

Are You Certain Your Workers Understand Their Orders?

In the charge of the Light Brigade, in the Crimean War, six hundred British troops went into the valley of death against overwhelming Russian forces because of a misunderstanding of orders by their superior officers.

If well-trained, highly disciplined officers could misunderstand their orders, there is reason to suppose that almost anybody could misinterpret orders in an everyday golf course operation.

If an employee misunderstands his instructions, is it his fault? Probably not.

First, the superintendent may have incorrectly evaluated the employee's ability to comprehend a certain level of instructions.

Second, the instructions could have more than one interpretation-or a misleading single interpretation. Instructions or orders have to be given with due consideration of the experience and the level of comprehension of the employee who is on the receiving end.

Of course, excessively detailed instructions are time-consuming, but a presumption that can be frequently made is that *"if an instruction can be misinterpreted, it will be."*

That premise too often can be true, whether the employee is careless or conscientious in complying with his superintendent's orders. Therefore, before issuing an instruction, consider if there are any possibilities for alternative reactions on the part of subordinates.

In order to maintain optimum levels of productivity it is paramount to avoid confusion and offer good instructions.

Guidelines for Instructions To Employees

1. Who is to perform.
2. What is to be done.
3. When is it to be done.
4. What are the exceptions.
5. What is to be done with the exceptions.
6. What are the alternative methods.
7. When are alternative methods to be used.
8. Who has additional know-how.
9. Where are written instructions.
10. When should advice be sought.
11. What tools are available.
12. Which equipment is to be used.
13. Which examples should be followed.
14. What follow-through is required.
15. What checking should be done.
16. How are errors to be handled.
17. When is the task considered to be complete.
18. What is to be done after the task is over.

—Thru The Green,
Golf Course Superintendents' Association
of Northern California

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