

Involve Me, And I Will Understand

Accepting input from employees whenever possible can improve morale.

by DARIN S. BEVARD



The crew gained valuable hands-on experience when they cleaned up the hillside adjacent to the sixth green and also installed brick planters, which improved the aesthetic quality of the hole (McCall Field Golf Club, Upper Darby, Pennsylvania).

PROPER MAINTENANCE of a golf course depends upon many factors. A good superintendent, an adequate budget, and modern equipment are substantial parts of the equation. However, none of these factors matter if you do not have a well-trained maintenance staff that has a genuine concern for the well-being of the golf course. If crew members care about the facility and take pride in their work, better conditions can generally be attained.

Golf course maintenance revolves around tasks that are repeated on a daily basis. Think of the many hot, dirty jobs that are routinely performed. These tasks can become monotonous over the course of the growing season. As such, crew members can become mired in a state of going through the motions. Attention to detail can suffer and overall playing quality may be reduced. Ultimately, this reflects back upon the superintendent.

As managers, it is important to develop ways to keep the interest and morale of workers at a high level. The challenge is to find an avenue to provide motivation for employees to do their best without using threats of termination or demotion.

Joe Candelore, superintendent at McCall Field Golf Course in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, has implemented a unique program to keep his employees motivated. The sign hanging over the door of Mr. Candelore's office best summarizes his philosophy. The sign reads, "Tell me, I'll forget. Show me, I may remember. But involve me, and I'll understand." Mr. Candelore uses this philosophy as often as possible in his day-to-day operations, but especially when a special project needs to be addressed.

Mr. Candelore asks his employees how they think a particular problem should be resolved. In return for their suggestions, he may allow an early exit on a Friday afternoon or an opportunity to play a round of golf. He makes it clear that only serious suggestions will be accepted. Many small projects at McCall Field Golf Course have been completed in this manner.

One example of a project where this tactic was employed was an effort to improve the appearance of the hillside adjacent to the sixth green. A housing complex borders the top of the hill. Over time, the area had been littered with various assortments of trash. The goal was not just to clean up the area;

that would be easy. Improving the overall appearance of the entire area was needed.

After Mr. Candelore requested input from his crew, several solutions were considered. In addition to collecting the trash, the decision was made to build brick planters into the hillside. The end result provided a dramatic improvement. What was once a forgotten area was changed into an asset, and the entire crew had a part in it, from start to finish.

Another project involved the construction of a footpath through an area between the sixth green and seventh tee. Foot traffic had worn the area between the two holes to bare soil. Again, the crew helped to develop a plan of action, and a new crushed-brick path surrounded by landscaping beds was installed.

These projects by themselves are not marvels. However, allowing his crew to be involved from start to finish has provided a source of pride and esprit de corps as they go through their daily routines. And, just maybe, it has raised the level of awareness and made someone try a little harder not to miss a strip when mowing or to rake a bunker more carefully by helping them to realize their work matters.

Mr. Candelore will be the first to admit that he has an unusual situation for the implementation of this type of program. He has a solid core of employees, many of whom have been with him for several years. His goal, however, is not unique. It is simply to motivate his employees to do their best. He accomplishes this by involving his staff in decision-making whenever possible and providing some incentive for their input. Getting the staff more involved whenever possible can help them understand the significance of the tasks that are performed.

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