



Lincoln, Neb.-based Landscapes Unlimited hired Cesar Martinez last September to help the company's mostly American construction superintendents communicate better with its nearly 700 Hispanic workers, 70 percent of whom speak little or no English. "Part of my responsibility is to help identify the obstacles our Hispanic employees encounter daily and help them grow within our organization," Martinez says.

Superintendent Scott Wicker turns English teacher once a week at Black Creek Club.

Learn their language

Some superintendents may resist learning Spanish to improve communication with Hispanics. They say: "Hispanics who work in America should learn English to communicate better with us."

In Sync

Arturo Castro, a Chicago-based communications and organizational consultant for golf courses that employ Hispanics, says superintendents should implement these practices when employing Hispanics:

- All internal verbal and written communications should be translated. "If you don't do this, you're segregating Hispanics," Castro says. "If you do it, you're ensuring involvement."
- Clearly outline job descriptions. Make sure Hispanic employees realize they have a chance to be promoted.
- Provide performance reviews, including one formal review, one informal half-year review and two quarterly performance updates.

Use an outside translator — not an inside interpreter — when giving reviews. With an outside translator, information is kept private.

For more information on better communicating with Hispanics, contact Castro's Web site: www.spanishsystems.com.

That attitude is a mistake, Castro says. The language barrier must be addressed from both ends. Hispanic employees will respect a superintendent who tries to learn their language. That could translate into hard-working employees and improved retention.

Steve Campbell, director of agronomy at Las Campanas Sante Fe in Sante Fe, N.M., employs about 100 crew members at his two Jack Nicklaus-designed championship courses, and nearly 80 percent of them don't speak English. But Campbell says he has formed a strong bond with his Hispanic employees because he speaks their language. "They don't feel like outsiders," he adds.

Wicker took 16 hours of classes at a language school to learn Spanish. He says it was his duty to learn the language so he could improve communication with his Hispanic workers. "You can't approach them with a my-way-or-the-highway attitude," he says.

Towery's advice to superintendents and other English-speaking course workers is to learn three new Spanish words daily.

"It's an easy goal to set for yourself," maintains Towery, who also attended language school. "Grab a dictionary and write the words down on an index card. Carry the card in your pocket and study it during the day."

Experts say the best time to learn another language is between the ages of 3 and 5. So it's important that superintendents be patient when learning Spanish. More importantly, they must be patient with their Hispanic workers who are learning English.

Because much of his material is elementary, Wicker says he feels like he's teaching children when he's teaching English to his crew members. "You have to teach them like they are children, but you don't want them to feel like children," he stresses.

Wicker says he enjoys the sessions, as do his employees. They're spending time together and learning from each other.

"I'm learning as much as they do," Wicker says. "It's a good group, and we're enjoying ourselves."

Wicker urges superintendents with Hispanic employees to learn Spanish. "There's a Hispanic wave in the United States, and you had better be willing to adapt to it," he adds.

Help them learn

It's important that golf courses make language classes available to Hispanic employees and encourage them to improve their skills. Las Campanas Sante Fe will pay for language classes for employees. "If we can get enough people to participate, we'll have them on site," Campbell says.

At Southern Hills, Towery stresses to employees the importance of learning a new language when conducting performance reviews with them. "I push them to better themselves by learning English or Spanish to communicate better with other employees," he says.

Martinez says Landscapes Unlimited implemented a program to help Spanish- and English-speaking employees under-

Continued on page 32

In Other Words

Continued from page 31

stand each other's language as it relates to course construction. The program uses a large poster and audio cassette. The poster is a map of a course and features greens, fairways, tees and other areas identified in English and Spanish. The cassette includes construction-related phrases and words in both languages.

Many Hispanics who migrate to the United States have never seen a golf course, Campbell says. "They're great workers, but they have no conception of what you're trying to do," he adds.

While superintendents must train Hispanics how to use greens mowers and hole cutters, they learn quickly.

Continued on page 35

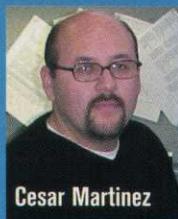


Superintendent Scott Wicker (left) says his bilingual assistant, José Perez, has been a big help in training Hispanic employees.

