

Service vs. servant — attitude makes the difference

by John P. Daschler



You have just finished the 18th hole and walked into the clubhouse; it's hot; you just blew a 3-footer and didn't break 100. But out of nowhere a polite voice asks, "You look a bit tired. How about a little delicious lunch and a drink to pick you up?" You start to feel better immediately.

How come it doesn't always happen that way? Where I play golf, the discussion goes something like this: "You want something? Just sit down somewhere, I'll get back to you in a minute." Later, after you make four trips to the water fountain, one of the member's kids shows up and takes your order (usually wrong). Sound familiar?

The golf course is, indeed, a remarkable place. Where else can a person start out to get some needed relaxation and end up so frustrated? The biggest frustrations aren't always on the course. Some of the biggest take place in the clubhouse.

The professional club manager will ask, "What can I do to keep my members happy?" There is no simple solution, since every member believes that his dues entitle him to be the boss. As the boss, he demands special treatment. It's the same way with customers at public courses. The key to meeting the needs of members and customers is **excellent service**. In order to have excellent service (whatever you serve, whether just hot dogs and soft drinks or a full breakfast, lunch, and dinner menu) you must develop the correct attitude for your staff.

In order to achieve the correct attitude in employees, you must first recognize the attitude of your customers. People play golf for a number of

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reasons; all however, would like to play reasonably well. I get a real enjoyment out of people who say, "I don't worry about my score, I just play for the exercise." Baloney! That reminds me of people who buy *Playboy* "just for the articles."

Since people would like to play well but the majority (including myself) don't, the club manager has to make their time spent at the course as enjoyable as possible. He can only do this if his staff has real empathy for the golfer. A suggestion I would make is that all managers take their personnel on a tour of the course, hole by hole. This lets your staff know what your guest has experienced before coming in for a refreshing lunch. This gives an added benefit since even if your staff does not golf, the beauty of the grounds will help them in their own feelings of pride.

Yes, **pride** is the key to establishing the correct attitude. For your staff to exhibit this feeling, you as a manager must set that example. To do this successfully, take a "pride inventory" to determine your attitude. Ask yourself these questions and see how you rate:

- 1) Do I enjoy what I am doing?
- 2) Am I doing the best job that I can?
- 3) Have I trained my staff to do the best that they can?
- 4) Have I developed into a real leader?

"Do I enjoy what I am doing?" If you do not and you don't have a ball and chain around your legs, you should get out. Nothing is so apparent to the guest as someone who is not happy with their work. This attitude will permeate the entire operation and eventually destroy it completely.

"Am I doing the best job that I can?" Since we are all capable of doing more, this is a difficult question to answer. Do you find yourself abdicating instead of delegating? Are you sitting at the bar complaining to anyone who listens or are you watching the garbage cans to see what is being thrown away?

"Have I trained my staff to do the best that they can?" You would be amazed at how many managers think that once you hire someone, give them a couple of hours of on-the-job training, then put them in a regular shift,

you have a trained employee. The best way that you can determine if you have a trained staff is to ask them (believe it or not). Have a cup of coffee with them and ask the question, "What can I do to make you the best-trained employee?" Hopefully, they will tell you, but you better be prepared to act upon what they are saying or have reasons why it cannot be accomplished at the present time. You know how frustrating it can be if the board of directors promises you some additional equipment or other needed facilities and then doesn't deliver. The same is true for your employees.

"Have I developed into a real leader?" The title of manager does not make you a leader. A textbook definition of leadership is a process by which people are directed, guided, and influenced in choosing and achieving goals. Not being an academician, I find it hard to understand — so I made up my own. How about "getting the employee to do a common job uncommonly well." To accomplish this as a leader I must know what role is expected of me by my employees. A leader (be it a club manager or a locker room manager) has two distinct roles to develop. The first is a task role. You have to accept the responsibility of setting objectives and goals that must be met. If you don't know where you are going there isn't much sense or purpose in getting there. The second role of a manager is equally important, the role of the helper. You as the leader are expected to meet the individual needs of your employees. I'm not suggesting that since an employee doesn't want to work weekends that you don't schedule that employee to work weekends. I am suggesting that you get to know your employee as an individual (not just as Joe Brown, the kid of this year's president).

After you take the time to do this "pride inventory," what do you do with the information? You utilize it to your best advantage. You now know what you and your staff are like. This will give you that sense of pride. If you think of the word as Progress Rests In Determined Effort, your entire operation will be able to capitalize on the pride inventory.

When I play golf with Rick Haywood, a golf course superintendent, I

am always amazed at how much he knows about golf courses — the setting of the flag, the type of grass used, and the equipment needed to maintain the course. When I ask him about it he responds, on the course I'm the expert that you should be in the clubhouse. This is really the crux of the matter. Do I as a club manager know the game? More importantly, do my employees?

Golf has a set of rules — so must the club. These rules aren't on a scorecard, but I can tell the type of operation that is being run by the size of the average check. We don't call them rules, but we do call them standards. Standards are the difference between taking a hamburger to the guest and suggestively selling and presenting to the guest a quarter-pound chopped beef patty attractively garnished. (Look at what McDonald's and Wendy's have done with the hamburger.) It is also the difference between calling the waitress "Hey you in the wrinkled uniform and the 10 pounds of makeup" and "Mary" (because she has a name tag) the girl with the nicely pressed uniform and the clean hands. It may seem like a little thing, but that's where the difference between "service" and "servant" are distinguished. Can you imagine what the person who only hears, "hey you," must feel like by late in the day — or early in the day, for that matter?

Another area where standards are needed is the bar. Is the bartender just grabbing a handful of ice and throwing it in a glass and freely pouring the liquor? Or is each drink getting the same amount of ice and, more importantly, liquor? Standards may not seem to be the most important thing from the guest's view, but the employee should know them as well as a golfer knows the rules of the course. Once an employee knows and follows the standards you set, the attitude of "servant" can be changed to "service."

Just remember to live by the same standards you set. The quickest way to destroy any standard is to not follow it yourself. How effective do you think you can be telling employees "there is to be no smoking except in designated areas," when every time you walk through the dining room you have a cigar or cigarette in your mouth? □