

Employee Orientation — It's a Start

Does this sound familiar? It is April 1 and you are scrambling around looking to hire employees for the season. A prospective employee stops by and asks for a job. You conduct a thorough interview and offer him or her a position on the crew.

Orientation is conducted by one of our crew foremen, both of whom are bilingual. This allows the new hire to receive training from a senior member of the crew. It also validates the foreman's position as a crew leader and a supervisor.

The only problem is that the thorough interview consists of checking your prospect for a pulse, holding a mirror to his mouth to see if he is breathing and shaking his hand to see if the core body temperature is above 50 degrees. If he or she happens to pass any one of these requirements, the individual is then hired on the spot. Within minutes, this new employee is paired up with a fellow employee and is out raking bunkers, mowing greens or using a weed-eater, being a productive member of the crew.

For me, this hiring methodology was all too familiar. Then last year, as I reviewed our final payroll summary, I was shocked to discover that even with a peak summertime crew of 19 employees, I had more than 35 different employees on payroll in my department. This worked out to an annual turnover rate of 85%. Is it any wonder that we had struggled with consistency in the quality of our work? Maybe our quality wasn't consistent because our crew wasn't consistent.

Over the winter, we targeted this as an area where we wanted to make improvements. We reviewed our recruiting techniques, compensation, benefits and our training program. While all of these topics are worthy of discussion, this article focuses on changes we made to improve our training program. We wanted to make sure that once we did hire employees, we were providing them with proper training so that they would understand their new job and what would be expected of them.

To accomplish this, we decided to implement a formal employee orientation program. As we worked to develop this program, it quickly became apparent that we would first need to take one giant step backward and prepare a series of written documents upon which we would base our program. These documents include:

- Employee application form;
- Job description;
- Job offer;

- Safety policies;
- Hazard-communication training program;
- Lightning-safety policy;
- Work rules and standard of conduct statement;
- Lock-out /tag-out policy;
- Open door grievance policy;
- Spill-response training;
- Disciplinary policy; and
- No-solicitation policy.



Once finalized, these documents were compiled into an employee manual. This manual became the cornerstone of our orientation program. We had the employee manual translated into Spanish and it, along with a series of bilingual training videos, allows us to offer our orientation program to all new employees in either English or Spanish.

Orientation is conducted by one of our crew foremen, both of whom are bilingual. This allows

the new hire to receive training from a senior member of the crew. It also validates the foreman's position as a crew leader and a supervisor. As the foreman conducts the orientation session, he works off of a prepared outline. This helps assure that each orientation session has covered the same material. As the foreman covers each item on the outline, he checks it off. At the end of the orientation, this checklist and an

employee sign-off sheet are stapled together and put into the employee's personal file.

The employee sign-off sheet appears at the end of the employee manual. After each topic in the manual is discussed, the employee turns to the sign-off sheet and initials the proper subject (safety rules, sexual harassment policy, hazard communication training,

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etc.). When the entire orientation session is complete, the employee signs and dates the sheet and turns it in to the superintendent. The employee keeps the manual for his/her own reference.

New Employee Orientation: Step by Step

We do orientation on the first day of a new hire's employment. This is often inconvenient. It can interfere with our planned work schedule, especially since it ties up one of our crew foremen, but it is important to cover this material as early as possible so that everyone gets started out on the right foot. The break room is the setting for conducting all orientation.

As the foreman conducts the orientation, he works off the following outline:

1. Verify that the job application form has been completed and turned in.
2. Verify that the employee has had an opportunity to review his/her written job description.
3. Verify that the employee has received and accepted a job offer for the position for which he/she has been hired.
4. Verify that the employee has completed I-9 and W-4 forms and has provided the superintendent with documentation of I-9 eligibility.
5. Assign the employee a locker and put his/her name on it.



6. Issue the employee his/her safety equipment:
 - hard hat;
 - rain gear;
 - ear protection;
 - work gloves; and
 - safety glasses.
7. Review uniform policy with the employee. Have him/her complete the uniform agreement.
8. View the video titled "This is a Golf Course" and go through video training booklet.
9. Go through the Employee Manual, pages 4-6:
 - Introduction;
 - Equal Employment Opportunity;
 - Employment Categories;
 - Hours/Leave/Pay; and
 - Job-Related Injuries and Accidents.
10. View the video titled "Safety Basics on the Golf Course" and go through video training booklet.
11. Go through the Employee Manual, pages 6-12:
 - Safety Policies;
 - Lightning Safety;
 - Rules, Standards of Conduct and Disciplinary Action;
 - Employee Areas and Personal Equipment;
 - Sexual Harassment Policy; and
 - Solicitation Policy.
12. View video titled "Crew Etiquette" and go through video training booklet.
13. Go through Employee Manual, pages 13-16:
 - Before You Start Work;
 - Employee Benefits; and
 - Employee Golf.
14. View video titled "Hazard Communications Training" and go through video training booklet.
15. Go through Employee Manual, pages 17-22:
 - Hazard Communication Training;
 - Spill Response Training; and
 - Lock-out/Tag-out Training.
16. Verify that employee has completed and signed "Acknowledgement Form." This form documents that the employee has received training regarding specific club policies. Turn the acknowledgement form into the superintendent.

