

Fit Right Manager to Job and Let Him Manage

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When reference is made from time to time that there exists a very great problem in the tremendous turn-over in the management of clubs as a whole, and of golf clubs or country clubs in particular, one is apt to decry the fact; perhaps feel sorrowful over it and say, "It's a pity"; but there are few, I believe, outside of the editor of GOLFDOM and others who deal with many managers all over the country month in and month out, who appreciate the real gravity of the situation.

That there is a tremendous turnover, and an abnormal one, has been brought home very forcibly to me since I became national secretary of the Club Managers' Association of America. The true indication of the numerous changes made each year, either by voluntary resignation on the part of the manager or through pressure brought to bear by his employers, comes through the address file of our association with the continual changing of addresses of managers in all types of clubs, but to the greatest degree in the country clubs. I was naturally interested in this condition; first, because of the great amount of work which is placed upon the secretary's shoulders in keeping his correspondence records in proper order, and then again by comments made by the editor of GOLFDOM Magazine in regard to this situation. In response to an inquiry on the part of Mr. Graffis to make some comment on the reason for this abnormal turn-over, I have taken the opportunities afforded me in my contacts with the large groups of managers in different sections of the country, of getting expressions of opinions from those who had made recent changes, as to their reason for so doing and, on the other side, I have talked to officials of clubs in whose hands rests the responsibility for engaging and discharging managers. It can be readily imagined by those who have had close contact with these conditions, that the story would be one of many volumes, but I do believe that it can be condensed sufficiently, mere-

ly touching the high spots, so as to give some general idea as to the outstanding reasons for the condition which exists in this industry, and perhaps at the same time a solution may present itself.

Poor Picking Primary Fault

In the first place, we have to consider that although clubs range financially on a par with business enterprises, they are rarely considered as such by those who are financially responsible for their operation. I think this is the crux of the entire situation. No business man would think of having selected for his board of directors men who were picked merely from a popularity standpoint or because of their social standing. He would, rather, select men who were familiar with his business, or, if it were a technical line, perhaps original in itself for which men of experienced training could not be secured, he would select for his board men who at least were successful business executives. In a few clubs it is true that the members of governing boards or house committees are men who have had a broad business training which would fit them to see the club's true business aspect and thus be able to lend their support and intelligence to the manager.

In the cases where perhaps this ideal type of governing board may have been secured, you will of course find a very successful club, providing they have used their ability to the extent of selecting a man equally capable as themselves in a business sense, plus the technical training in club management, to handle the managerial functions of their operations.

There are cases also where this same ideal type of governing body may have been secured, but whose personal feelings or temperament may be such that they abandon their business judgment the minute they come into contact with a club problem and treat it as something entirely foreign to a business condition. This, of course, comes from the practices of the past when clubs were informal proposi-

tions, as far as the financial side was concerned, and were small enough and simple enough so that the problems involved were not important enough to be classified as 'business ventures.'

Elections Bring Upheavals

About 75 per cent of the managers whom I questioned had a similar story to tell. They were engaged to manage a club by a certain board of governors or house committee. This committee had ideas which, perhaps, were compatible with the manager's ideas based on his training and experience, and with this harmonious feeling existing and co-operation which resulted, the club had a successful administration. But, unlike any other business, the board changes the following year, or if it has the rotation system, at least a new house committee is appointed.

Now it may have happened that some of the members of the club elected to the new house committee were not favorable or friendly to the policies of the last one and so they take it out on the manager, either having made up their minds to get rid of him because they felt he was responsible to a great extent for those things which didn't please them, or, on the other hand, the things which they recommend for the administration during the coming year, are entirely opposed to good practice or sensible procedure from a technical viewpoint in club management. It naturally follows, therefore, that if, in the first place they are after the manager's scalp, they make it so uncomfortable for him that he gets out, or in the second place, if he has any pride in his profession and his reputation to make good, he will refuse to continue to operate a club in a manner which he knows is not what his training and experience has taught him to be the best method of management, and so he gets out.

The next problem involved is for the new committee to engage a new manager and in nine cases out of ten, I doubt that the committee is capable of selecting the right type of man for the job.

This is no reflection on the average house committee, but rather an unfortunate circumstance, is that the problems of management have not been sufficiently aired, discussed and advertised so that the average member might have a better knowledge of what is required for club management.

