

The miracle mower or, how to destroy employee morale

You can improve your employees' job satisfaction and job performance by learning to manage their expectations.

by Joe Carbone

■ Did you ever go to see a movie that was built up so much by advertising and promotion (like last summer's "Batman Returns") that, even though the movie was okay, you still felt that it was a letdown?

In that case, your level of satisfaction was *lower* than it otherwise would have been. Why? Because your expectations were too *high*.

This illustrates an important point for golf and landscape supervisors who want to maintain a high level of worker satisfaction and productivity. Good supervisors must be aware that they are always in a position to

influence worker expectations, and as such, can benefit by practicing "expectations management."

The key to successful expectations management is for the supervisor to become aware of how what he or she says influences what employees come to expect. And how employee expectations influence job satisfaction.

This often means that you may have to temper your own optimism, frustration, apprehension or excitement.

A good example—Suppose you order a new piece of lawn care equipment. Quite understandably, you are excited about its advanced features and the prospect of improved efficiency. Prior to its arrival, you cheerfully announce, "Wait until you see it! It's going to be the end of all your problems! These jobs will be a snap!"

You continue to sing the praises of this "miracle mower" until it arrives. Your people are trained on it, and you sit back and wait for the return on your investment. But instead of increased productivity, your peo-

ple have nothing but complaints:

"I thought you said this would be the end of all our problems."

"This thing's more trouble than it's worth."

"If you had enough money to buy this monster, how come you can't give us a raise?"

Where did you go wrong? Your enthusiasm was understandable, but by unintentionally raising worker expectations, you virtually guarantee lower satisfaction, more complaints and lower productivity.

The answer—Your feelings are your feelings. Your expression becomes their expectations. *Be moderate and realistic.* Don't get people's hopes up too high, but don't be a prophet of doom, either.

Think about how your expression affects worker expectations. Learn to manage them by becoming more aware of what you say and how you say it.

It's not that difficult, and the payoff will make the effort worthwhile.

—The author wrote "Getting It Right: What It Takes to Become a Good Front-Line Supervisor." For more information, write Carbone, P.O. Box 267, Lansing, NY 14882-0267.

Spill control protects pro applicators

■ Spills, when handling, transporting or using pesticides, are a concern for every applicator. Knowing what to do if a spill occurs, whether it's on your property or on the road, minimizes the risk and prevents water contamination.

Here are precautions to take when a spill occurs, according to A.C.R.E. (Alliance for a Clean Rural Environment):

✓ **Control the spill** as quickly as possible by restoring the container to its upright position, closing a leaking valve or hose, or putting a secondary container in place to catch the leaking solution. Use appropriate personal safety equipment like rubber gloves, rubber boots and eye protection.

✓ **Call your dealer** for advice on clean-up of their chemical. They will also give you special safety advice and other information.

✓ **Contain the spread** of the spill when the leak has been stopped by creating soil dams in the path of the spilled liquid. It may be most important to first divert a spill away from a nearby pond or stream and then attempt to stop the leak

or spill. This is a judgment call that only you can make.

✓ **Begin clean-up** as soon as the situation has been stabilized. Quick action on your part to clean up a spill is not only required by many states, but will prevent the chemical from leaching or washing away in a rainstorm.

✓ **Use absorbent materials** on

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Atlanta	(404) 347-3004
Boston	(617) 565-3715
Chicago	(312) 353-2000
Dallas.....	(214) 655-6444
Denve	(303) 293-1692
Philadelphia	(215) 597-9370
San Francisco.....	(415) 556-6478
Seattle	(206) 442-5810
Kansas City	(913) 551-7003
New York	(212) 264-2525

pavement or concrete to capture the spilled liquids. They can then be shoveled or swept. An excellent, inexpensive material to keep on hand for such purposes is nonchlorinated pet litter.

✓ **Properly dispose** of the drenched soil or absorbent material. This will depend on what and how much was spilled and the rules for disposal in your state. Contact state or local officials for legally-acceptable options of disposal.

✓ **Report the spill** if required, before it threatens public health or the environment. If the spill is large or enters a waterway, you'll need to call the local EPA office, the local emergency planning office or the state health department. The reporting criteria vary with the chemical spilled, however, so check your Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) or call the manufacturer for further details.

—For more information on handling pesticides, contact ACRE at P.O. Box 413708, Kansas City, MO 64179-0386; phone (800) 545-5410.