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Figure 1.

Top 20 List

- 1.) Arrive to work on time.
- 2.) Never put your hands or feet by a cutting unit while equipment is running.
- 3.) Fix ball marks daily.
- 4.) Use a dew whip daily.
- 5.) Wear appropriate uniform and hard hat daily.
- 6.) Never engage or disengage P.T.O. or cutting units while the motor is running at a fast idle.
- 7.) Speed limit on the course and around the shop is 10 mph.
- 8.) Weekend work is required.
- 9.) Do not put grass in the paper dumpster or vice versa.
- 10.) Do not make sharp turns with the equipment. All turns should be “teardrop”-shaped turns.
- 11.) Do not mow over bunker rakes, golf balls or paper trash.
- 12.) When mowing, you must move all ropes and stakes and return them to their proper location when finished.
- 13.) Any equipment being transported in a trailer must be secured with a bungee cord and the tailgate on the trailer must be secured.
- 14.) Carts and equipment are not allowed to travel through the parking lot. Use the cartpaths.
- 15.) Fill your equipment with fuel in the morning before going out and in the afternoon when you are finished.
- 16.) Do not disturb the golfers.
- 17.) Disciplinary action = Verbal warning with retraining
= Written warning with retraining
= Suspension with written guidelines and retraining
= Termination
- 18.) No use of cell phones or radios while working.
- 19.) Clean all equipment daily.
- 20.) Clean out carts daily, return all tools to their proper location and park the equipment in its proper spot.

17. Review the "Top 20 List" (Figure 1). This is a list of topics that we have found we need to constantly review with both new and veteran employees.
 - Gas can cabinet: no smoking, gas vs. diesel vs. gas/oil mixture, if unsure when fueling equipment ask the mechanic.
 - Fuel pump: no smoking, gas vs. diesel, if unsure when fueling equipment, ask the mechanic.
 - Dumpsters: landscape vs. paper. Review proper disposal of paper trash, aluminum cans, landscape waste.
 - Equipment wash-up areas: wash all equipment daily.
 - Employee parking area.
 - Shop cleaning duties: daily, weekly.
 - Proper parking of equipment in the shop. All carts cleaned out nightly. All tools returned to their proper location.
18. Take the employee on a shop tour:
 - Mechanics area: no working on personal vehicles, no unauthorized use of shop tools or supplies.
 - Fire extinguishers: location and use.
 - Eye-wash stations: location and use.
 - First-aid kit: location, report all injuries to supervisor.
 - Hazard communication station and location of MSDS sheets.
 - Lock-out/tag-out station: location and use.
 - Spill response station: location and use.
 - Rinsate pad: location and use.
19. View the video titled "The Knowledgeable Operator" and go over video training booklet.
20. Train the new employee to operate a carry-all.
21. Train the new employee to operate a Cushman.
22. Give the employee a scorecard that contains a map of the golf course. Explain that it is important that he/she learns the layout of the course and the difference between a green, a tee, a fairway, a bunker, the intermediate rough and the rough. Teach the employee to use the tee signs to help guide him/her through the course.
23. Give the employee one of the superintendent's business cards. On the business card, use a highlighter to mark the phone number for the shop. Explain to the employee that if he can not make it in to



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work, he must call the shop. If no one answers, the employee can leave a message on the voicemail.

24. Take the employee on a tour of the course. Discuss course layout, cart rules and usage (where to drive, where not to drive), and crew etiquette in regards to the use of carts and equipment around the golfers.
25. Explain to the employee that proper communication is the key to our success as a crew. If the employee is unsure or does not understand a job assignment, it is important to ask questions!
26. Introduce the new employee to his fellow crew members.


It takes eight hours for the foreman to conduct a complete employee orientation program.

Tangible Results

This year, with a peak crew of 20 employees, we have had a total of 25 employees on payroll year to date. This represents an employee turnover rate of 25% — a 60% improvement over last year. As I mentioned earlier, our training program was just one of the areas where we looked to make improvements. We also evaluated recruiting practices and our compensation/benefits package. The decrease in employee turnover has resulted in a crew that is more solidified in their commitment to each other and to their work.

The most difficult part of putting together the orientation program was writing the employee manual. If you are planning to write or update an employee manual, I would recommend seeking expert professional help. Since our club chose not to, we put our employee manual together using a series of policy

statements that already existed at the club, an old version of an employee manual that the club no longer used, and samples from other clubs and the GCSAA. If you would like a sample of our manual so that you can better see how the manual and the orientation outline work together, you can download it off the MAGCS Web site.

Although we have made considerable improvement in our orientation of new employees, we believe that this is an evolving program and that it will need to be updated on a yearly basis. Already we have made adjustments to the outline so that it is easier for the trainer and the employee to follow. But for now, it's a good start. 



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