

Building a Professional Management Team

A Superintendent's Approach

By Fred Taylor
Mankato Golf Club

Judge and Jury

The measure of success for any organization can usually be formulated from the success of its smaller functioning units. In other words, to say that Muskrat Flats Country Club is a wonderful, marvelous and enjoyable place to recreate, is to say that the golf course, golf shop and dining areas are each, individually, offering superior experiences for the patrons. To lower the performance of any one area is to reduce the success of the entire organization. Just as a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, so is the club only as successful as its poorest performing unit. With this in mind, it behooves the members of the management team to collaborate, cooperate and work together towards the organization's ultimate goal of success.

What Determines Success?

In order to judge success, failure or any level of performance in between, there must be a set of criteria for an evaluation to take place. Job performance evaluations are quite common and relatively easy to perform for individuals, but what about for the functioning units of the organization? Or for that matter, the organization as a whole? How is the golf course judged? Is green speed the overriding factor in determining a "good" course, or is the density of the turf in the fairways the most important factor? Do fiscal matters override the aesthetic factors? Do you expect Augusta conditions on a Scumwater budget? The same questions must be asked in the golf shop and dining areas. Are golf professionals judged on the way they swing the four iron, or how the apparel is arranged on the shelves? In the lounge, are the strength of the (cocktails) more important than the length of the server's skirts or the condition of the furniture? Does profit supercede service? It becomes apparent that in order to find success, the first step is determining what factors will be used to evaluate and judge performance.

A Golf Professional's Approach

By Greg Mireault
Pebble Lake Golf Club

Building a successful management team starts with common goals and objectives. Goals and objectives can be driven by the facility's financial state or something as simple as an enhancement to the facility. Each facility, be it public, private or resort, must have goals set each season with an evaluation done at the end of the season to see if those goals were achieved. This management style can be very rewarding for the individuals involved because there is a sense of accomplishment. Hopefully, those accomplishments are the byproduct of the professional management team.

Once the goals and objectives are understood by each part of the team, a plan will need to be implemented. Hiring and training becomes one of the most important parts of a successful management team. Having a procedures and policy manual is a vital part to goal management style because it helps create consistency and continuity. The other factor that often hinders the success of the team is the lack of constructive criticism. We must all be willing to listen to each other's opinions and ideas in a professional manner and not a personal manner. In the ever-changing golf business where the bottom line has become more prevalent than the quality of the golf experience, it helps to have the superintendent maintain and improve the product while the golf professional sells the product and the golf experience. Communication lines must be open so the golf professional can answer the many questions that are asked about the course and its condition. The information the superintendent provides gives the team credibility in the eyes of the user. This vital form of communication maintains a smooth-running operation which benefits the golfers that use the facility.