

Treasure Coast "Tide"ings

Employee Morale And Motivation

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While payroll generally burdens more than 50% of a golf course's operating budget, the efficient use of this expenditure is usually given less thought and attention than lesser items such as fertilizer or pesticides. Superintendents are continually reviewing the efficiency of preventative maintenance programs, fertilizer and pesticide strategies. Employee motivation strategies should be, continually reviewed and improved on as well.

Perhaps the words programs and strategies are too specific. Motivation is an inner drive that can only come from ones self. The employer can only help this inner drive to appear.

The most elaborate motivation strategies, consisting of bonuses, high salaries and other incentives, can produce poor results if the working environment is not also made more conducive to a higher degree of motivation.

To check your working environment ask yourself "why are these people working for me?"

According to the late Professor A.H. Maslow, "Everyone wants to work." This is necessary to keep one supplied with food and shelter, but this is the lowest form of motivation and does little to improve a golf course. This is where the manager comes in, it is his responsibility to encourage employee motivation from this point.

Motivation will only flourish when a person feels a sense of security, importance and belonging in his job. Job security is the first responsibility of the superintendent. Once employees have been trained in their job it is important that they understand that quality work will insure their job security and help in job advancement. It is important that this is not an idle promise. It will be easy for them to see from others on your crew if quality and job security do not run hand in hand.

After employees are reasonably sure of their employment stability, motivation will usually falter if a sense of importance and belonging have not been developed.

If employees are properly trained in their jobs, they will generally improve work methods and techniques on their own. These new methods will become a source of pride and give them a sense of importance in the overall operation. It is tempting for the manager to stop employees from experimenting with new work methods, but is generally more advantageous to allow them to experiment and discuss the pros and cons of the new methods afterwards.

The days of totalitarian management are past. Due to electronic and printed media, employment is relatively easy to find and an employee will not tolerate harsh treatment and lack of respect for his or her accomplishments. Fear will cause many employees to work harder, take care of the course and machinery only while the supervisor is there. The cost of employee turnover and equipment abuse must also be taken into account.

With the high cost of labor and the problems caused by employee turnover, it is imperative that today's golf course superintendent be more attentive to the needs of his staff. He must recognize that the small expenditure of time given to employee needs today will reap large benefits to the whole operation tomorrow. ■

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