

Performance Appraising

Glen Bereiter
Aldeen G.C.


Every December, a "present" is delivered to each supervisor working for the Rockford Park District. Now this "present" is not something that is necessarily looked upon as being favorable. You see, each year it is the responsibility of our fine Human Resources Department to deliver to us the yearly performance appraisal forms, otherwise known as the Grim Reaper of paperwork. Though these are meant to be a valuable evaluation/learning/goal setting/improvement tool, they rarely live up to their billing. Whether it is the fault of the person doing the appraisal, the appraisal form itself, the person being appraised, or the follow-up, is open for debate.

Regardless of the reason, the fact is that most of us do not use this opportunity properly, and probably most dislike the task altogether. So, our organization decided that it was time to teach all managers/supervisors how to properly prepare for, administer and follow up on this procedure. The Rockford Park District, as it has on several occasions, secured the services of Gerald Olson, president of the Leading Edge Consulting Group, to explain to us the advantages of performance appraisals, how we could use this tool to evaluate an individual fairly and accurately, clarify expectations and focus on improvement. It is not my intention to provide information regarding performance appraisal forms. I know GCSAA has a good evaluation form; but other than that, I would imagine that every


organization's form is a bit different and tailored to their specific needs. The purpose of this article is to, hopefully, help you to prepare for and administer an appraisal and allow you to maximize the amount of information that can be gained through the process.

There are all kinds of reasons why the performance appraisal experience is not a good one: distractions, a lack of documentation to support positives or negatives, a lack of interest by appraiser and/or appraisee, defensive attitudes, inconsistencies, surprises, etc. As the managers of our specific department, it is our duty to reduce these reasons. It was explained to us that there are seven secrets to a successful appraisal:

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1. No surprises. It is not fair for an employee to hear of a criticism for the first time during an appraisal.
2. Keep the employee involved.
3. Focus on performance improvement.
4. Keep daily documentation, both positives and negatives. By doing so, this will give you an opportunity to reduce the "recency error" (focusing on actions of recent memory).
5. Be prepared—both employee and appraiser. Give ample warning of time and date of meeting.
6. Agree on terminology. Since we all see and hear things differently, make sure that you

both understand what you are hearing and saying.

7. Make performance a regular part of your discussion.

Another tip that was discussed to encourage a fair appraisal was the 30/15 principle: 30 minutes/month talk about performance with the employee; 15 minutes/week review personal goals by yourself.

There are two things that we can do as employers and appraisers to encourage our employees to succeed. The first is to clarify expectations: the purpose of performance is to deliver value. A goal statement would be an intent to deliver value. Work together with your employees to develop a goal statement for the upcoming year. Pinpoint results that you would both like to achieve, actions/behavior that you would

like to see or change. Be specific. Do not leave any doubt of the expectations that you have for that employee for the next year. Once this exercise has been completed, you should both understand what needs to be accomplished and how in order to get to the next level. There is probably going to be a certain amount of confusion and revision necessary, but over time, this process will become second nature.

The second aspect of success is coaching, coaching for improved performance. To me this means utilizing the 30/15 exercise all year: Daily or weekly monitoring of progress by the employee and visiting the goal statement periodically throughout the year to insure that objectives are being met, both are satisfied with the progress and wording, and that you are "on track" with the statement. During

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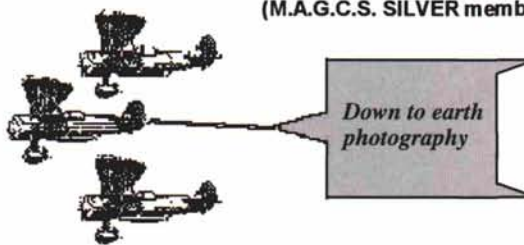
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the coaching period, give the employee your undivided attention. Encourage dialogue, especially from the employee. Ask open-ended questions and solicit information/examples during this time in order to better understand his or her feelings. Use silence as a means to get them to verbalize. More often than not, the employee will begin to talk during periods of silence because it is so intimidating. These are all examples of ways to encourage dialogue between the employee and yourself. Remember, the feedback your employee gives at this point will allow you to better understand, evaluate and reduce perceptions.

Performance appraisals, when utilized properly, can provide you with valuable information about yourself, your employee and your organization. They will provide you with a means by which communication lines are opened between you and the employee, establish some credible information by which to properly evaluate employees, provide documentation and a system by which raises and promotions may be given, and offer an opportunity to fairly establish goals and the criteria by which one may attain those goals.

