

Sports turf veterans on managing personnel

ABBY MCNEAL, CSFM, director of turf management, Wake Forest University

Have you ever had any official training in personnel management?

McNeal: There were no classes that were "officially" geared towards personnel management during my college days, but I have taken several at STMA conferences and through work seminars. I am fortunate that Wake Forest has a strong professional development philosophy and provides free classes to employees. I have taken several classes (ranging from half day to 1.5 hours) that focus on team building, leadership, and personnel management skills.

What are the most important qualifications you seek when hiring?

McNeal: The main qualifications that I look for when hiring someone are education (high school diploma and at least 2-year degree) and varied field related experience. I want to see that the person is committed to bettering themselves through education and experiences after high school. Varied experiences help expose the person to the different areas that we as sports turf managers face in our jobs and I think that they become better contributors to the staff because of the exposure.

How do you handle "constructive criticism" from employees, whether it is meant to be helpful or not?

McNeal: We all want criticism but are not always prepared for what we hear. A good team/crew will give each other good feedback on a regular basis. I am all for any type of criticism as long as it is for making us all better and that it is presented in a professional manner. Some days, with all the work and life stresses the timing of the criticism (whether receiving or giving) is critical. I try to be as open as I can when receiving the feedback so that the end result can benefit everyone and the situation can improve.

Have you found that matching personalities with specific tasks to be performed works? How do you determine who does what best?

McNeal: I do try to match personalities and skills set as well as mix and match the staff so that they can learn from each other. Some days two staff members will accomplish a task better than others. If time allows I will pair up employees that may take a little more time and have a better sense of the details with one that tends to be faster at getting the job done, with the goal that they can balance each other out and learn from each others skill set. The pairing can be a risk

7 habits of extraordinary teams

By Geoffrey James

EVERYBODY AGREES that "teamwork" is crucial to business success but few people bother to define what "teamwork" really is. A few years ago, Phil Geldart, author of "In Your Hands, the Behaviors of a World Class Leader," explained to me a set of principles that allow teams to overcome even the most thorny business challenges. Based on that conversation, here are the seven characteristics of truly extraordinary teams:

1 EXTRAORDINARY TEAMS HAVE A LEADER.

Regardless of whether team members come from the same organization or are collected from multiple organizations there must always be a designated and recognized team leader. Even though the team leader needs rest of the team to deliver the result, the team leader—not the team—is responsible for that result.

2 EXTRAORDINARY TEAMS HAVE QUANTIFIABLE GOALS.

Teamwork requires that every member of the team understand exactly what the team is supposed to achieve. That sense of exactness is only possible when the team's goal can be measured objectively, which means the goals must be quantifiable rather than vague. So, for example, a goal to "Build better customer relationships" is meaningless mush. By contrast, "Increase re-order rates by 50%" is precise and understandable.

3 EXTRAORDINARY TEAMS HAVE WELL-DEFINED ROLES.

Each team member should know exactly what he or she must do day-to-day so that the team achieves its goals. Without that clarity, team members may work at cross-purposes and trip each other up. The intersecting roles of the team members should be thought through carefully at the inception of the effort; they can then be refined as the team moves forward.

4 EXTRAORDINARY TEAMS SHARE RESOURCES.

For a team to be successful, members must be willing to share whatever resources they control that are required for the team to achieve its goal. These include physical resources (money, materials, equipment, etc.) as well as mental or emotional resources (like ideas, suggestions, encouragement, or enthusiasm). When team members hoard, teams are weakened.

5 EXTRAORDINARY TEAMS COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY.

Depending upon the goals and time frame, teams should meet at least once a week, and more often if necessary. More importantly, team communications must be tooled (or retooled if necessary) so that each team member understands what's going on and, perhaps more importantly, what is expected of him or her before the next meeting.

6 EXTRAORDINARY TEAMS ARE 100% COMMITTED.

Commitment expresses itself through consistency, particularly in behavior of the team members. They're willing and able to do what needs to be done in order to achieve the team's goals. While extraordinary teams are committed, however, they aren't obsessive: members shouldn't be sacrificing their private lives for the team. In fact, team members can't perform consistently when their lives are out of balance.

7 EXTRAORDINARY TEAMS DISCOURAGE BIG EGOS.

A strong ego is a good thing in many business situations, but not inside teams. For a team to function effectively, individuals on the team must hold their own egos in check and make both the team itself and the team's goals more important than individual members or their individual contributions. Otherwise, grandstanding and prima donna behavior can short-circuit everything.

Needless to say, these "habits" do not emerge automatically. You need to make sure you're fostering the kind of culture that helps these teams develop, because teams founded with these habits in mind are far more likely to succeed than teams that just meet periodically and hope for the best.

Geoffrey James writes the "Sales Source" column for Inc.com.