

Motivation and In-Service Training

by PALMER MAPLES JR., Superintendent, The Standard Club, Atlanta, Ga.

Motivating a crew of men and training them for the work they will perform are most often related to one another. It is the responsibility of the golf course superintendent, or the man in charge, to correlate these two in such a way that we have maximum production for expended manhours.

Man is motivated by many things, and the most basic is self-preservation. He wants food, clothing, and shelter. For him to provide these for himself and his family usually requires that he work for a wage that can be used to buy these necessities. Therefore, if we have a crew of men to train, we can assume they have been motivated first by self-preservation.

As we go into a training program we can relate the training with the motivation, since a trained person has more value than an untrained person. We instruct our crews and tell them that if they can do certain jobs in the desired and proper manner they can get a higher wage, thus enabling them to obtain more of their necessities.

This gets us back to motivation, because now we get into another basic motivating principle—self-improvement. After the essentials are provided, our next desire is to improve ourselves, to make ourselves better than the next man. And now we can relate motivation and in-service training.

There are means of motivating a crew for general purposes or morale building; for example, a ham or turkey for the best kept equipment, or no trees hit with equipment; an extra bonus for no loss of time, a coffee dispenser for the winter; a half-day break and TV set to watch the World Series.

Motivation can be accomplished when we praise a workman for a job well done in front of other crew members, and just as important, NOT to correct a man in front of the other men. Always give the man a chance to explain his side of the story. Make sure your orders are clearly given and understood by all. It's not always the workman's fault if he's not properly instructed. That's your responsibility.

One of the more important factors in dealing with a crew is communication. If we cannot explain ourselves, or make ourselves understood, then we have a hard time getting the job done. I once heard a man compare the relation of the superintendent and crew to that of a spark plug; the spark plug furnishes the fire at the right time, in the proper amount and to the right places; the motor runs smoothly. There is an exact setting of the gap of a spark plug that causes all these things to take place and be of use when the spark plug fires. And so we too must adjust to a proper gap if we are to perform our duties in the best manner. We must be aware of the gap between ourselves and our crew. Not too close, not too far apart.

If we are training and must criticize, let it be constructive. If we are trying to motivate, let it not be too personal, but always keep the proper relationship. If things go wrong and we become angry, don't fire off too quickly; try to maintain the gap. This communication contact is the best adjustment to make the program function smoothly. And if it is adjusted properly, it can take care of the "slow downs" and "speed ups" in the same manner it takes care of the normal run.

As we go about different jobs, we should explain what we do and why we do it. It gives the crew a better understanding of the overall picture, where this job fits in, and why it is important. It will make the crew feel important in that they can answer a member's questions. A crew member feels more at ease in being able to say, "we're spraying an insecticide for grubs," rather than "just something the boss put in the tank." The member in turn feels that the crew knows what it is doing, has pride in its work and takes proper care of the golf course.

There is a relationship between in-service training and motivation. As we go about our job of explaining one and creating the other, let us remember to keep the proper gap, to be the spark plug that runs smoothly, to communicate with our crew so that we will be assured the maximum production from manhours expended.