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handicap. Phrase your questions so that you can learn as much about the candidate that relates to the position for which you are hiring. Some good questions include: what did you like best about your last job; what did you like least about your last job; and if you could have made one suggestion to management at one of your previous jobs, what would it have been and why?

Staff Training and Motivation

Once you've hired your staff, it's time to orient and train them. This is a crucial step for seasonal staff. Seasonal staff have a very short period of time in which to become proficient in their new jobs. Take a golf course for example: you hire part time greenskeepers once the course is open in the spring because you have no work, nor a labour budget, prior to the course opening. However, once the course is open, it's full speed ahead with respect to having the course ready for play and routine maintenance. This leaves little time to train your new staff how to do the job properly.

Remember that training is continuous; it need not stop after the initial orientation. In fact, it shouldn't. Nothing acts as a motivator more than on-going training. Not only does it ensure that staff are very aware of what needs to be done and the proper way to do it, but also it sends a very powerful message that you feel they are worth your time, effort, and money even though they will be leaving you at the end of the season. This, in turn, will help to create a productive staff.



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There are several motivating ideas that you can utilize to keep your seasonal employees happy and productive. These include one-on-one discussions, incentives, compensation, and staff surveys. The most obvious, and common, of these is compensation. It's no surprise to employers

that people work for money. However, most businesses, including golf and country clubs, do not have unlimited budgets. This means that there are usually other jobs available that pay the same or more than the jobs you have to offer. Therefore, you need to differentiate yourself using other motivators. For instance, one-on-one discussions can be very beneficial. These can be quick, informal discussions with each of your employees throughout the season. This invites open communication and a comfortable rapport between manager and employee. Also, they can help to prevent disciplinary problems by preventing or stopping them before they become serious. The benefits of open communication alone can be tremendous.

Incentives are an obvious way to keep employees happy and productive. There are several things an employer can do that do not cost a lot of money, or take up much of your time. Something like providing employees with an employee handbook makes them feel valued, as well as answering many questions and allowing employees the opportunity to fully understand what your organization stands for and what is expected of them. Also, simple employee outings such as golf tournaments, staff baseball games, picnics, bowling, lunch, and birthday cards go a long way in creating a staff that work well together and feel secure in their jobs. This, in turn, creates a staff that are motivated to do their best for you.

Another idea is a confidential staff survey. Not only does this allow staff an anonymous method of giving their ideas and complaints, it can tell you an enormous amount about what your staff feel you are doing well and what they believe needs improvement. Remember, anything you can do to positively distinguish your workplace from another will assist you in maintaining productive and happy seasonal employees. ♦

For more information regarding managing seasonal workers, or any other human resources training and development issues, please contact Rhonda Gordon, owner of Gordon Consulting, at (519) 823-1088. Gordon Consulting specializes in advising the golf club and private club industries. Rhonda has also been a Human Resources Manager for over eight years – first at retail giant Woolworth Canada in Toronto, and currently at the prestigious Westmount Golf and Country Club in Kitchener. Rhonda is also an instructor at Conestoga College in Kitchener.

Coming Events

March 7 & 14

University of Guelph, Office of Open Learning *Pesticide Applicators' Certification Exam Preparation Course*, Guelph Turfgrass Institute Guelph, ON. Call: (519) 767-5000

March 8 & 9

Ontario Parks Association
44th Annual Educational Seminar
Protecting Tomorrow Today
Explorations 2000 Trade Show
(March 8), Toronto, ON
Call: (416) 426-7157

March 22-26

Canada Blooms, Toronto, ON
Call: (800) 730-1020

April 7-9

Ontario Amateur Softball Association
Annual Convention, Midland, ON
Call Bea Weber at (519) 824-8061

April 30 - May 5

Ontario Recreation Facilities Association Inc. *45th Annual Professional Development Program Corporate Exhibition & Marketplace* (May 3), University of Guelph, Guelph, ON. Call: (416) 426-7062

July 11, 12 or 13

3rd Annual Solving Turf Problems
University of Guelph, Guelph, ON.
Call Marilyn Dykstra at (519) 767-6258 or Pam Charbonneau at (519) 824-4120 ext. 2597

August 16

Sports Turf Association
13th Annual Field Day
Guelph Turfgrass Institute, Guelph, ON
Call: (519) 763-9431

August 22

Guelph Turfgrass Institute
Research Field Day & Summer Turf Workshops, Guelph, ON
Call: (519) 767-5009

