

Employers must help instill work ethic

By VINCE ALFONSO

In spite of our society's extraordinary efforts to educate its citizens, I wonder sometimes just how well we're doing. Especially, if we focus on how well our educational system is equipping our citizens to enter the work place.

For instance, how well are we doing in the area of instilling a sound and solid work ethic? Now, before you jump to your feet to shout out your answer, let me point out the qualities I think you should find in a person with a sound and solid work ethic. A brief list (not in order of importance) includes integrity, honesty, sensitivity, tenacity, dedication, creativity and loyalty. Now jump up and shout, knock yourself out! Do I hear a resounding "You've got to be kidding?" Now, now, aren't we a little testy today — perhaps even bordering on displaying a little cynicism?

Oh, I see your problem. You think I have unfairly placed this responsibility squarely on the shoulders of an overburdened, underfunded educational system. Well, before we get swept away in a wave of emotion, let's at least acknowledge those voices crying "Foul!" You know, those who feel the qualities of which I speak are more the responsibilities on parents alone in 1996?

Statistics show that in the last 20 years the number of children growing up in homes without a male parent has skyrocketed 70 percent. I am not sure just how much we can expect from a single-parent home. In today's culture, it is tough enough to raise children with two parents. It has to be extraordinarily more difficult with one parent. Let's face it, folks, schools, television, media in general and peer groups have had a lot more influence in shaping the values of our work force than any parent, parents and/or church. I really believe this to be true.

So, what does all of this mean for the employers of the world? I think it means that the number of employees who apply for jobs at your facility, that come to you with even a majority of the qualities I have enumerated, is at best a shrinking pool. Therefore, I believe, employers have to get in the business of helping educate and motivate our employees to become men and women of integrity, honesty, sensitivity, tenacity, dedication, creativity and loyalty. We have to provide a work environment that fosters, acknowledges and encourages development of these qualities.

Now, here comes the hard part. Here is how I propose we get started. Let's look in the mirror. What do we see? Let's take an inventory of ourselves in these areas. How do we (honesty) rate ourselves? I propose we get our own house in order first.

Someone once said, "You can't

give what you don't have." In the Bible, the book of Acts, chapter 3, verses 1 through 10, you find the story of St. Peter healing a man who was lame from birth. The man was a beggar who was placed at the gate each morning to ask for alms. When he asked Peter and John for alms, Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, walk." It is a simple thought but oh, how true! How true! We can not give what

we do not have.

I want to challenge you and me as employers to be men and women of character. I want us to be men and women who are in the business of teaching by example. It has to be, "Do as I do, not do as I say." This short, straightforward little story will illustrate it best:

My daddy caught my youngest brother smoking when, I believe, he was a freshman in high school. Dad really laid into him with all of the reasons why he should not

smoke. When he was through, my brother said, "If you'll quit smoking, Dad, I'll quit smoking."

My father stood there in stark silence for what seemed like an eternity to my brother. Then Dad spoke. He said only one word, "Done." They shook hands on it and neither my father nor brother ever smoked again. My daddy was and is a wise man.

If you read this column each month, you are going to find stories to help you get in the business of bringing these qualities out in yourself and in employees. Please feel free to write me to share your stories, so that I can share them with others.

Vince Alfonso Jr. is a past president of the National Golf Course Owners Association and longtime owner of The Rail Golf Course in Springfield, Ill. He recently formed Alfonso Creative Golf Enterprises, Inc., a management consulting firm with special emphasis in promotion, marketing and advertising primarily for daily-fee courses. This is the first of what will become a monthly feature on golf course management issues.

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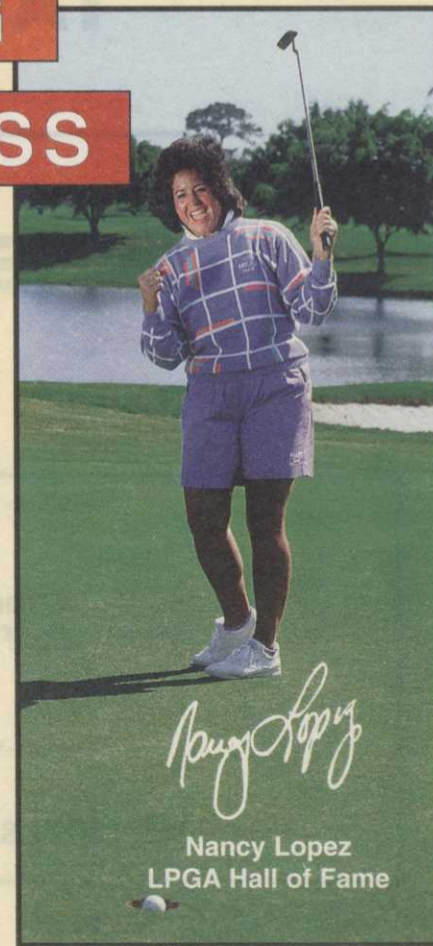
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