

**T**he stories in *Golfdom* last month about the mechanics shortage in the industry led me to wonder: Are there any scarier words than “I quit” for a superintendent to hear from a mechanic?

Let's face it, when your best mechanic packs his spanner wrench away for the last time and drives into the sunset, you are screwed.

Good mechanics are becoming members of the endangered species list. How many of the ones you know have a hands-on understanding of small engines, sophisticated mowers, tune-up procedures for your trucks, inventory management, reasonable computer literacy; as well as the ability to cut through the slick sales pitches of equipment vendors and, in their spare time, perform superhuman repairs to keep all your important rolling stock in service? A good mechanic is the ultimate “go-to-guy” and rarely gets credit for all he contributes in terms of saving the day.

Is it possible it's time to rethink how you treat your mechanics?

Mechanics are trained to think sequentially. Seeking input from a person with this common-sense view of the world may provide you with a new angle on solving that non-mechanical problem that has stumped you for weeks.

Mechanics can become very paternal about the equipment they repair. Seeing employees abuse equipment without penalties can become a large source of frustration for them. It might also send the unintended signal that, if you as a boss don't care about the equipment, why should they?

Speaking of abusing equipment, when is the last time you had a cup of coffee with your mechanic and inquired about who was not taking proper care of the equipment assigned to them? Employees who abuse equipment generally show disdain for other aspects of their employment with you.

Mechanics don't think in terms of the promises and warranties equipment manufacturers make regarding their products. Their lives revolve around how the piece of equipment performs when put to the test in the real world: How easy is it to operate and repair? The lesson here is that you should thoroughly discuss

## Keep Mechanics Running Smoothly

BY DAVE ST. JOHN



HAVE YOU EVER  
THANKED YOUR  
MECHANIC FOR HIS  
ROLE IN  
PRODUCING YOUR  
BEAUTIFUL  
CONDITIONS?

equipment purchases with your mechanic.

Many of the mechanics I've known were tinkers. They could take a piece of equipment that had been designed by an army of corporate engineers and with a few modifications make it easier to operate, easier to maintain and more reliable. Have you unlocked these creative juices in your mechanic?

For all their apparent “hard case” personalities, mechanics are a sensitive lot. This doesn't mean that you will find them sitting near the blue tees on the 15th humming mantras at the sunset every evening. But it does mean that they take a special sense of pride in the fact that their work has contributed mightily to the finely sculptured greens and fairways of your course. Have you taken your mechanic for a ride in your golf cart around the course lately and thanked him for his role in producing this beauty?

This “sensitivity” is often offset by a strong sense of independence. You will hear them use the possessive adjective “my” very frequently. It's “my shop” and “my equipment” and “my truck.” Don't be alarmed. A mechanic who thinks this way is the best friend you'll ever have when it comes to taking care of equipment. When a foreman or crew member comes to you in fear of their life because they have to tell the mechanic they damaged “his” equipment, remember this: Fear is good.

The modern mechanic is an anomaly. For most of us, the only time we think of him is when something breaks and needs to be repaired. We take him for granted during those times when our equipment runs perfectly.

Maybe that's why he just quit.

---

*Dave St. John is a principal in GreenSearch, an Atlanta-based management search and human resource consulting firm. He may be reached at [info@greensearch.com](mailto:info@greensearch.com).*