

Hiring Practices

by JAMES T. SNOW

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1. Be Prepared

Know your budget so that you can answer any questions intelligently and confidently.

2. Neatness

Your budget should be typewritten so that it can be easily read. A copy should be sent to the necessary members for examination prior to the date of presentation. Use visual aids, slides, charts, graphs, blueprints, etc., to explain items in the budget.

3. Personal Appearance

When you are presenting a budget, show your members that you are a businessman in the way you dress.

A good golf course superintendent should be able to stay within 2 percent of his forecasted budget, weather conditions permitting. Labor continues to be the single largest expenditure in golf course maintenance, followed by the purchase of chemicals, materials, parts, and expendable supplies.

By prudent purchasing of these items, we can save our golf courses thousands of dollars each year. It is our job to get the proper materials, to do the proper job, for the best possible price.

The following guidelines will assist you in obtaining the best price:

1. Using past records and current research results, develop a program for the coming year and forecast the types and amounts of material you will need.

2. Be aware of early order and early payment discounts. Be sure that your payments fit into the cash flow of the club.

3. Compare prices. Buy only reputable products from reputable distributors. Send out a list of materials you need and let the distributors quote you a price. Prices for identical products may vary a great deal between distributors and you should be constantly alert to this fact.

Shop around! Spend your club's money as if it were your own! Add to your foundation of agronomic skills and manage your golf course like a business — it is one.

For further help in budget preparation, refer to *The Budget Process on A Golf Course*, available from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, Lawrence, Kansas.

HOW OFTEN the statement has been made, "a supervisor is only as good as the people he has working for him." How true it is! We all know of golf courses with small crews that seem to accomplish more than other courses with crews twice the size.

While much of the success of a maintenance program rests on the ability of the golf course superintendent to supervise and manage a crew of workers, it is his ability to hire people with ambition and dependability that ultimately makes the difference. Thus, it is to the advantage of the superintendent to develop a sound routine for hiring new workers for his course.

Establishing a Philosophy

One of the first moves is to establish a hiring philosophy. For example, are you looking for a smaller, better paid, more permanent crew, or do you want a

larger, lower paid, mostly seasonal staff? Will turfgrass or college students be a part of your program, or do you want to avoid seasonal turnover by hiring older, more dependable, and consistent workers? Do you want an assistant superintendent? If so, will he (or she) be a turfgrass student or graduate who will move on to a course of his own in a couple of years, or would you prefer a more permanent assistant who is less inclined to become a superintendent himself?

The answers to these questions depend on several factors. Certainly the background, experience and feelings of the superintendent will have much to do with the hiring philosophy. The needs of the club and its willingness and ability to pay a decent wage and provide some benefits will help determine what can be done. The availability of certain labor types, competition from nearby industries for good workers, and the climatic characteristics of a region are other factors that influence hiring practices.

Although there is no single recommended philosophy to take with regard to hiring workers, most superintendents would agree that they would like to be able to provide decent wages and benefits and thereby attract better-quality workers. With maintenance equipment becoming more sophisticated and expensive and with golfers increasing their demands for perfect turf, it is no wonder that superintendents want to hire more dependable people.

Developing a Recruitment Plan

Because wages paid to golf course workers are generally low, resulting in a fairly high turnover rate, many superintendents are always searching for replacements. Rather than starting from scratch each time a new worker must be found, the more successful superintendents have discovered that a well-developed recruitment plan can greatly increase their chances for finding good workers. In other words, they have a system.

The premise behind most plans is quite simple: find and cultivate a potential source of good workers. It is easy enough

The approach taken in hiring new workers . . .



to obtain job applicants by running an ad in a local newspaper. Obtaining a high percentage of good workers from this source, however, is not always possible. Instead, try to develop a personal working relationship with some individual at each employment source. For example, rather than phoning or sending a rather anonymous announcement to a local high school or college placement office, visit the office yourself and cultivate a friendship with someone there who will then be more interested in your business and more willing to help. Better yet, get to know some of the instructors at the schools. Having worked directly with the students, they will be better able to supply the names of workers with greater than average potential. If these contacts can be made with instructors at colleges with turf-grass management programs, so much the better.

Regardless of the source you are working with, be it a college, a local high school or an employment agency, establishing personal contacts with people who can help is a key to the long-term success of a recruitment plan. Realize that it takes time, and perhaps a little politicking, to develop trusted contacts. As they get to know you better, they become more sympathetic to your cause and more willing to help. If it is a college professor you are hoping to seek assistance from, get to know him as well as you can. Call him on the phone, invite him for lunch, visit with him at meetings, offer to help with his programs if you can. The better he knows you, the better your chances of obtaining good referrals.

Many employers have recruited friends or relatives of present employees on the presumption that they will be similarly motivated. This approach may work very well or turn out to be a disaster, but it is an option that superintendents might consider if the situation is right.

The Interview

As inquiries begin to come in, prospective employees should be asked to fill out an application form. The form should include the standard questions, along with others related to what the job entails on the golf course, such as mechanical ability and equipment operation. You might also ask whether or not the person plays golf. Request references and *check them*.

The face-to-face interview is the most widely accepted and most commonly used method of evaluating potential employees. After applications have been reviewed and references checked, invite



... Can make a big difference!

the several leading candidates for an interview.

The key to the success of any interview is knowing what you're looking for. This is determined by the specific requirements of the job itself, and by considering a less-tangible set of five characteristics which all good workers possess to some degree. They are: 1) a positive attitude, 2) a strong drive, 3) a steady persistence, 4) maturity, and 5) an aptitude for getting along with others. During the course of the interview, try to question the candidate in such a way as to get him to reveal how he measures up to these characteristics.

There are a number of topics that should be discussed during an interview. For example, ask the candidate why he is applying for the job. Discuss his work history, and inquire about the types of experience he has gained from previous

employment. Ask about the specifics of his formal education and training, and investigate his other qualifications. By asking leading questions and being a good listener, you should be able to learn of the candidate's character and potential.

Another objective of the interview is to be sure the applicant understands all that is involved with the job. Let him know the bad points as well as the good. Tell him about the bad weather, sand raking and rotary work, and weekend requirements. Providing an assessment of the negative aspects of the job will help ensure that only the hale and hearty remain for final consideration.

Give the applicant a full rundown of club policy and your own shop rules. Tell him that all new employees serve a probationary period, and that you reserve the right to terminate employment at any time during that period if you feel that things will not work out. Establishing the ground rules during the interview will provide a smoother transition and minimize problems after the person is hired.

After recruiting candidates for the job, reviewing their applications, checking references, and conducting well-planned interviews, you will be in a good position to hire the person who will contribute most to your program. The new employee is then likely to become an asset and contribute to your professional image and club operations.

Lead, Follow or Get Out of the Way

by DONALD E. HEARN

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ITHINK WE CAN compare golf course superintendents to the story of Paul Revere. After Paul Revere finished his ride through Lexington and Concord to warn of the approach of the British, everybody said what a great job he had done. But no one mentioned his horse. I'm sure you can imagine how that horse felt; if he could have talked, you can bet the horse would have told Revere just how important that unsung hero was.

So many times, just like Revere's horse, we feel that our efforts aren't appreciated. Most times they aren't. One of the reasons why is because people don't know what it is they're supposed to appreciate. How are people to appreciate something they don't know anything about?

Let them know what it is you do and what your responsibilities are. Tell them about your background and experience in agronomy, horticulture, entomology,