

Motivation — Part of Managing A Crew

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One of the golf course superintendent's main jobs is to get his crew to do what he wants, when he wants, the way he wants, and to have them want to do it.

For that, he needs the respect of the crew and the authority to direct them. He has the authority because he is the superintendent, but for him to be effective, the crew must accept his authority and allow him to use it over them — something they won't do unless they respect him. So the essential ingredients for good management, respect and authority, must be given voluntarily by those to be managed.

Getting respect and authority from a crew takes deliberate effort, careful thought and effective actions, but most of all it takes motivation.

Satisfaction is the biggest motivator. All people, not just golf course crew members, have certain needs, and if they can be satisfied, morale will rise and the crew will perform better. An individual's needs include: to do a good job, to receive individual recognition, to advance, to feel balance and order, and to belong.

People naturally want to do a good job. The fact that they may be doing a lousy job now doesn't mean they like it that way. It's up to the superintendent to help them do their best. The example he sets is probably the most effective way to show the crew that doing a good job counts. Attitudes are contagious, and the superintendent's attitudes are reflected in those of his crew.

For instance, the superintendent can set a standard of excellence by always doing his work correctly. If employees see the superintendent use a pesticide without measuring or reading the label, they'll do it too. If a superintendent slides through a training session with little attention to detail or the feelings of his trainees, the crew also will pay little attention to details or the feelings of others. Even the smallest things, like being obviously glad to come to work in the morning, will rub off on the crew. Never underestimate the power of personal example.

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MOTIVATION

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Another thing people require is genuine recognition for individual effort and contribution. They want to be assured that the superintendent knows when they have done a job well; they want their work to be appreciated. Recognition doesn't have to be a certificate or a direct compliment. The simple statement that John is a fine irrigation man may be reward enough, as long as it's deserved and honestly given.

When something has gone wrong, it is valuable to criticize only the job, not the person. A superintendent may say, for example, "John, you normally do a fine job of syringing the greens, but this afternoon some of the low spots were very wet. I think they need more attention." That tells John that he's all right — he does a fine job of syringing — but it also lets him know that the job he did was not satisfactory.

Crew members have a desire to better themselves, to advance, to achieve personal goals. If the superintendent listens — really listens — when talking with them, he can tell what those goals are. He then can create an opportunity for crew members to meet their goals and advance in the organization. Advancement doesn't have to be a promotion; it could also be education, letting crew members who want to take on extra duties do so, and encouraging innovations and ideas.

Part of helping crew members progress and improve is inherent in personal managerial organization and style. If it's rigid, there isn't room for the crew to move or be creative. People need room to breathe, to expand. A superintendent can demonstrate an open organization by providing flexibility and diversity in work assignments, and by not being hung up on too many written rules and procedures. Flexibility encourages the crew to expand to their fullest, and when they feel fulfilled they will do a better job.

Another thing people need is to feel a sense of social balance and order, which can be provided by fair job assignments and promotions. If one person never gets the dirty work and another always does, more than the one who gets the dirty work will be unhappy and unmotivated. Everyone on the crew will judge the superintendent to be unfair, and they will not do their best,

fearful that they might be the next victims.

When major routines or structures must be changed, people whose working lives are affected will be less upset if they understand ahead of time why and how the changes will be made. Radical changes without explanation generate fear — fear of the unknown. Everyone wonders if his job is to change or be terminated and fantasies and fears can run rampant, taking energy and motivation from the crew and decreasing their accomplishments.

Finally, crew members need to feel that they are part of the group, that they belong and are wanted. These feelings involve pride, self-satisfaction and personal reputation. The wise superintendent tries to help each employee build a good self-image, because self-image is a prime motivator; it is even more important than pay, for although adequate pay is important, money can't change the way a person feels about himself or his position, and feelings determine how the job gets done.

The good superintendent can create a climate in which his crew will be motivated and gain their willing cooperation by consciously satisfying as many of their basic human needs as possible: the need to do a good job, the need for individual recognition, the need to advance, the need for balance and order, and the need to belong. In addition, it is well to remember that what motivates the superintendent may not motivate the crew. Sensitivity to *their* needs, respect for those needs and satisfaction of them, will help build highly motivated people who do the good job they really want to do.



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