

TALKING MAINTENANCE

Compelling Communication Depends on Consistency

BY JIM BLACK

I find myself constantly searching for ways and means to make our operation run more smoothly. Everything from crew scheduling to job assignments to staggered lunch breaks.

I also look for ways to make things run more smoothly between maintenance and the clubhouse. I appreciate the meetings (when I can get them), and I appreciate being kept apprised of outing schedules and the like. Good communication is paramount to a smooth operation.

Sometimes, though, communication breaks down — and I openly admit it goes both ways.

Sometimes, we aren't told of a special event until the day it's taking place, but sometimes we'll forget to let the clubhouse know when we're top-dressing greens.

What we need then is a consistent method of communication that is a wide-open line running back and forth between the two departments.

Each department also needs to openly support the other. I long for the day when the person at the pro shop stands proudly, looks the customer squarely in the eye and says confidently: "Yes, as a matter of fact we are aerifying greens and tees today. It's been a long summer (or winter), and they really need to be opened up. We'll give you a discount on fees today, and we ask that you kindly not hit into the crew as they're working. Give yourself a par, pick up, and move ahead to the next hole. Thank you very much."

We can in turn support the clubhouse by providing a much better product for the customers to enjoy.

So another article on good communication is fine and dandy, but we all know that it's a topic that has been covered many times before. But I'm going to attempt to take the good communication concept a step further.

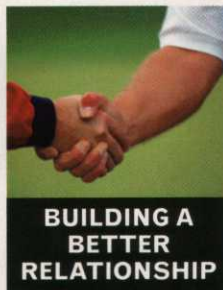
You can't operate in effective bursts of information, only to relapse into old ineffective habits. This pattern makes for poor efficiency. The information has to be clear, concise and consistent.

In order for the lines of communication to stay free and open, remember this one thing: Mean What You Say and Say What You Mean. I find this to be the ultimate key to consistent communication.

From my own personal experience, I've found that if I'm unclear in my meaning, or if I assume that the listener understands what I'm talking about, then the gist of what I'm trying to say somehow gets lost along the way.

In a business or professional setting, this can spell disaster across many different lines — employee/employee, boss/employee, department/department. Animosity develops, trust is broken and efficiency suffers — all because of a breakdown in understanding of what was meant vs. what was said.

In the golf club business, this is sometimes the root cause of the classic poor relationship that exists between the maintenance department and the pro shop. This poor relationship gets



passed along to the customer and the entire operation suffers.

There is a relationship triangle that exists whenever two or more people are communicating with each other. The parts of the triangle center around the main thought or idea that

is the topic of whatever is being said.

First, there is intention. What is the ultimate goal of the person who is conveying the idea? Is the subject of the conversation purely informational, or is there something deeper going on in regards to the information?

Second, there is perception. Is what you're trying to say being received correctly in accordance with your intention, or does the listener think you mean something other than what you're saying?

Which leads us to assumption. The rule of thumb here is simple — don't assume. If you're unclear in regard to what is being said, don't hesitate to gain clarity. For some reason, assumption always seems to lean toward the negative. In most cases, negative wasn't the original intention. So if something is coming across to you as negative, clarify it in order to release all assumption.

Simply put, mean what you say and say what you mean, eliminate assumption, and you will have more consistent communication skills and a smoother running operation.

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