

In The Real World,

The Education Continues . . .

by Cheryl Jones

Just when you thought you knew it all. . .WHAM. Let's talk freight train in the face feelings here. Fresh out of school, smug with the feeling of ACCOMPLISHMENT - of finally *arriving* but arriving only to find out how wet behind the ears you really are. If only your new fairways were as "green" as you!

A young man graduated from Lake City Community College in April and entered the golf course profession. The transition went smoothly. When asked what was the most difficult aspect in making this transition from school to his Assistant Superintendents position, he replied "getting your plans accomplished." Projects that look absolutely beautiful on paper, with all the "I's dotted and "T's crossed, in reality may not see the light of day unscathed. Those plans must come face to face with the dreaded unforeseen and uncontrollable circumstances. Included in (but certainly not limited to!) these are the following:

- 1) Weather
- 2) Employee personality conflicts and absenteeism
- 3) Supplier delays
- 4) Owner's suggestions - which you want to implement

as quickly as possible, but may have to alter your non-essential plans to do so.

Let's look at a typical day, and eliminate many of these hypothetical circumstances. The day is bright and sunny, your outstanding crew gets along together very well and all show up, the owner is happy and satisfied with your progress - but late this Monday afternoon your herbicide supplier calls to say your delivery, due tomorrow, will be a little late. An unforeseen and uncontrollable circumstance has just reared its ugly head. It's frustrating to be a day behind in your carefully laid-out plans. It's even more frustrating to fall a week behind. The herbicides are finally delivered late Saturday afternoon. Since it looks like rain you don't begin to apply the chemicals. How bright you were, you congratulate yourself as it begins to rain on Sunday morning. By Sunday afternoon the steady light rain has become a steady downpour. Driving home from the course Sunday night, you assure yourself that the weather will clear, and your plans will be accomplished tomorrow. Have you forgotten Murphy's Law?

Your dependable employees all slosh in cheerfully on Monday. . .wade in on Tuesday. . .swim in on Wednesday. . .row in on Thursday. . .and by Friday you haul out the old pontoon boat, skim lightly past the alligators on the lakes (which used to be your fairways) to rescue an indomitable golfer stranded on a high tee. On Saturday you snorkle out to check your drains and come to the conclusion that this indeed is one of those unforeseen and uncontrollable problems.

Sunday dawns bright and clear, and your whole crew voluntarily shows up to help clean up any damage. Shortly thereafter, your employees report that your carefully pampered greens are now lovely lime-green and buttercup yellow colors. And the television weatherman grinningly announces that you can expect rain, rain, and more rain for the next two weeks. College instructors never gave you a "WHAT TO DO IN THIS SITUATION" manual. . .

One lesson this former student learned outside the lecture halls is how very valuable a good employee can be. Those rare gems who are prompt, reliable, trust-worthy, take the initiative, "work-plus" and have common sense are worth their weight in gold. All the meticulous planning in the world will not lead to timely accomplishment without good employees. What follows is a list of incentives our new assistant Superintendent will attempt to implement to KEEP his good employees.

1) WAGES GOOD

After spending years on the other side of the desk this concept is underlined. You get what you pay for.

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2) BENEFITS

This is another *BIGGIE* to provide if at all possible. A health insurance option is a large Plus to the good employee with three kids at home.

3) EQUAL TREATMENT

Show no favoritism. Bad feelings produce poor work.

4) PRAISE

Everybody needs strokes. If a job is well done, a pat on the back with sincere thanks costs nothing but goes a long way.

5) GENUINE CONCERN

A troubled employee may have difficulty producing. Show your employee that you care and are available to listen.

6) ENCOURAGE INPUT

Answer your employees questions and invite him to ask questions when he needs clarification of his work. Encourage suggestions! All those paid eyes on the course may see ways to cut costs and time spent that you have overlooked.

7) SHOW INTEREST IN DAILY PROGRESS

Ride around when you can to check on the progression of work. Knowing the boss is interested enough to get down and show the employees the best way to lay sod — and why — sparks interest and renews effort.

8) PROVIDE WELL-MAINTAINED EQUIPMENT

An employee should expect that the mower he takes out

in the morning will not break down a dozen times before noon, wasting both his time and your money. At no time should an employee feel qualms about the safety of operating his machine.

9) RESOLVE CONFLICTS

Get to the bottom of the employees conflicts immediately and straighten out misunderstandings.

10) CARE ABOUT COMFORT

A clean air-conditioned lunch lounge shows the employee that you care for his comfort and value him as a human being. You'll get a tenfold return on your investment.

**11) ENCOURAGE CAREER
ADVANCEMENT/DEVELOPMENT**

**12) MAKE AVAILABLE TRADE
Publications
(THE FLORIDA GREEN!)**

Eager, intelligent, thoughtful and sensible golf course employees who show an interest in bettering themselves, should be encouraged to get that education necessary to turn them into eager, intelligent, thoughtful and sensible superintendents.

There is so much more to this profession than "BOOK LEARNIN'" can teach you. For our new Assistant Superintendent, the REAL Education has just begun. ■

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