



OPTIMISM FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

David Golding, GTC Education Director, gives us optimism as we move into 2009...

As we move into a new year and with the festive season well and truly over, the glass can be well and truly half empty at best, if we let it!

It would be so easy for all of us to feel a little worried as we all feel the impact of the recession.

Yes, as I mentioned in last month's article we are all now having to take stock of our personal lives as well as the business we work in.

I guess most of us are counting the days until the end of the month - payday - which always seems to take longer than all other months. Businesses, especially traditional golf clubs, will be waiting to see how many of the members renew their subscriptions for the New Year and I am sure hoping they can at least retain the majority.

Difficult times for all of us, but can I bring your attention back to one key element I believe in and that is to consider addressing all of today's issues by better communication!

I have fallen victim of this recently and should have known better at my age and addressed matters head on rather than thinking I'll sort it later or it will sort itself out.

I know I have written many an article on the importance of communication and it is 20 years ago since, during my early days at BIGGA, we introduced the infamous Management Courses at Aldwark Manor with Communication Skills always the number one subject requested by the delegates.

As the years have passed our sector has invested heavily in the specialist training courses to improve staff communication skills and it has,

I believe, certainly improved many of us, but we must not slip back!

So what has changed from those halcyon days at the Manor?

The internet is now such a major player in our day to day lives, the mobile phone is a must have tool and this you think should have made effective communication better.

Emails come in thick and fast, website forums are popular for many, texting is vogue but call me old fashioned I still believe in the values of "it's good to talk".

Come on, admit it, we've all been there...some of us having to put our glasses on to either read a text or spend ages writing a text, even worse trying to master predictive text!

Why not pick up the phone, ring the person that you feel might be a "problem" whether it is the Bank Manager, mortgage company or the Chairman of Green, Green Convenor, owner or better still if they are within distance face them head on?

Stress is a killer and too many friends in this sector alone have fallen victim to the pressures of life.

The GTC will continue to ensure communication skills are included in all levels of qualifications and training courses must continue to help us all.

There can be little doubt we have travelled a long way in the last 20 years in greenkeeper education but we must not be complacent.

I honestly believe that a problem shared is a problem solved and there is nothing worse than feeling alone in trying to deal with a problem whether it be of your own making or not.

I am optimistic for the future of our sector despite the current economic situation but we must all keep talking, keep supporting each other and let us not forget, the companies who fared best through and after the last recession, were those that invested in their staff development.

It will take a team effort and while strong leadership is a quality and skill that people admire, all the best leaders have tremendous communication skills and the team ethic has proved the vital ingredient to their success.

A topical example within our sector is the "S" Factor (sustainable golf course maintenance) and we will be addressing this early in 2009 when we will be hosting, with The R&A, a number of workshops for turf staff working within our Approved Centres will come together with those brave "Gingerbread" guys who are working within the sustainable best practices on the ground, to discuss the whole aspect of how best we can share the knowledge and experience to employers and today's and tomorrow's Course Managers.

The GTC Approved Centres and training providers are there to help employers and learners with individual training needs and courses, as are BIGGA and we at the GTC always offer an open invitation for you to contact us if you feel we are missing something in terms of qualifications, training manuals etc - so please talk to us!

Email the GTC at: david@the-gtc.co.uk

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