training needs is the appraisal form. This is the record of an employee's job performance, usually completed following an annual interview with their superior. Appraisal interviews, and the documentation which accompanies them, are the formal mechanisms by which golf clubs can assess or evaluate their human assets. In a well-managed golf club, this formal appraisal merely rounds off, in a relatively standardised way, the frequent informal appraisals carried out regularly by the club's managers as a normal part of their job.

## Planning Training

Once training needs have been identified, the Course Manager can begin the task of sorting training priorities, drawing up initial plans, costing them and submitting their draft plans for approval. Draft plans spell out the key areas for training, the numbers and categories of employees concerned, the nature of training proposed, preliminary time-tabling of training programmes and an estimate of likely costs.

Training programmes can be formal or informal, and can take place 'on-the-job' or 'off the-job'. The latter can mean in-company, or in-service, training or it can refer to externally-provided training. The table below illustrates some of the different methods of on- and off-the-job training, and indicates some of the advantages and disadvantages of each approach.

Training plans are designed to encompass the following:

- a. What training is to be provided
- b. How it is to be provided
- c. When it is to be provided
- d. By whom it is to be provided
- e. Where it is to be provided
- f. At what cost it is to be provided

Resources put into training and development represent a considerable investment that needs evaluating to ensure it is being deployed wisely.



Often 'off-site' training is beneficial as staff are free of workplace distractions and can focus better on technical aspects

Picture Lely UK/Toro

## Evaluation of Training

Evaluation is part of the training control process. Methods used aim to obtain feedback about training results and to use this feedback to assess its value, to improve things where necessary. Training evaluation is firstly concerned with setting appropriate training standards. These may take the form of policies, objectives, adherence to external standards, and standards of trainer training and qualifications.

The next key point is the collection of relevant training feedback data. Finally, there is the impact on golf club goals to be considered – e.g. what has training done for profitability? This is a favourite question from top management, but is extremely difficult to evaluate because there are many other variables that impact on these goals.

For further education and training advice, contact your local specialist land-based college. Most offer advice, bespoke training and a range of education and training courses often leading to recognised qualifications.

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