



Dave Frieta (right) superintendent at Pronghorn Golf Club in Bend, Oregon, regularly communicates both the short- and long-term goals of the golf course to his interns and staff as a whole.

It's All About The People

How to get the most out of your most important asset.

BY BILL GRIFFITH

For a number of years I have been interested in ways to motivate employees and have had many opportunities to observe maintenance crews in action while visiting internship sites of students in the Turf Management Program at Walla Walla Community College (WWCC). I have visited more than 150 worksites in the last 10 years and have seen some really motivated crews and others that are not so motivated. This article is about those observations and some materials gained from other sources.

I have observed two major areas that hinder motivating employees. One of those areas is the lack of organization

and clear directions to the staff. The other is that the supervisor's communications to the staff are infrequent and/or negative in nature. Employees want a leader who leads and provides consistent communication to them. Informed workers are much more likely to be motivated.

THE LINK BETWEEN ORGANIZATION AND MOTIVATION

Organization gives workers confidence, direction, and power while planning out the work day, work week, and even longer. Something visual works best and is much more likely to be under-

stood than just verbal planning and direction. Advance notice of tournaments, special maintenance practices, and scheduled events empowers employees because they know what to expect and are mentally prepared. When employees know the plan, they are better able to process what needs to be done and are more efficient at doing their job.

THE LINK BETWEEN SHARING GOALS AND MOTIVATION

Setting and sharing goals with all of the staff moves the organization forward because the staff has a better idea of the

big picture. If you want your workers to buy into the goals of the organization, make them part of the goal-setting process. Regularly communicate the short- and long-term goals to your workers. Reaching your goals is the perfect opportunity to give positive reinforcement that can go a long way in motivating your employees. Employees who know the big picture of the puzzle are better able to fit the pieces together.

THE POWER OF A "GOTCHA" MANAGEMENT STYLE

"Gotchas" are often used when workers do something wrong and for communicating their mistakes to them. "Gotchas" may correct wrong behavior, but seldom do they have any long-lasting positive motivational effect. In fact, this management style becomes very counter-productive and eventually the employee will not believe what you are saying about him.

Another closely related point to remember is to concentrate on the behavior or action, especially patterns of behavior. Obviously, these situations need to be dealt with, but care should be taken to differentiate between the person and the behavior or action. The other thing that happens with a "gotcha" management mentality is that critical attitudes and words flourish. Eventually, this becomes part of the maintenance crew's normal operating procedure, and the interaction between management and crew becomes critical in nature. "Gotcha" management styles erode trust from those we manage and produce fear, uncertainty, and resentment. One positive comment usually stops critical comments and changes the direction of the conversation.

THE POWER OF A "WELL DONE" MANAGEMENT STYLE

"Well done" managers notice when things are being done right and communicate the same to workers. What do we pay the most attention to — when workers do something wrong or when they do something right? Unfortunately,

of all our response options, the one that is most used for a job well done is "no response." Over a period of time, consistent "no responses" tend to be perceived as negative in nature. We need to understand what a positive difference it makes in their motivation when people are appreciated for what they do right. "Well done" managers communicate to workers when they see progress, not just when something is done perfectly.

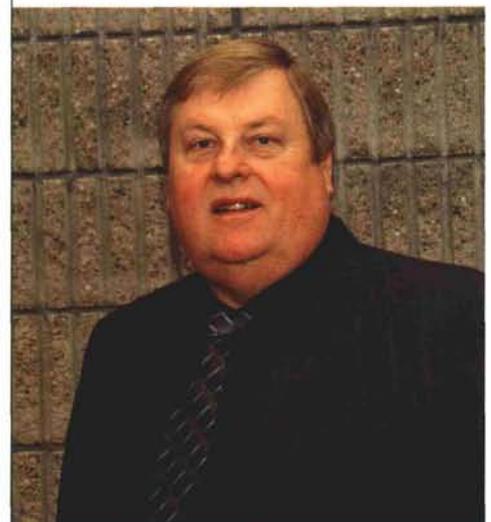
Do not confuse this process with manipulation, which is used only for the manipulator's benefit. The goal is to get people self-motivated so that the reward comes from within when they do a good job. They will learn this best if we provide a model for them. One of the best quotes from Ken Blanchard's *Whale Done* is, "Praise progress. It's a moving target." Write this on your wall or make a sign above your desk, but make sure to keep reminding yourself of how important it is to recognize progress.

Accentuating the positive is a learned process and works only when it becomes a habit. How many of you wake up just before the alarm goes off every morning? That is a learned habit, and when we repeat something often enough, it becomes a habit and eventually part of our character. Involve your employees in helping to add ways to accentuate the positive at your work sites. This also works well in the area of customer service. It gives the employees ideas for better customer service and communicates to them the importance of good customer service. We need to consistently model customer service to our employees and reinforce the message that, without the golfers, we wouldn't have jobs. Work sites that practice affirmation and "well done" management create an environment of safety and trust. People are willing to hear and accept the truth in a place that has trust and is without fear. If our employees are given consistent affirmation, they will really take notice when we point out a mistake or a behavior problem.

Try this with one or two people for a week or two and see if it doesn't make a difference. Start by making a list, and note every time you see an employee do something right, and then comment individually to the employee. Remember to look for progress from your employees and praise them for it. Consider practicing this in your personal life, too, and you will probably be surprised at the difference it will make in your personal relationships. As a parent, it made a tremendous difference in my relationship with my children when I started appreciating them for what they did well and focused less on what my expectations were for them. Finally, promote a work site that encourages employees to learn and grow. Make your positive and redirective comments to individuals first, then to groups when necessary. A well-motivated work force will always accomplish more and make the manager look good.

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