



Bunker repair tops the list of most disliked, but necessary tasks on a golf course.

DEVELOPING AND MANAGING LEADERS ON THE GOLF COURSE

BY STEVE KAMMERER PH.D., SENIOR CONSULTING AGRONOMIST, SOUTHEAST REGION

A [ttracting talented and dedicated staff to work on golf courses is a major challenge facing the golf industry.](#) Keeping those staff members engaged so they stay in the industry can be even more challenging. Whether through an internship or as a new hire, new employees should be gauged for their energy level, passion, and desire to grow their skill sets. Some employees may be content for just a paycheck, but ambitious individuals often desire and respond to guidance and mentorship to become better employees and future leaders in the industry. These individuals tend to put extra effort into the tasks they perform and take great pride in their work.

So how do you keep these individuals engaged and motivated? Have you asked them about their short- and long-term aspirations? New employees who perceive themselves as just laborers or hours on a timecard may leave golf for greener pastures. Wages need to be competitive to keep people in any industry, [but money itself can be a very short-term motivator.](#) Here are the motivators that seem to have a more lasting impact on

keeping golf course employees motivated and engaged:

Develop Goals and Objectives

Most people need and desire objectives and goals, so they understand how their performance is evaluated. Without feedback on their progress or performance, an employee can lose their passion the quality of work may suffer. Developing goals and conducting periodic reviews is a great opportunity to provide compliments and constructive feedback.

Give Ownership and Responsibility

Provide an intern or new employee with the opportunity to lead and oversee a specific project. This fosters a sense ownership and responsibility for the project and helps build skills and vision for future projects.

Rotate Responsibilities

Most people, especially future leaders, want to learn and be challenged. They can quickly burn-out doing the same thing every single day. Having variation in jobs and tasks can provide challenges while breaking up the necessary but repetitive tasks. Balance boring, tedious tasks with ones that require more cognitive skills. A recent turf management grad is likely to question their career choice if all they do is rake bunkers or spot spray weeds every day.

Recognition and Performance Evaluations

Recognize extra effort and be receptive to suggestions of new ways of doing something. This develops individuals who see what needs to be done versus just doing what they're told. Don't make empty promises. Making promises around promotions, bonuses, or merit increases, while intended to motivate people, can decrease moral if not delivered upon and can lead to complacency. When an opportunity arises, introduce your employee to key industry personnel. This sends a strong message, that the employee is important, and you're committed to helping them in career advancement.

A good manager is one who takes an active interest in their employees to mentor and help them reach their goals. Superintendents that follow these principles are the ones that everyone wants to work for. They aren't necessarily the easiest superintendent to work for, or the highest paying, but they're the managers who take active roles in growing and marketing their staff so that they can move up in the industry. Without naming names, just look at some of the people who have received the USGA Green Section Award and their attributes – these are people students want to study or work under. They are the visionaries, the pioneers, and the builders of successful men and women in the golf industry.



For information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service Contact the Green Section Staff.

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SOUTHEAST REGION AGRONOMISTS:

Chris Hartwiger, Director, USGA Course Consulting Service, chartwiger@usga.org

Steve Kammerer, Ph.D., Senior Consulting Agronomist, skammerer@usga.org

Addison Barden, Agronomist, abarden@usga.org

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