

Training and Security to Attract A-1 Club Help

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AT the Los Angeles Country Club we are conducting a monthly restaurant and bar business 110% greater than our pre-war business with 74% of our pre-war staff and, believe it or not, we are still giving good service. Of course, it is not up to our pre-war service but it is service that we are not ashamed of and do not attempt to explain away by reminding our members that there is a war on.

It has been accomplished by assembling and training a crew that moves much faster than the greater percentage of our pre-war crew and does it more cheerfully. They are willing to move faster and do it cheerfully because they have been given every consideration by the officers and directors of the club.

This consideration includes a health and accident insurance policy and an old age retirement policy, both of which are entirely paid for by the club. There is also a fund for emergency loans without cost of any kind. The administrator of the insurance and loan funds also acts as personnel counselor and is always available to employees in time of difficulty.

The grounds crew numbers approximately half that of the pre-war crew and even so keep two 18-hole courses in very enviable condition. Through the efforts of our Supt. of Grounds, William Beresford, and with the cooperation of the Greens committee, working conditions on the golf courses have been improved to the extent that the men now do their work with enthusiasm.

When the war is over and our members are able to travel again, we anticipate that our volume of business and volume of play will have a tendency toward the pre-war levels. By retaining the employee benefits that have been instituted and by making full use of our personnel relationship program, we anticipate that our post-war pay roll cost will be less than the pre-war and the service will actually be improved.

Bar and restaurant costs have been brought into line and these departments are now operating on a break-even basis which has always been the intent of the policy of operation of the Club.

While menus are naturally much more restricted than formerly and certain social functions have been discontinued entirely,

the Board of Directors is so pleased with the results of our war time operation that I do not believe they will ever permit the lowering of prices to pre-war levels, except to the extent that prices can be lowered and still maintain our break-even basis of operation.

Our experience with the personnel problem suggests that one of the improvements the better types of clubs may receive as a result of changes made compulsory by the war is that of better-trained and more reliable help, with less turnover in employment.

The old days of the obsequious sort of club employee have passed, we might as well admit that. And the days of the catch-as-catch-can employee who fitted into the uncertain loads of country clubs and its frequently inadequate help quarters, we also hope have departed.

In the place of these obsolete factors the club must attract good help by providing attractive and steady jobs for employees who make the club their life's business. Even with the possibility of much more personnel of rather good standard being available after war industry lets down, the relationship of efficient help to operating efficiency and tone has been impressed on all of us too much during wartime to permit any casual hiring and training after the war.

Our training program at the Los Angeles CC is conducted as much as a matter of employee satisfaction as it is for the benefit of the club members and balance sheet.

It is based on periodic meetings, usually weekly, of employees and department heads. At these meetings problems of the moment are discussed and methods of service are discussed and demonstrated.

When we reach what we all believe is a degree of perfection that cannot be excelled in our club operation we intend to have a service manual printed for all departments and given to each employee.

It is very practical evidence that the employee training plan on this platform is succeeding, for we have not yet printed our manual. We have our weeks when we are confident that everything is running perfectly smoothly despite the varying conditions to which club operation must adjust itself in wartime.

And then some new problem will arise, or some ingenious and thoughtful member of our force will have an idea of improving some time-honored method of club operation. Then we'll discuss the idea and subject it to discreet tests to see if it is worthy of inclusion in our manual.

I am certain that this degree of interest and cooperation could not have been attained were it not for the fact that our club officials decided to provide security and other inducements that identify the Los Angeles CC as a very good place for a very good worker.

And to be perfectly frank, I doubt that country club officials often have gone into this matter as thoroughly and as studiously as our club's men have. The house help problem, club officials generally consider is the exclusive headache of the manager—or, if he doesn't mind migraine, the house chairman can share the pain with the manager.

I believe that subconsciously many club officials are inclined to believe that the help should have a wonderful time and be grateful for working at a country club. The awful truth is that it doesn't work out that way.

Problems of clubhouse construction for service and help quarters, uncertain days and hours and volume of business, the delicate handling necessary in an establishment where each member considers himself owner, are headaches for the employees too. And to get and keep the right sort of help the club management

policy has to be one that takes due consideration of this fact.

The hell of it around a club—and it will be a sensational disclosure to some club officials—the member isn't always right. But part of the job of the competent club employee is to smooth out such situations tactfully, without sacrificing his self-respect as a free-born American citizen.

What we want, and insist on at our club, are self-respecting employees. Otherwise the work can't be correctly done.

Where I am positive our officials have set the sights that first-class country club operating must shoot to from this time on, is in this sort of protection for employees. It's a group policy that we worked out with the John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Co. It is the sort of thing that better clubs are going to have to do to meet the competition for better employees.

There long has been a sharp realization of the necessity of a first class club attracting and holding the most desirable membership candidates. But I don't think we have placed nearly enough accent in club management on the equally important point of a club attracting and holding the most desirable job candidates.

That is something we have given a great deal of thought to at the Los Angeles CC, and it's cost us money, too. But it hasn't cost us money net, nor has it cost us nearly the worries that club management usually is heir to in the personnel problem.

When the todd rural school north of St. Joseph, Mo., burned last February, the St. Joseph Country Club offered its ballroom as a schoolroom for the youngsters. The kids also have use of space between the 10th and 18th fairways as their playground at recess. The youngsters are delighted with their temporary classroom, and the St. Joe club's members are getting a great kick out of providing this opportunity for the children.

