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## PRICELESS

One of the most common frustrations I've encountered during my 20 years of working with superintendents is an insufficient budget to pay maintenance staff employees what they deserve. With economic issues facing the golf industry, this frustration will only grow. Perhaps employers need to think differently about compensation.

When thinking about compensation, most people think salary or wages, and other economic benefits such as social security, unemployment insurance, vacation and sick days, health and life insurance, retirement, etc.

Think about why you chose to be a golf course superintendent. Was it because of money? What were the main reasons? I suspect they were mostly noneconomic.

Now, think about why employees work. Economic and noneconomic compensation come to mind. Their economic return includes a salary or hourly wage, as does yours. Your noneconomic compensation includes love of turf and the outdoors, golf, tradition and successes or accomplishments. Noneconomic benefits for the maintenance staff, while not exactly the same as managers, produce similar results. Employees go home with noneconomic benefits such as accomplishments, job satisfaction, being part of a successful crew and personal growth.

With this broader view of compensation, think about what you can do to provide the best possible compensation package for your employees by adding improved noneconomic compensation.

When my sons started to play sports, I enjoyed coaching their baseball teams. Several other coaches in the league believed playing ball should be just about having fun. Although those coaches were well intentioned, I rarely observed their team members getting a lot of satisfaction out of playing baseball. They weren't having fun. As for me, I wasn't overly competitive, yet I provided two things to the kids on the team:

- An opportunity to be a member of a winning team that didn't necessarily mean we won every game. It meant everyone did their best. We got better, and we encouraged rather than criticized each other.

- An opportunity to succeed. Everyone played the same number of innings, but each player was positioned where he had an opportunity to succeed. We didn't put players in key positions until they had a likelihood of succeeding.

In this way, the winning – the satisfaction and fun – came from being a member of a successful team (not necessarily a team with many victories) and from personal success and improvement. Similarly, providing noneconomic compensation for employees isn't about making work fun. It's about being a member of a successful crew, and the personal growth and success that contribute to the crew's success.

The following are suggestions for providing greater noneconomic compensation for your maintenance employees:

1. Provide high-quality, positive feedback. By high quality I mean very specific, so the employee knows exactly what he did to earn the positive feedback. The result of this noneconomic compensation is that most days an employee leaves work with the satisfaction of having had a successful day.

2. Provide maintenance staff opportunities to learn and succeed by building on their strengths. A sense of accomplishment from excelling at some tasks and learning and mastering others provides the noneconomic compensation of satisfaction from accomplishment and growth. The focus on

building on strength comes from excellent research throughout the last two decades that shows we can make greater progress by building on our strengths than by trying, usually unsuccessfully, to overcome our weaknesses.

3. Provide excellent supervision. The relationship an employee has with his supervisor is, apart from his relationship with his family and a few close friends, the most important relationship in his life. Remember the supervisor's responsibility is to provide the training, direction, coaching, and support to enable the employee to succeed.

4. Engage your employees in the success of the course. Do everything you can to encourage your employees to have pride in the course. Each of us wants to be a member of a winning team. Contribute to this form of noneconomic compensation:

- Always speak positively of your course, your club and your industry.
- Continually reinforce your vision for the course and your plans for the future.
- Provide items – hats, shirts, etc. – that confirm their importance to your course
- Seek their ideas and input into course decisions.

Remember noneconomic compensation contributes to the total compensation employees receive and it's the least expensive compensation you can provide. **GCI**

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