Though following the information above will not reduce the amount of work involved in evaluating my department, I am hopeful that it will make it easier to do so. In addition, I feel it will hold my employees more accountable and responsible for their actions and behavior and give me an opportunity to resolve conflicts more quickly and more decisively. ■

Nick Hongisto -N- Schaumburg G.C.

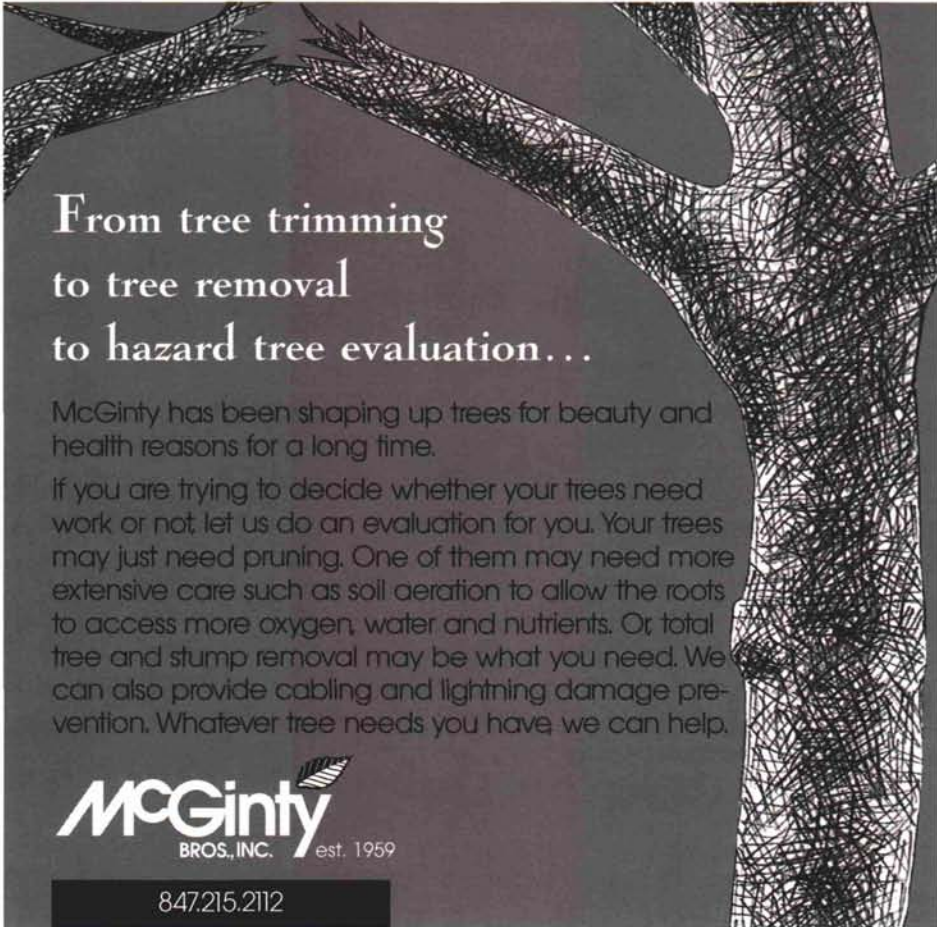
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the new layout is the fact that despite the wide-ranging changes, many of the mature trees were able to be saved giving the course an established feel with the benefit of fresh playing surfaces.

Nick's greatest challenge was in 1993-1994 when he was responsible for essentially four different 9-hole courses: Walnut Greens, the newly finished nine holes at SGC, the nine holes then under construction, and the nine yet to be improved. He says that getting new turf up and maturing it to the point where it becomes playable requires constant attention (especially when it turns out that a year like 1995 is looming on the horizon). Apparently, Nick has enjoyed some success in managing new turf since this year, for the second time,

Schaumburg will be hosting the local regional qualifier for the U.S. Open.

Nick, Diane and the boys live in La Fox, near St. Charles, where they are actively involved in their church (Nick is on the building committee, among other things). He led the prayer breakfast at the 1997 GCSAA National Convention in Las Vegas. Nick is one of the most computer-literate superintendents in the area. He spoke at the 1996 MAGCS Annual Meeting at Butterfield C.C. on using the Internet and has written articles for *On Course* on the subject. Nick enjoys his family and wishes he could spend more time with the boys, especially in the summer. By the way, with two boys in the house, Nick and Diane don't have to go out anymore to enjoy the demolition derby. ■



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