



Palm Beach Trade Winds



EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

When one thinks of the topic employee motivation, you sure better realize how important it is to work with non-materialistic items and make them as valuable as gold. Think of the many songs that have been written about love and wealth. Seldom do you find golf courses allowing laborers to become wealthy, while you sure need them to love their job. Golf courses are quite typically at the lower end of the pay scales, especially compared to construction labor. In the Boca Raton area, construction is traveling faster than the speed of light. It is nearly impossible to obtain skilled help, because of the fact that many other jobs are available at much higher pay scales. True, the work load is of a different capacity; however, the golf course maintenance skill is unique and must be appre-

ciated for its values. Your salaries budget had better be at least competitive enough to lure help, otherwise you'll find yourself singing the blues from a deep hay field. When the sad fact is revealed that monies are not always available, it is at this point you must become a magician. You must lure your help with non-materialistic items that one might not have enjoyed with their previous employment. You must at least have the basics, i.e. company benefits of health care, uniforms, lunch programs and it is even getting to the point where periodical company parties are even assumed. All of these items are the basics which one can find readily available anywhere. Since exorbitant labor salaries are not available and the club's benefits stop here, this is where you begin!

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WHEN IT COMES TO ELECTRONIC IRRIGATION CONTROLLERS, LET THE SPECIALIST HANDLE YOUR COURSE!



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It is at this point, the non-materialistic items must appear via your imagination. True we all have bills to pay and money is a key element to human survival. Believe it or not, money is not everything; if it were, we would all be bank robbers. The human elements of pride and respect being reinforced with being a part of a family unit with a purpose will produce a happiness that can not be purchased. The ability for a maintenance crew to be unified and perform as a family unit, will undoubtedly produce an excellent golf course where turnover is seldom and the wanting to seek greener pastures will be diminished. I believe the family unit can band together to overcome the problems of which the superintendent does not have the ability to resolve for the crew. How often does one hear a manager say "if I only had a good crew". Just as much as your job responsibilities were not given to you on a gold platter, you also must be innovative to motivate a crew to be a part of the family unit. The phenomena of the family unit must spread from your portion of responsibility downward on the chart via the assistants, foremen, mechanics, and downward to the very bottom of the totem pole. This will achieve success, not only for yourself, but for everyone.

When I began work at Boca Greens four years ago, during early construction, our crew started at a capacity of just one. As responsibilities increased, so did the crew, while a small family unit evolved. Change of personnel occurred; however, the family element remained. Now the project is completed and matured with larger responsibilities extending to a 16 member crew. The family unit has produced a keen sense of responsibility for all crew members, with self recognition for a job well done. There is little turnover as seldom does one find a crew that is satisfactory at all levels of help. This type of occurrence for the family unit to develop is rare as compared to the duties of walking into a large complex and starting at the very beginning.

Such is the case at Quail Ridge Country Club, where Tim Hiers resides as superintendent. I always notice within his crew, an element of professionalism, along with pride that produces exceptional results. Tim feels motivation begins at the top, "the superintendent must first of all try, and try very hard. If you do not care, then obviously your employees will not care. In order to command respect, you must be fair with consistent discipline, so they have an understanding of your direction. Give an employee a

sense of responsibility and pride will prevail in their workmanship, while less absenteeism and tardiness will be the by-products."

You not only rely on your crew to create the product, but you must trust them. A sense of being within the family unit will motivate employees to expand their area of responsibilities. Pride will create an expanded awareness on the golf course. A problem can be resolved more readily, if the laborer is conscientious and reports such problems to you. If the laborer brings to a supervisor's attention such an example, and they see it resolved, a sense of pride is immensely increased. Tim is an advocate of good communication throughout all levels of maintenance which is strengthened by the concept of cross training. Flexibility of operation creates a well rounded knowledge of maintenance in all areas. I have noticed how the operator of our collar machine often would not cut far enough into the fairway; however, when he was upgraded to mow with the fairway unit, he began to appreciate the fact of the collar machine needing to go into the fairway, if the larger machine was to blend the two areas into one. If sickness occurs or crew members leave, that specific function can still be performed while the new operator typically is proud of his new responsibility.

If all of these concepts are not enough, what does one do, if labor productivity decreases because of boredom from monotony. Once again, good communication prevails. Tim feels it is important to have a total understanding of your crew from all dimensions. One should know the personality of each individual, to harmoniously make all run smooth. If one is something short of a psychiatrist and sociologist, operations would seem to go rather easy. Considering most of us are horticulturists, quite often with little more to offer than the industry next door, we should be proud of our course and especially our crew for it is they, who really make it happen.

Within the past year a professor with a doctorate in horticulture came by to visit me. He made a comment about how impressed he was by the elements of good communication, efficient productivity while everyone seemed to enjoy their job. He thought about how he, perhaps, would have liked to have been a golf course superintendent. That struck me so odd, as I myself envied the prestige of a Phd., to think of how I would enjoy being so profoundly knowledgeable as himself, and to be in total control in a type of field such as his. ■

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