

# Morale and Leadership:

## Buzzwords for the 21st Century

*Webster defines morale as “moral or mental condition as regards courage, confidence, enthusiasm, etc.” Sun Tzu alluded to this well over 2,000 years ago in his military doctrine “The Art of War.” He said, “The advantages of the ground are not as important as harmonious human relations . . . he whose ranks are united in purpose will be victorious” and “If he cherishes his men in this way he will gain their utmost strength, if he treats them as his own beloved sons they will die with him.”*



*Caught in the act: this operator is mowing greens with the transport wheels on. This type of photo appears on a bulletin board in Winnetka G.C.'s maintenance building, injecting a little levity into the workplace and improving morale.*

Fernando Fernandez, CGCS, gave one of my all-time favorite Midwest Turf Clinic presentations in 1993, titled “A Complete Renovation Project.” As he started his speech, I believe he said it best, “It’s time I give something back to the Association.” Personally, I have always wanted to write an article. Well, Fred, here it is, finally!

Like most, I read *On Course* cover to cover. I must confess (albeit reluctantly) to reading very few of the many fine articles in *Golf Course Management*. The Civil War, Vietnam War and military leaders are topics consuming the majority of my recreational reading at home. From my concentrated “study” of the above, it seems ironic to me how much military and civilian life parallel one another. How do you motivate someone to face imminent death/permanent injury? How do you motivate a laborer to hump a string-trimmer after just walking five miles mowing greens on a 92-degree day for \$8 an hour? The common ground is good morale and enlightened leadership.

Not professing or pretending to be an expert on this subject, I am merely a student. My only hope is to help someone, somewhere to improve his or her individual management style. Disappearing are the days of dictatorial management. Superintendents cannot possibly watch over their entire staff spread out over 100-plus acres throughout an eight-hour day. We provide the leadership to “get the job done.”

Motivation is a way of providing the incentive to do an assigned job well. We have all read articles on what motivates people at work—things such as pay, room for advancement, good benefits, job security, absence of double standards, etc. If people enjoy their work, have a

few daily laughs, care about their coworkers and are treated fairly, good morale will be contagious. Morale is the fiber that can make ordinary people do extraordinary things.

Following are some activities and practices we implemented at the course that foster morale:

- Instead of sending staff home, or “sweeping the barns” for that second consecutive rain day in April, we cook up a couple of boxes of popcorn and watch a movie. Between safety training tapes we annually watch *Happy Gilmore* (the crew rolls over with the Bob Barker fight scene), *Caddyshack* (they love the gopher and Baby Ruth scenes), and the Three Stooges classic *Three Little Beers* (golf-ball washers will never be viewed in the same light). Remember, your crew wants to and needs to work to put that bread on the table for their families.
- We encourage laughter and fun while stressing NO horseplay.
- We have a coveted “Wall of Shame” photo board in the lunchroom featuring numerous pieces of equipment stuck in our peat-muck soil or in a pond (protocol requires operator to pose in picture) and staff doing nutty things, for example, a new hire mowing half his green with the transport wheels on and wondering why he’s not filling the basket . . .
- We take annual group photos and post them around the shop and/or clubhouse.
- We encourage staff to play golf. Several play weekly and love their “membership” on the nine-hole par-3 golf course.
- This June will be our third year holding the AJGA Windy

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Another highlight of Henry Michna’s photographic Wall of Shame: overaggressive mowing of pond banks.

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City Classic. The top juniors in the country shoot par or better over a three-day tournament on a longer and more difficult course than the MAGCS played last June. For our last two hours of work on the day of the tourney's final round, we go over to the 407-yard no. 9's green complex and sit in the shade on the little berms and bridge and watch the leaders (future collegiates and potential pros) shoot darts at a green flanked on the left by 180 degrees of water. We always have a few kids look up at our imposing staff of 20 and say "nice job" or "thank you for the week." Boy, does that feel good.

- We enjoy the typical fine summer BBQ shop party.
- In December, Richard Blust, our superintendent of parks, takes both crews to a very, very nice Italian bistro. Cloth napkins are, of course, an oddity to most.
- "Putting For Dollars" is the best \$100 I spend in a year. On a hot day in summer, when staff seems a little more wound up than usual, we play "Putting For Dollars." We try for a Thursday or Friday when

our 25-stall practice range is two-deep and the clubhouse area is buzzing. At lunchtime we tell all staff to report back to the shop two hours before the end of the day. At that point, we tell them all to grab their putters, bring a cup-changer and drive **all** the utility carts up to the clubhouse. Cut a new cup on the spot and place a five- or ten-dollar bill in the cup for closest to the pin. I putt first to show the line and use a ballmark to mark the closest ball. If someone holes it, he/she automatically gets the same amount. Don't worry too much about going through the money too fast. Everyone turns into Tiger and surveys the situation before each shot. It takes a while for a staff of 20 to play out. One of the settings we use is a relatively easy 10' straight downhill with the placement on the slope to help teach the cup-changers why they have been trained not to have placements on slopes. Next thing you know, **EVERYBODY** on the practice range is watching your staff having fun and cheering for all those near misses. They almost never see your full staff assembled and realize that it does take a lot of dedicated people to provide the playing conditions and improvements your staff contributes.

