

Humane Resources

by Keith Williams

A survey conducted in 1997 by Lou Harris and Associates indicated that 53% of all workers in the United States will leave their current job within the next five years. What the percentage is in the golf course maintenance industry is unknown but for many superintendents and golf course managers, employee turnover is just an accepted cost of the business.

But does it have to be that way or are there ways to minimize employee turnover and maintain continuity in your workforce?

The first step in the process to combat excess turnover is to calculate the "cost" of turnover. When determining how much it costs to bring on a new employee, both tangible and intangible costs must be determined. The tangible costs are obvious: administrative paperwork, drug testing, uniforms, etc. while

intangible costs can include unemployment insurance and an increase burden for the superintendent/decision-maker to replace the departed employee. Other costs that cannot easily be discounted are a decrease in productivity and the possibility of a dip in employee morale.

The second step should be to focus on the strengths of your organization and workplace. The ongoing use of constructive employee evaluations along with exit interviews will help determine both the positive and negative aspects of the operation. Responding to these comments will help the employees realize that you are actively "listening" to their concerns. It is also important to use communication vehicles such as newsletters and meetings to remind personnel how valuable they are and how much they are appreciated. Do not dismiss the importance of

positive reinforcement on a regular basis.

The final item(s) to be incorporated into the management process is the tandem concept of training and orientation. Patience on the part of the new employee and the management team should be emphasized. Other aspects of training and orientation that can and should be utilized are cross-training of other tasks/jobs, exposure to various activities outside of their current responsibilities, mapping our career paths, and the establishment of goals and expectations that are rewarding and productive to all parties.

By investing more time and effort on this complex and challenging aspect of human resources, dividends may be realized in a more stable workforce and a more productive and efficient working environment.

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