RANDY PARKER

Striving for Unity at Landscapes Unlimited

Cesar Martinez was hired last September at Landscapes Unlimited in Lincoln, Neb., to help the company's mostly American construction superintendents communicate better with its nearly 700 Hispanic crew workers, 70 percent of whom speak little or no English. Martinez implemented a "belief system" to create



Cesar Martinez

unity for employees within the company. The system stresses:

Respect - Treat all employees with respect and recognize the talents they possess.

Access - Ensure that all employees have access to company information in a format and language that is appropriate for them.

Education - Provide all employees' ac-

cess to education and training in a bilingual setting to maintain the highest quality construction and customer service practices.

Language - Recognize that an individual's ability or inability to speak a second language is not a direct reflection of their intelligence or ability to perform their work.

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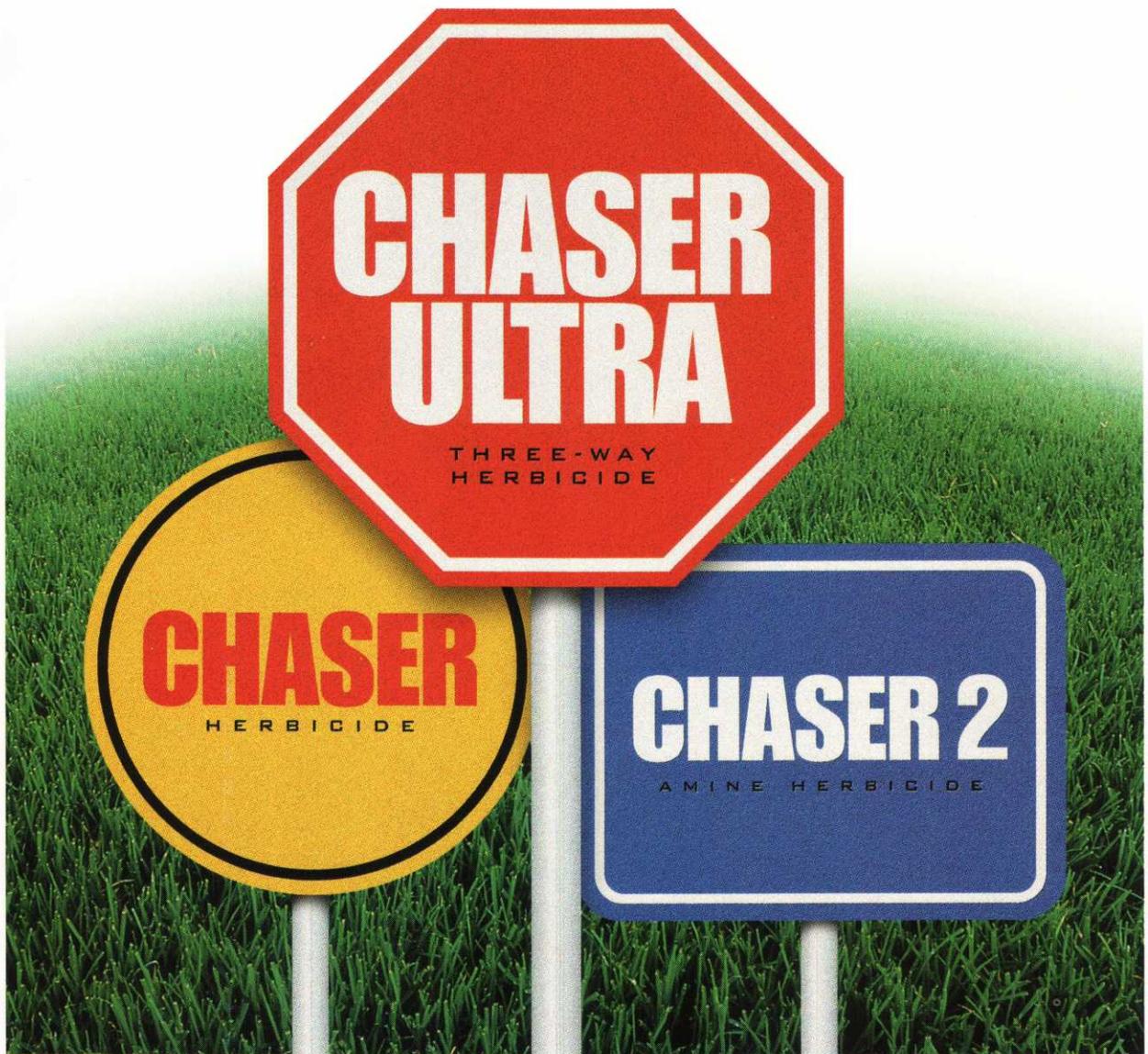
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In Other Words