- Although we must treat people individually, we avoid double standards.
- We keep an honest two-way street policy.
- We keep an open mind and solicit input on anything from all staff. Staff has provided the genesis of some of the best improvements to date.
- We try to pass on to them all those nice comments golfers give—they did the work!

- We tell the staff "nice job," "thank you" and that we are **PROUD** of their work!

Liberty is taken here to recommend my favorite book, *About Face*, by Colonel David H. Hackworth, U.S. Army, retired. His Web site is [www.Hackworth.com](http://www.Hackworth.com). My assistant Mark Anderson, radio operator/forward observer, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, 1st Marine Division (Vietnam 8/67-9/68) turned me on to his book. Maybe he thought I could learn a thing or two. Mark, thank you.

Following are just a few of the essentials of good leadership "Hack" expounds on in the story of his military career. He learned soldiering the right way, from the hardened veterans immediately following WW II in post-war Italy. He served throughout Korea and three tours in Vietnam to become America's most decorated living soldier, with 110 medals including two Distinguished Service Crosses, nine Silver Stars, eight Bronze Stars for valor and eight Purple Hearts. He is an outspoken critic on military reform and is a contributing editor for defense at *Newsweek* and a syndicated columnist for King Features and a regular on the "Larry King Live" show. He is the man General Creighton Abrams called "the best battalion commander I ever saw in the United States Army."

Although essentially military, these leadership traits seem to carry over to everyday life. I frequently review them as a reminder on how to do things right:

- Lead by example.
- Care for your staff. Know your staff.
- Be a doer and self-starter. Aggressiveness and initiative are the two most admired qualities of a leader.

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*Morale is a state of mind. It is steadfastness, courage, hope, confidence, zeal, determination and loyalty.*

while the SBC Senior Open runs July 16-23. If you'd like to share your time and expertise in exchange for a great experience, call Gregg at 847-540-7209.

Mechanic wanted: McHenry Country Club is looking for a full-time mechanic to start ASAP. Benefits include insurance, meals, 401(k) and uniforms. Salary commensurate with experience level. Contact Bob Lively at 815-385-0635, or at rbl35@juno.com

Irrigation technician wanted: Heritage Bluffs Golf Club in Channahon is accepting applications for this position. Salary range is \$23,000 to \$26,000 and includes a benefit package. Interested parties contact Chuck Anfield at 815-467-1665.

- Strive for self-improvement through constant self-evaluation.
- Enthusiasm, fairness, moral and physical courage are the four most important aspects of leadership.
- The essence of leadership is integrity, loyalty, caring for your people and doing the honorable thing.
- Have consideration of others.
- Food is very important.
- Showmanship is a vital technique of leadership.
- Never be satisfied; how can it be done better? Strive to do small things well.
- Don't over-inspect or over-supervise.
- The harder they work, the more they brag.
- Keep troops informed; tell them what, how and why. It builds confidence.
- Maintain discipline and command respect.
- Give encouragement. Be diplomatic.
- The ability to speak and write well are two essential tools.
- There is a salient difference between profanity and obscenity.
- Yelling distracts from your dignity; take it aside.
- Stay calm and show little emotion in distress.
- Don't cry to staff. Be a resolute island in all the insanity.
- An organization does well only those things the boss checks.
- Stay ahead of your boss. Your boss is always right.
- Discuss and argue your point of view until a decision is made and then support the whole decision heartedly.
- Learn it right and you'll do it right the rest of your life. Learn it wrong and you'll spend the rest of your life learning how to do it right.
- Morale is a state of mind. It is steadfastness, courage, hope, confidence, zeal, determination and loyalty.

**Esprit de corps . . .** 

somebody from Purdue University. I would like to run some seminars that are funded by the MAGCS: Spanish classes in the fall and a CPR class with training on defibrillators in the spring. Next January (2002), we'll be able to partake of two GCSAA seminars, one on drainage and the other on lake and aquatic management. We had a really good turnout for the March session and would like to repeat this next year.

Medinah C.C. will once again host the Midwest Turf Clinic on November 7, and by now you should all surmise what the theme will be: our 75th anniversary. Just a quick synopsis of the event (nothing is set in stone): a history of the MAGCS, evolution of equipment, statesmen

and mentors, keynote speaker, history of the *Bull Sheet/On Course*, science/ research speaker, and our Association's future.

Also, we are working on compiling a "Midwest Family Tree." Brad Anderson of Midlane C.C. brought this idea, originally conceived by Mr. Bob Williams, to my attention. You should already have received the flyers on this particular topic. The form is pretty self-explanatory; the top section is rather easy and focuses on your club, the bottom section will require you to do some digging. Ask members and long-time employees for information on past superintendents. Try to get accurate dates and spelling of names. Then mail or fax these forms to George Minnis, Brad

Anderson or myself. We will compile the forms, sort them and put them into some kind of binder. Every seven to ten years, we'll update the list. If you have any questions, please feel free to call any of us mentioned above.

I certainly hope you all come to at least one monthly meeting to enjoy the gorgeous golf course, the great food and spirits, and the lovely beverage ladies; may the educational speakers get your undivided attention, too! If anybody has any ideas for education programs or wants to speak at a monthly meeting, please contact me. Enjoy your season! 