

Pride Beat the Steam Drill

by JACK KIDWELL and MICHAEL HURDZAN
Golf Course Designers
Columbus, Ohio

Did you ever ask yourself why John Henry raced the steam drill and, as the legend goes died beating it? Was it for higher wages? Doubtful, for John was paid little or nothing as a black railroader. Was it to protect his job? Probably not, because the machine would have only made his work easier, not eliminate it. Perhaps it was because John Henry believed that he was the strongest, fastest man on the railroad and he couldn't let a steam drill beat him.

If you accept this answer you are probably well on your way to being a successful manager of men with few labor problems, for you have done two things. One, you have realized that the most powerful force in this world is a man's pride; he will even give his life to protect it. Number two, you realize that your best men working for you and with you value praise above money and job security. I'm not for a minute saying that money and security are not important—I am only saying that they are not the *most* important factors in a job. As evidence of this, surveys were conducted among employees and supervisors to find what employees wanted in their jobs. The difference between what the supervisors and employees thought may surprise you.

TABLE 1.
WHAT EMPLOYEES WANT IN THEIR JOBS*

	Order of Importance to:	
	Workers	Supervisors
Full appreciation for work done	1	8
Feeling "in" on things	2	10
Sympathetic understanding of personal problems	3	9
Job Security	4	2
Good wages	5	1
Interesting work	6	5
Promotion and growth with company	7	3
Management loyalty to workers	8	6
Good working conditions	9	4
Tactful disciplining	10	7

In another survey the question asked employees was: "What is important to employees?" The differences of opinion were again striking.

TABLE 2.
WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO EMPLOYEES

	Order of Importance to:	
	Workers	Supervisors
Credit for work done	1	7
Interesting work	2	3
Fair play	3	1
Understanding and appreciation	4	5
Counsel on personal problems	5	8
Promotions on merit	6	4
Good physical working conditions	7	6
Job security	8	2

These surveys point out that workers are more interested in appreciation for work done than wages and job security. The work need not even be interesting, as elaborated by Table 1. And notice Table 2, where credit for work done was judged most important to workers and job security least important. Supervisors, on the other hand, judged these completely differently.

Think about it—are your best men paid what they are really worth compared to construction men, factory workers, or salesmen? Don't you think they know they could quit you tomorrow and get a job with another golf course, park, cemetery or landscape outfit? Then why are your men loyal to you and of what value is it to know this? Simply that you can get more work done, keep your men happy, and have fewer general labor problems.

Most likely, your men are loyal because they are proud to work at your course, be associated with you, and they know they can do a job well. They are proud of a good job of mowing, watering, raking, or cleanup because

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someone notices the good job. Remember how you feel when you get a compliment about the condition of the course as opposed to only getting more orders or criticism. When you give a compliment like "good job on those traps, Joe," it does more than talk about the condition of the sand. It makes Joe feel like part of the team; he has done his part and you realize how tired and hot he must feel for doing it. Don't be afraid to brag about your staff and when you get a compliment, pass it on to your men. Soon each man will feel peer pressure to do a good job.

A compliment can be simple or complex, but it must at all costs be sincere. That is so important that I'll repeat it—"a compliment must at all costs be sincere." An insincere compliment is a slap in the face and everyone knows when you are insincere. "This is good and true," you may say, "so I'll sincerely compliment and become interested in my good men and they will work harder, but it's the 'bad' men that give me the trouble."

It works with them, too. I have worked with many men and I will use two as specific examples. Erv Friend is the kind of man who works seven days a week, 12 to 14 hours a day if necessary. Erv is at work every morning on time, rain or shine, and will do any job from raking raps to tee starter and has done so for 25 years. I also worked with a man I'll call Les Hope who would only work five days a week at the most, was always late (half the time we had to get him out of bed), who was lazy, stole equipment and gas, and didn't care if the golf course dried up and blew away. Les abused the machinery, counted the weeks till unemployment would start again, and asked for a raise every week. What was the difference between Erv and Les? Personally, I felt it was pride. Erv is proud of himself, the golf course, the work he does. I felt sorry for Les, for he didn't care how he looked, what he was, or what people thought. Nothing was important to him. I know now that Les could have been nearly as valuable as Erv if someone had tried to build his pride in his work. Actually, this is what happened. Les Hope was fired, got another job, and his new employer found out he had mechanical abilities and praised his work. At last word, Mr. Hope is one of the most trusted foremen in his business.

CAUTION, for our first point of agreement was that pride is the most powerful force in the

world. This means it can cause problems as easily as it can cure them. Remember that insincere compliments or compliments that are thought to be insincere will destroy a man's pride in his work. Be yourself and be true. Secondly, be sensitive to what you say and do toward your men or unknowingly you might hurt someone's pride. Let me give you an example. Joe Protz worked for a local club and he was a pretty good mechanic. He prided himself on being able to fix anything and he just about could. Then along came hydraulics, pressure valves, pumps, and special lines, and Joe's efficiency dropped because he didn't understand the hydraulics system well enough to find problems and make repairs quickly. Joe's superintendent thought that Joe should go to school. So he said, "Joe, you just don't seem to be quick enough on these repairs anymore, so the club has given me money to send you to school." So the next day Joe quit his job and no one knew why. But you and I know why—Joe prided himself as a mechanic and that pride was shattered by a few thoughtless words. The superintendent didn't stop to consider Joe's feelings before he spoke. Chances are if the superintendent had said, "Joe, you're the best mechanic we have ever had at this course, and as a result, the club has voted money for you to further your education and keep you the best." Joe would have been honored and probably have worked hard to be at the top of his class.

Just recently my wife bought a new vacuum cleaner and on the box was printed "Fragile—Handle With Pride." In this instance, a man's self image and feelings are much like the vacuum cleaner, for they both, indeed, are Fragile—Handle With Pride!

How do we gain skill in using pride as a tool to help us? By first becoming genuinely interested in people and trying to understand their wants and needs. "I don't have time for that stuff," you say. It takes just a minute to put yourself in the other man's position, and if you don't have one minute for "that stuff," you may be a lonely man. There are a number of excellent books on the subject and I urge you to read as many of them as possible. It could be the best purchase you have ever made.

In summary, always remember that a man's pride defines who and what a man is. Handle it properly, and you have a John Henry.