



Training Culture?

QUESTIONS FOR TRAINING-PROGRAM PLANNING & EXECUTION

Written by Mark Wiebe, Assistant Superintendent, Oakdale G&CC.

Training, training, training. It's a word we talk about, plan for, and execute every season on our golf courses. Training-programs may be the most important factor in producing both tangible and, when reaching our full potential as leaders as well as a team, intangible results.

Besides helping ensure our safety and improving the physical features of our golf courses, what else can a comprehensive, creative, and consistently executed training-program do for us? And, what else could be required for our training-programs to be effectively executed? Of course, there's no one-size-fits-all answer. But, after breaking our future plans and past executions down into their contingent parts and after asking ourselves the right questions, we can make the best decision on how to move forward.

Our golf courses, the individuals who maintain them, and we as leaders can then reap all the benefits.

EXPECTATION VS. CARE

Most, if not all the work that goes into maintaining a golf course is very detailed. Our training-programs often reflect this detail-oriented nature of the work. One of the greatest challenges and glaring contradictions of it all is this: the majority of the individuals who we hire, train, and rely upon to carry out the work won't always care as much, or be as highly motivated as we are. A strong training-program with clear and concise process standards and a system of accountability can help remedy this expectation versus care imbalance. Other than reaching the balance between thoroughness, ease of use and adaptability, what else makes a training-program strong for our seasonal staff?

FREEDOM VS. CONTROL

If being free, that is, using our own directing mind and intuition, has a connection with being strong, we're forced to question its importance in our training-programs. Although contradicting the expectations versus care imbalance we can often encounter, people still seem to inevitably slump and perform poorly when the workplace and training is being influenced too heavily by the opposite spectrum of freedom: control. Therefore, looking through this lens of control versus freedom we can over time, and as trust in our program increases, ask ourselves: how can we shift further into the spectrum of freedom? What does freedom within a training-program mean to us? Having this balance of freedom versus control can have several benefits that may contribute to a positive and productive workplace. Again, there's no perfect answer. We'll never have

“arrived” at the perfect place. That’s for us as leaders to always question, work on, and get ever closer to. This much is clear. The many benefits, all of which can be seen through both an individual or collective viewpoint, are well worth the effort.

INDIVIDUAL & COLLECTIVE PERFORMANCE

Like plotting out the stops on a trip to somewhere you’ve never been or finding out where your classes were before the first day of school, many of us like to know what we’re getting into. When we know what we’re getting into, we’re more at ease and confident. When we’re more at ease and confident, we’re more likely to perform at a higher level. The trickle-down effect of getting this right from the start can be a game changer. When new members of our team see the confidence and trust gained from our own commitment to their training and development from the get-go, there can be a collective rise in morale and overall positivity. Feelings, thoughts, actions – a sequence that’s important to consider from the start and all the way through.

ENGAGEMENT & INCLUSIVENESS

Our training-programs offer the first and on-going opportunity to encourage engagement and inclusiveness. Feeling like you’re a key member of a team and something bigger than yourself usually inspires good thoughts.

Good thoughts inspire good actions. Adding opportunities for feedback from our trainees as well as those who are delivering the training is one example of how we can build engagement and inclusiveness into our training-program. When one person on our team sees this openness, and how they can affect the operation, it can create a collective realization and the motivation to achieve excellence.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Another more practical, but at the same time less obvious way to create accountability is within our training-programs and a “training culture.” Evaluation of completed work after training is a traditional way to hold our people accountable. Meeting the specific steps within a standard operating procedure document used for training is another, and arguably more accurate way to do this. The same collective realization and motivator to reach uniform standards will also encourage people to hold each other accountable and, more critically, to hold themselves accountable.

LEADERSHIP

When those on our team hold themselves and each other accountable, each of them becomes a leader. From a more individual viewpoint, developing the trainers on our team can only enhance their leadership skills and therefore, their ability to consistently execute our training-programs. When you feel, think, and act like you

matter, like you’re a part of something bigger than yourself, you’re more apt to consistently perform at a higher level, to hold yourself and those around you accountable, and, most importantly, to be a leader. Keeping the big picture in mind and at the center of our training culture can help keep individual and collective viewpoints aligned. The big picture may change from place to place, different circumstances and styles of management and leadership, but some things never change. Taking pride in maintaining a beautiful golf course for our members, guests, or customers and, most importantly, being a good teammate will always be cornerstones of success. There may be no one-size-fits-all answers, but we can always ask ourselves how a training culture could help our golf course, our teams, and ourselves as leaders in reaching our full potential.

Follow the QR code which links to an example of a process checklist, or standard operating procedure document with sections for feedback from trainers and supervisors. ■



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