Where a new man comes on the job, in many cases inferior and unfitted for his position, through the errors that he makes or the policy which he follows of trying

to operate a club from "plans laid out by architects" who are not skilled in these highly technical problems, he not only brings discredit upon himself, and lasts but a short time on the job, but he brings difficulties to the club which make it increasingly hard for the new and capable man who may come to rectify those conditions and furthermore, the whole "kit and kaboodle" of club managers are condemned as inefficient. As I said, we could write volumes based on personal experiences of managers and committees, but I think that the main questions involved center upon the following points:

The Board's Guide-Posts

First—that the committee or board be thorough business men, willing to see business methods practiced in the club, up to the point, of course, where they do not exclude club spirit;

Secondly—that they attempt to learn something about the technical side of management, so that they will not force upon a manager policies and ideas which are not conducive to sane, sensible and efficient management;

Third—that a standard of management be set up whereby board members may apply a yardstick to the prospective manager, so that he can be properly measured for the job and be assured they are getting a capable man.

Fourth—that a thorough understanding exist between the employer and employee, namely, the board and manager before he takes over the administration concerning his responsibility, duties, his authority, and how far it extends, and also that the committee or board be clear in its mind as to its policies, and lay them down for the manager at the very beginning of his office.

"Who They Are" No Criterion

No doubt someone will ask how this standard of management referred to previously may be compiled for the use of those entrusted with the employment of managers. If there is sufficient interest, I would be glad to present for you, such a standard as a result of the deliberations and study of a group of the foremost managers in this country as to what they believe to be the proper qualifications for a club manager. As long as boards of directors, or governors are chosen because of who they are instead of what they know, you are going to have an increasing turnover of managers each year.

As long as proper judgment is not used in the selection of men to fill man-

agerial positions, you are going to have constant changes because it is no more true that every man who represents himself as being a club manager is a practical, successful manager, any more than every man who calls himself a golfer comes in that category—just because he says he is a golfer. The chances are, ten to one that he is just a dub.

Certainly a man with considerable money which he invested in a manufacturing business of which he knew absolutely nothing, as far as the details of the product were concerned, would attempt to dictate policies to those whom he employed to manage that business if he employed them because of their proven ability. He would only be "gumming up the works" and the pocketbook would be bound to suffer eventually.

I must be fair, so I do not say that the reason for this great turnover and the various problems that arise between manager and clubs is entirely the fault of boards and committees. I have a full realization of the shortcomings of managers and I will admit that we have many managers in this country who would be better off trying to do something else because they certainly have neither the ability or personality to be successful club managers.

The solution to the problem therefore means a more sensible selection of boards, a more careful selection of managers by these boards, as well as closer co-operation and greater understanding between the two.

Last, but not least, the sins of a board, or committee, should not be visited upon the manager, and when members will realize that the manager in most cases is hampered by lack of authority and must follow the dictates of those who are his superiors, they will be more lenient in their judgment, and the desire for revenge will not exist in their minds when eventually they emerge from the rank of membership and become officers of the club. Rather, will they understand the conditions under which the manager had to operate and attempt to make his task an easier one by greater understanding and co-operation, during their term of office.

When that time comes you will find the average manager eager to react to better treatment and we will have fewer changes in management, greater efficiency of operation and what is most important, better service and happier financial results.

What's Wrong with This Picture of House Cost?

C. R. OREMUS, secretary-manager director of the Erie Downs G. & C. C., at Bridgeburg, Ont. (near Buffalo), sends in his club's dining-room statement for the last two years, asking GOLFDOM to print it so he can get discussion or constructive criticism.

In explaining the statement, Mr. Oremus says:

"We have 300 members with no expensive clubhouse or equipment and crowded conditions, charging \$1.50 for steak and chicken dinners, also an a la carte menu. The employes' meals charged at 75c each, they eating same food as the members. The food costs are 33 per cent higher than same food in States because of duty and sales tax going into Canada.

"The ice and electricity were charged as house expense, and no doubt weren't any higher than years previous. I also might say that our dining-room opened May 1 and closed as of this report, considerable being lost in November because of weather conditions, which made poor patronage of a golf club." The statement:

November, 1929

Statement of Restaurant: Income and Expense Increase:	1929 Current Year	1928 Previous Year
Sales	\$13,917.52	\$10,752.31
All employes' meals	3,798.25	3,190.87
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	\$17,715.77	\$13,943.18
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Expenses:		
Foods	\$11,022.51	\$10,285.50
Supplies	190.79	392.68
Employees—		
Wages	5,026.70	2,777.00
Meals	1,461.91	1,233.75
Electricity		227.44
Laundry	365.19	539.71
Ice		142.50
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	\$18,067.10	\$15,598.58
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Net income or loss*	\$ 351.33*	\$ 1,655.40*

*Loss in bold face.