Continued from page 32

"Training has been a lot easier than I anticipated," Wicker says, adding that his workers are quick learners.

Wicker and Campbell utilize veteran Hispanic employees who speak English and Spanish to help them train employees. While Wicker speaks decent Spanish, he'll be the first to admit he doesn't speak the language as fluently as his assistant, José Perez, who's from Cuba. "He has been a huge help," Wicker adds.

Handle with care

While the superintendent is the boss and is expected to give orders, he shouldn't treat Hispanics as inferior because they're from other countries, Martinez states. Hispanics shouldn't be judged as less intelligent because they can't speak English.

If you treat Hispanics as less, you'll be doomed to fail, Wicker adds. "They're not going to respect you, and they're not going to want to be part of what you're doing."

It's important to let Hispanics know they're part of a team, Campbell stresses. "Most of them want to be good workers, and they want to fit in and be respected."

Campbell also stresses that superintendents strive to understand the Hispanic culture, not just the language. "I like the Hispanic culture — the traditions, clothes and music — and that helps me better relate to them," he says.

Superintendents should remember that Hispanics are not an assimilated group. While they hail from Mexico, Hispanics also come from many Latin American nations. "They come from different countries with unique cultures, histories and dialects in regard to the language they speak," Martinez says.

The career path

Mexican and Latin American immigrants are unlike European immigrants, who came to America in the 19th and 20th centuries to establish new lives. Many Hispanics come to America temporarily to earn money and return home after a year.



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That doesn't mean that superintendents should treat such employees any less. In fact, if superintendents treat

Hispanic employees well and offer them pay raises and opportunities for advancement, there's a chance they will stay longer.

"You want to be seen as an employer that provides everything necessary for Hispanic employees to develop," Castro says. "Turn your course into a desirable place for them to work and make them feel like they're at home."

Considering that Hispanic employees are migratory, retaining them is vital, especially when they comprise a growing percentage of the labor pool. "That's beneficial because turnover is one of the biggest problems in this market," Wicker says.

One of the reasons Martinez was hired at Landscapes Unlimited was to help Hispanic workers advance. "Our organization's senior managers realize that the Hispanic work force is contributing dramatically to the company's success," he says.

Wicker says he would consider promoting a Hispanic employee to assistant superintendent. "I have Hispanic people here who are intelligent, reliable and want to excel."

Wicker believes his Hispanic workers respect him and appreciate his efforts to improve communication with them. His proof is that the Black Creek maintenance crew has had no turnover in almost a year. "That tells me that they like where they're working," Wicker says proudly. ■

Bill Kubly (right), founder of Landscapes Unlimited, wants more Hispanic employees to advance in his company's ranks.

Learn More Words than 'Rápido'

Jennifer Thomas, founder of Spanish Training Services in Evanston, Ill., recognizes that several cultural barriers exist between English- and Spanish-speaking employees. But Thomas, whose business offers language and cross-cultural training services to the green industry, believes most of the barriers can be overcome.

For instance, Thomas says many Hispanic employees claim the only word their managers know and use in directing them is "rápido." Her solution is for managers to teach their crews basic English or learn a few phrases of Spanish themselves to communicate more effectively. "Communication equals productivity," she notes.

Another problem is that Hispanic employees often have strained relationships with equipment technicians, Thomas says. If a Hispanic employee breaks a piece of equipment, he's afraid to tell the technician and turn in the equipment in fear of being berated. "We don't yell at the technician, but the technician yells at us," Thomas says, repeating what many Hispanic employees have told her.

Her solution is for technicians to outline an area in the maintenance facility with masking tape where employees can turn in broken equipment and not confront technicians. "At least the equipment gets turned in," she says. Better training in using equip-

ment and a little sensitivity on behalf of technicians would also help matters, she notes.

