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Implement a recruitment plan

Think about the success of great sports coaches – Vince Lombardi of the Green Bay Packers, Don Shula of the Miami Dolphins, Mike Krzyzewski of the Duke Blue Devils and Bobby Cox of the Atlanta Braves. They're outstanding leaders, but they didn't win championships every year because winning a championship requires more than strong leadership. An exemplary coach also must have gifted players and excellent team spirit.

Similarly, a first-rate golf course requires more than a first-rate superintendent. It requires an excellent staff, as well as motivation, commitment and team spirit among all employees. These requirements are influenced greatly by, if not dependent on, recruitment.

With a tightening job market in most parts of the country and uncertainties about immigration policies, some frustrated superintendents and assistant superintendents think hiring reliable employees is impossible. Some resort to hiring whomever can be found.

Recruiting is frustrating for almost all managers; however, it's crucial. Because of the need for excellent employees and a responsibility to the club, it's critical to excel when recruiting. Excellent recruiting is more than just writing want ads. It starts much earlier by developing a recruitment plan.

You wouldn't wait until turf showed a nutrient deficiency to plan your fertilization program, or wait until you found weeds or insects in turf to plan your pesticide program. Waiting until it's time to recruit new employees or fill a position isn't much different.

The first part of a recruitment plan is to consider and shape the image of your facility as an employer. Believe it or not, there are businesses, including golf facilities, that don't have to recruit because they have a waiting list of applicants. They have the image of a preferred employer. Who are the preferred employers in your community? How did they become preferred employers? Here are two examples:

1. A manager of several agricultural businesses, including a turf business, always spoke in the college human resource course I taught. His business was a preferred employer. He would often

sheepishly tell the story of a young man who came to his business seeking employment. After a few minutes of questioning the young man, he realized, to his amazement, he had moved more than 50 miles for the sole purpose of working at his business.

2. A business is a preferred employer for high school students at three local schools. It has mastered the challenge of providing student employees flexibility and knowing they'll show up when assigned work. It accomplished this by providing opportunities for the students to indicate work preference but then required student employees to honor the resulting schedule. It worked.

So how does a golf course become a preferred employer? It's not that different from how a golf course becomes a preferred course for golfers. First, you must provide a great workplace, which doesn't mean excessively high compensation or just being nice to employees. It means you have to have competitive compensation. Most importantly, you must be a great employer by:

- Treating employees with respect;
- Being relentlessly fair to employees;
- Providing clear expectations and detailed feedback;
- Creating opportunities to grow and advance; and
- Developing a team atmosphere that's attractive to join.

Next, you have to promote your course as great workplace. A good place to start for promoting your maintenance staff as a preferred workplace is members or golfers at your course. At many facilities, members look down at the maintenance staff and perhaps all staff. That attitude is detrimental to the future of the club or course as it makes recruitment more difficult. Part of your recruitment plan should be to reduce or eliminate that attitude. Here are some ideas:

1. My wife and I exercise at the St. Paul Gym on the University of Minnesota campus. There's an information board just inside the door. The names

and pictures of every staff member were posted on the board so I was able to learn the names of the employees I interact with. Seeing the pictures personalized the staff for me and provided recognition for them. Why not post pictures of your staff in the pro shop, clubhouse or even near the first tee?

2. Develop a recognition program where employees' accomplishments are highlighted with their name, accomplishment and picture where all can see. The recognition should be for specific accomplishments, not overused employee-of-the-month-type programs.

Starting and continuing programs like these take time and energy. Keeping a program like this in place will happen only if you make it a priority. Making it

a priority can come only from a recognition that being a preferred employer is critical.

Another key part of a recruitment plan is identifying the labor pools that

are most likely to contain excellent candidates for positions on your staff. Thorough recruiting targets specific, identified labor pools rather than the general labor market. Some examples:

- For years, McDonalds has been a master at targeting the pool of part-time high-school students. As that pool shrinks, it's also targeting senior citizens.
- One golf course that targets high school juniors and seniors, who in many cases work at the course through college, has a more select pool. They send a letter to all juniors and seniors elected to the honor society.
- Other golf courses target members of the local school golf team or children of members of the golf club.
- Many of you target the immigrant labor pool; however, this pool is shrinking in many areas of the country.

No one pool fits all. The challenge for you is to develop a recruitment plan complete with the right labor pools and then earn and create an image as a preferred employer within that pool. This isn't easy, but if it were, everyone could do it. GCN

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