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Managing trust

Trust, or the lack of it, is in the news a lot lately, whether the subject is politics, business, sports, entertainment or religion. Trust is an equally important issue in our workaday worlds. As managers, golf course superintendents have to deal with trust at every level. You need to trust your boss or the owner. You need to trust other managers. And you want your employees to trust you – or they won't deal squarely with you.

But what is trust? Recently I heard a presentation on trust that can help you evaluate it objectively. There are four necessary elements of interpersonal trust:

1. Reliability – Does a person do what he says he will do? Does he have integrity? Are his actions living up to the values he claims to have?

2. Openness/honesty – Does a person only give selected facts? Does a person tell white lies? Does a person never volunteer information?

3. Competence – Does a person have the necessary core skills and abilities? Does he have interpersonal skills, including the ability to listen?

4. Concern – Is a person considerate? Does he have a benevolent attitude toward others? Does he think others are as important as he is?

All four elements must be present for interpersonal trust. Two or three aspects won't cut it. For example, if an employee is competent, open and concerned, but not reliable – he sometimes doesn't show up for work on Fridays – you can't trust him.

If you don't trust someone, and you're not exactly sure why, try using the above criteria to figure out what's missing. Managers also can use the criteria to test ourselves in relation to those who work for us.

On March 10th the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service demonstrated why it can be difficult to trust the judgment of our government. The agency announced that it had received enough H-2B petitions to meet this year's congressionally mandated cap of 66,000 new workers. After March 9 no more H-2B petitions were accepted.

Translation: If your application forms were not received by March 9, then you won't get any H-2B help this season. You might have had that help last year – because the government let the quota be exceeded

by almost 20 percent. You might also still get help this year, perhaps later than you would like, because Congress is trying to hammer out a bill to expand the quota by 40,000 to reach a total of 106,000.

Most superintendents with H-2B experience say the program works. Seasonal foreign workers come to the United States with documentation under a program that benefits them and their employers. When done, they go home. They can return the following year if they have a job lined up. If they break the rules while here, they are sent home. No job can be given to an H-2B worker if a qualified U.S. citizen wants it.

No one should have a problem with the government enforcing the law – in this case the quota. But laws should be enforced uniformly year-to-year. The problem with the quota is that it is set too low, especially when you consider how easy it is to enter the country illegally. Some golf courses that can't find legal help might be tempted to hire illegal workers.

Expanding H-2B makes sense for another reason. Given the terrorist threat, H-2B could be a key part of the solution. We're fingerprinting and photographing people who fly into our airports with passports, but in many places, people can walk in illegally. Doesn't common sense tell us that in the interest of national defense, we should seal our borders and only allow qualifying foreign workers to enter under an H-2B program that includes a security check?

Numbers can mislead. The April 5, 2004 issue of *Time* magazine ran a brief item and photo of a golf course under its "Numbers" column. It read, "2.5 billion: Gallons of water it would take to support 4.7 billion people at the U.N. daily minimum." Then, "2.5 billion: Gallons of water used daily to irrigate the world's golf courses." This misinformation positions golf as a wasteful business, but it uses faulty logic – it's not an either-or scenario. According to the U.S. Geological Society, the world has 2 million cubic miles of fresh water stored in the earth, and 60,000 cubic miles stored in lakes, inland seas and rivers (one cubic mile is more than one trillion gallons). Clearly, the world does have water quality and/or water shortage problems in some areas, but it does not lack fresh water. Golf irrigation is not the problem or the solution. GCN

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