Thomas' training program, "English for the Green Industry," includes workbooks, cassettes and picture flashcards as well as a facilitator's guide. In addition to vocabulary, many cultural misunderstandings are explained through case studies. She also offers a self-study, "Spanish for the Green Industry" (GCSAA counts it as three CEUs), includes a basic workbook, small flashcards, and a cassette.

Thomas is also the author of "Spanish for the Green Industry," a textbook that will debut next year in U.S. colleges.

For more information, contact Thomas at 800-491-0391.

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Convinced that industrialization had caused the degradation of work and the destruction of the environment, the Arts and Crafts Movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries emphasized simple but charming architecture. To pursue their goal, the Arts and Crafts reformers chose art as their medium, specifically the hand-crafted design of homes and furniture. Their goals were to restore pride through labor and overcome social ills.

The Arts and Crafts Movement inspired much of architect Frank Lloyd Wright's designs, though Wright believed in taking advantage of technology and machinery as long as it was under the architect's creative control.

Superintendents and their crews are well aware of the satisfaction achieved through craftsmanship and on-the-job creativity while taking advantage of the latest technology. They derive satisfaction from their work when creativity and intuition play key roles in what they're doing. Machinery is a secondary part of the equation that leads to a well-maintained course.

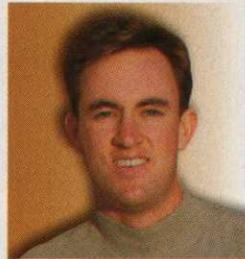
It's no coincidence that many of the greatest golf courses were designed during the 1920s, when the Arts and Crafts Movement changed the way America looked at itself. Nor is it a coincidence that the Arts and Crafts Movement is enjoying a renaissance today for many of the reasons that gave it flight in the 1890s.

Contemporary golf architecture has long since drifted from the ideals established by the Arts and Crafts Movement. Back then, if natural features did not exist, the master architects and their crafty construction crews created character in their designs. The extensive time they devoted to each project gave them a sense of artistic accomplishment. They used machinery only to finish the work. Even with road scrapers and other technology, the classic architects crafted contours that looked natural instead of machine made.

Today's designs are restricted by machinery more than most people realize. The lack of integrity and interest in many finished products is apparent to golfers. When golfers talk about knowing greatness when they see

For the Love of Simplicity in Design

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



WILL MODERN
ARCHITECTURE EVER
CLING TO THE
VALUES THAT MADE
THE CLASSIC
COURSES WORTH
RESTORING?

it, many of them can never pinpoint what it is about some courses that exude character. However, manufactured-looking designs nearly always fail to rate as high as those that appear natural.

John Ruskin, an Oxford University professor and one of the first to explain the Arts and Crafts Movement's ideals, believed that building designers of his era had become anonymous laborers. Returning to more handwork would restore character to architecture and the arts. The qualities of asymmetry, irregularity, roughness and naturalness — the same qualities that make the classic golf courses so distinct — compelled people to embrace the Arts and Crafts Movement.

The golf course restoration rage is an offshoot of the Arts and Crafts Movement's ideals of simplicity, craftsmanship and a search to rediscover integrity in design. But will modern architecture ever cling to the values that made the classic courses worth restoring — the love of crafting features by hand?

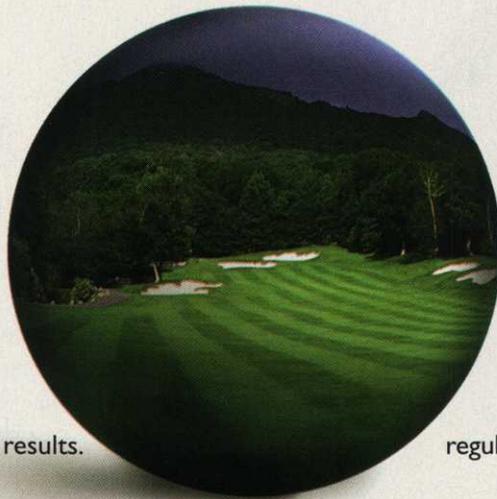
Only time will tell, but if the satisfaction superintendents and crews take from their hands-on creativity is any indication, maybe the architect of the 21st century will get out of his office and into the dirt. Maybe he'll give shapers the freedom to handcraft features to mask the use of massive machinery.

