

Frame On Management SELECTION

By Ron Frame

In the most recent published column, we discussed the employment process and identified its parts — selection, induction, retention and termination. The next few issues will examine each of these parts in sufficient detail to provide a global view of effectiveness in this general area of the management of people and, perhaps by implication, suggest ways in which the process can be made to work for the person with the responsibility for effectiveness — the superintendent.

Every superintendent realizes that sooner or later the process of effectively managing his subordinates is of great personal importance; any employee has the capacity to make the superintendent look good, just as the opposite is true. The superintendent's professional success is largely wrapped up in his ability to get things done THROUGH the crew at some appropriate standard of quality. It is a personal and serious matter; knowing turf isn't enough. He must know and do the management of people effectively. It is his job, at least a very important part of it.

Of course, managing people isn't all of it. The superintendent must also manage "things" — equipment, materials, supplies — and the typical superintendent (perhaps the typical human being) often is more comfortable with "thing" management than with people management. Things tend to be more predictable than people. Things don't think, communicate, rationalize, procrastinate or carry with them a notion of residue resulting from living two-thirds of their day in other settings populated with myriad other people, needs and pressures.

While even a brief comparison will prove that the human resources available to the superintendent's job are much more expensive than physical resources, it is generally true that more real dollars go into the selection and maintenance of "thing" resources than those that are human.

We easily accept the need to ponder purchases of equipment to

make well-informed, cost effective, goal supportive decisions. We look not only at quality of manufacture and functional efficiency but also at operating costs and maintenance requirements. Such processes may require many hours of reading, discussion, observation, computation and thought over the course of weeks or months. The resultant decision may result in an expenditure of \$25,000 or \$30,000 on a machine that has a life expectancy of 5 to 7 years, a terminal value of \$2,000 to \$4,000 and in-between maintenance costs equalling 40% of its original purchase price.

True, the machine is predictable; its behavior is mostly a known quantity. It will nearly always start, will go where steered and will cut at a breadth and height desired. And, when not doing these things, it will set quietly between its yellow-painted lines and be of no bother. That's nice.

But also true, it can never do more than a very limited number of tasks, and it can never perform its work better than when new and broken-in. Indeed, its functional deterioration begins the moment it is first used. A hand mower can never be trained and developed and grown to become a five-gang fairway mower. And none of that equipment, no supplies or materials, no physical resource will perform unless a human causes it to happen.

Productivity on the course requires the wisdom in the expenditure of dollars for desired results from both the human and the physical resources. Let's now turn to some ideas about cost effectiveness in human resource management.

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Management (cost) effectiveness starts when the selection process is initiated. In fact, effective management must be in place and evident prior to the selection process — a way of thinking that shows in the way things are done and attitudes are displayed. It may be seen in a sense of shared purpose, of involvement, of caring about the course condition and appearance on the part of all existing staff.

But, from the perspective of the job candidate, it does start with the selection process. That which

goes on between the candidate and the superintendent (and staff) in the selection process sets the tone for the boss/subordinate, employer/employee relationship for a significant period of time into the future. First and early impressions are important, and they work in both directions. The superintendent has some control over those impressions the candidate receives and should be sensitive to them.

Additionally, it must never be forgotten that, upon selection (at time of hire), not only has the candidate been selected for employment, the course (company, club, organization) has been selected as an employer by the candidate. It may seem that one side proposes, and the other accepts, but the reality is that, like marriage between two people, each selects the other. The degree to which each selection decision is an informed decision has a great deal to do with the success of the relationship.

How to generate informed decisions? Remember, we are dealing with people — not iron — and pretty, data-filled brochures are not available, nor are opportunities (most often) to observe the resource at work.

Informed decisions come from information and the resources for information are limited to the candidate and the employer; the various repositories of each can only be effectively revealed through a communication process. Central to that process are the job application, the interview procedure and ancillary follow-up activities.

We will deal with these and related matters in the next column.

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