

second-guess a decision or devise your own scheme may not be as prevalent, but even a good manager can make a mistake or two, or not see the best way of accomplishing a task or goal, or how to deal with a person generally or specifically. Same can be said for a superintendent with a general manager or club owner. If a decision is made that is not to your liking, ask yourself what you would have done differently if you were in that position. Who knows? Maybe someday you will be.

Generally speaking, I base my management philosophy on the adage of treating people how I would want to be treated. Be honest, fair and try to communicate in a pleasant, professional tone. I try to inject humor into mundane or uncomfortable situations. I want my employees to feel like they are all part of our team, and that I, and all of our management, do care about them as an employee and as a person. It sounds basic but it works.

I am also a firm believer in giving the people an opportunity to succeed on their own, or develop their own way of accomplishing a task. Empowering an employee is a very rewarding thing for both the employee and the operation. The one exception to that is when wisdom and experience trump ambition. A blending of the two is optimal. By giving direction backed with experience they will acquire the knowledge they need to succeed, but too much direction stifles ambition and retards the individuals desire to progress and feel self worth. A good manger walks that fine line, and the line is often blurry and resides in different locals for each employee. That is what makes people management both complicated and rewarding.

Now that is not to say that there are not superintendents that have different styles and personalities that also get the job done. We have all heard of superintendents that are “my way or the highway” guys, or “fire and brimstone” guys. A few are even the opposite- the “I don’t care what you do” guys. I think there are far fewer of these. Some guys run a tight ship, some guys run a very loose ship. It seems to me a balance works well, but there are operations that stand the test of time with dysfunctional managers.

However in this era of ultimate scrutiny of golf course management, practices, budgets, etc. it seems to me a superintendent had better have his crew on his side. Especially when seemingly everybody else is not. A manager cannot be all things to all people, but with solid communication, a positive outlook and a relaxed spirit the operation will have a pretty good opportunity to succeed.

We have all heard of or know of the manager that “seems like a really great guy or gal- but I would never want to work for him or her.” What a shame that is. If you are that guy or gal, or even have a suspicion that you might be, take a good hard look at how you do things and carry yourself. If you are successful presently, think about how much more successful you could be if your employees genuinely enjoyed working for you and with you, instead of just putting up with you. You might be astonished at how much more enjoyable your job will become, and how much more successful the overall operation will be.