

IMPROVE YOUR MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

I've never heard a superintendent state that he has a surplus of qualified labor.

I've never heard a superintendent state that he couldn't use an extra good man.

I've also never seen any improvement in available equipment operators over the past years. The reason of course is that our manpower quality requirements are vastly growing each year as we procure more and more equipment that require more capable, intelligent manpower. Well then, where do we turn for more qualified labor when we are hardly, if at all, able to increase our men's salaries to compensate for yearly inflation?

Our definite course of action to take is to strive for improved management practices. Careful instruction, more intense training, coupled with close supervision of all operations is more necessary now than in years past when mobilization was limited to only tractor operators on the golf course. The days are long gone when our tractor operators were the only machine operators on the greens crew.

Where do we start to improve on our management practices? We must be determined to improve on the existing quality and output of our present work force. A good start in this direction is to list what improvements we would like to see within our work force and tackle each problem separately; for example, let's discuss one reoccurring problem, correcting errors and mistakes.

Errors and mistakes in an organization often seem to be an invention of the devil, deliberately designed to harass superintendents. Reducing them is a constant challenge. When you are plagued by errors, here are a few simple fundamentals you may have forgotten, or may not be stressing as much as you should.

In the first place, let us appreciate that nobody is perfect. If a man has made his first error in two years, it is smarter to congratulate him on his excellent record than to scold him for his one mistake. You also can not expect to eliminate mistakes simply by punishing people. Eventually, that hurts morale more than it helps in other ways. To cut down errors you need sympathetic, willful cooperation.

When mistakes occur, no matter how serious, do not immediately set out with the idea of blaming somebody. That is unimportant and it won't remedy the damage. The important thing is to find out how it happened and how it can be prevented in the future. Then be sure everyone understands and agrees.

Instead of blaming people, mistakes should be an occasion for careful examination of work habits. An employee is not necessarily a bad or inferior person because he makes mistakes. He may be doing things the wrong way because no one has taken the trouble to teach him better.

Be sympathetic. Appreciate the fact that no one deliberately makes mistakes — it is rarely done on purpose. Show the people involved what a waste it is to them and to the country club. Nobody benefits. It makes them look bad, and you and your crew look bad too.

Do be encouraging. If a man makes even a little progress in cutting down errors, show him you have noticed and appreciate it. Tell him to keep trying — you know he can do even better.

In brief, put yourself in the shoes of the person who made the error. If you were he, what would make you want

to do better in the future? That's the key to the situation. If you approach mistakes in this manner, if you don't let indignation and anger dictate what you do, you will have a much better chance of making some real progress.

What management practice would you like to write about yourself next month? We can all learn from each other.

* * * * *

There are three times when you should never say anything important to a person; when he is tired, when he is angry, and when he has just made a mistake.

Dr. David Phillips.

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