Maybe architects will return their attention to detail and it becomes infectious? Maybe they will inspire new levels of thought and passion from those working for them, those maintaining their finished designs, and most of all, the golfers they're designing for? In the sainted names of those who created their designs with genuine craftsmanship, let's hope so.

Geoff Shackelford's latest book is Alister MacKenzie's Cypress Point Club. He can be reached at geoffshackelford@aol.com



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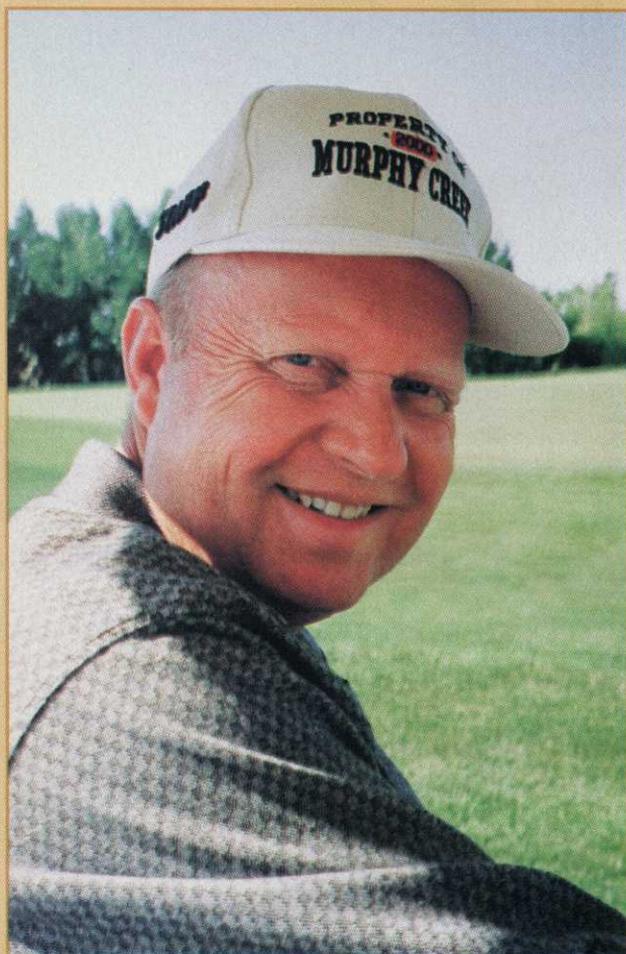
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His management style is one reason why the city's municipal courses
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STORY AND PHOTOS BY JASON STAHL



As part of his “partnering” concept, Dennis Lyon empowers his employees to propose ideas and solutions.

Dennis Lyon is cruising in a golf car around the Homestead at Murphy Creek GC, the newest of seven municipal golf courses the certified superintendent oversees as manager of the municipal golf courses for Aurora, Colo. Lyon spots an employee, jumps out of the car and greets him like he's a long-lost friend. From all the smiles and laughs traded, you wouldn't think they had just talked about the day's job list.

That kind of manager-employee relationship is one reason why Aurora's courses are some of the finest municipal tracks in the country. Lyon exudes confidence in his employees. When he walks away from talking to them, he's confident that they'll do their jobs right — like Tiger Woods is certain that his six-iron shot from 218 yards will find the green.

Lyon is a nice guy, but he's also smart. Armed with a bachelor's degree in horticulture from Colorado State University and a master's degree in management from the University of Northern Colorado, he's not just touring his courses to administer back slaps and “nice to see you” to the members of his labor force. Lyon is ensuring that his particular management system, which he calls “partnering,” is firmly in place.

“The partnering concept involves the realization that we, as a unit, are dependent on each other with regard to success and reputation,” Lyon says. “If one area of the organization improves at the expense of another, it pulls us all down.”

Lyon won't get any points for originality for his partnering concept, but he does score a 10 in his administration of it. Many times, brilliant ideas get left on the chalkboard, but Lyon has

Continued on page 42