

LEAD THE WAY

“Remind them that they still have jobs.” I’m sure you’ve heard this quip recently in response to the question of how to best motivate your staff during this tough economic time?

The stark reality of this statement is cold and honest, but I don’t necessarily believe it’s the correct response. In fact, a part of me cringes every time I hear this used in conversation. It’s not the response of someone who considers himself a leader, which we all need to be as we navigate through this economic quagmire. You see, adversity exposes true leadership abilities in an individual, and it is leadership that drives productive teams, whether they’re maintaining a private golf course or running a Fortune 500 company.

I don’t doubt you made some tough personnel decisions prior to the start of this season. But beware, I’ve seen these decisions sap the morale from a once cohesive workforce, which can be a very dangerous scenario.

But as a manager, whether it’s a team of two or 20, you have the ability to prevent this downward spiral. Instead, use this opportunity to build and strengthen your team.

Through your leadership as a superintendent, a course manager or even club owner, you can redirect setback into forward momentum. Properly leading your team will not only improve morale this season, but also boost performance.

So how do you improve this quality in yourself? It starts with your mind-set and how you approach and interact with your team, says business consultant Joe Calhoon, president of Kansas City-based PriorityAdvantage. While qualities such as courage and integrity are often inherent in a leader, exercising greater patience and humility are traits anyone can improve to better guide their teams.



Mike Zawacki Editor

Calhoon explains that leaders must prioritize the tasks before them and inspire their teams through achievable goals. More importantly, they share these goals with every member and empower them to become active participants in their completion.

Providing a work-life balance is another critical tool for a leader, Calhoon adds. An effective leader recognizes the importance of family and of a life off the course and he makes allowances for the time his team needs outside of the facility. It’s amazing how motivated and effective team members become when they realize their superior understands and appreciates the issues that are important in their lives.

And often forgotten, you need to recognize the emerging leaders in your midst. These circumstances provide great opportunities for “accidental” leaders to rise to the top. And remember, leadership can be contagious. If you’re inspiring individuals, then their actions could influence those around them to achieve and excel, as well.

So the next time someone asks how you’re motivating your crew during this summer slump, tell them you’re focusing them on shared goals this season and you’re using this opportunity to train everyone to become leaders in their own right. And who knows, you may emerge as a more effective leader yourself.

When you have a moment, please tell me how you’re leading your team this season, and perhaps how you’ve had to become a more effective leader to accomplish your goals. E-mail me at mzawacki@gie.net. I look forward to receiving your insight on this topic. **GCI**

On a side note, I’d like to take a moment to recognize everyone who has worked tirelessly on Golf Course Industry over the last year. Recently, GCI’s editorial and design team received a number of accolades, including best opinion/editorial writing, best cover design and best overall publication design in the 2009 Turf & Ornamental Communicators contest. Art director Andrea Vagas received a best-of-show Gardner Award for GCI’s July 2008 issue. In addition, GCI received Best Trade Publication and best trade report for its 2008 Smart Irrigation supplement, as well as other writing awards at the Ohio Excellence in Journalism Awards in June.

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