

BOOSTING YOUR CAREER:

strategies for success and significance in your work life

ACCORDING TO DR. TOM DENHAM, one of the pioneers on career stages, those in the workforce will usually move through five career stages, somewhat framed by age:

Growth - ages four to 13, when individuals first become aware of the future;

Exploration - ages mid-teens to mid-twenties, when various occupational options are explored though school, leisure, part-time work and volunteering;

Establishment - ages mid-twenties to mid-forties, typically a suitable field is selected and efforts are made to secure a long-term place in the chosen career;

Maintenance - ages mid-forties to mid-sixties, characterized by constancy, either by “holding on,” which is stagnating or plateauing, or by “keeping up,” which is updating or enriching; and

Disengagement - mid-sixties, typically marked by moving from formal employment to finding new roles with a view to retirement. However, Baby Boomers are changing this to a stage more appropriately named “Re-invent-ment.” They are completely redesigning the idea of “retirement,” preferring to work in some form while pursuing new or renewed outside interests.

What is critical to successful employment at any stage is career development, i.e., constantly improving yourself to add value in the workplace.

WHAT IS EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS?

During a gathering of sports turf managers at a women’s forum held in conjunction with the Sports Turf Managers Association Annual Conference, the concept of employment success was discussed. Interestingly, the items high on the list were not about monetary compensation. Job satisfaction, making a difference and respect for the job that sports turf managers do were at the top. Also discussed were the ways to achieve success. These included having a passion for the work, doing a great job, and continually improving

oneself. Also making the list were communicating well, projecting confidence in your leadership abilities, and asking for help.

At this year’s Golf Industry Show, golf course superintendents shared some strategies that helped them to achieve career success; many are similar to and build on those discussed at the women’s forum. These strategies have been redirected to sports field management, but can be applied to virtually any industry because they focus on self development.

TOP 10 TIPS TO CAREER SUCCESS

1) Volunteer. Become involved in your local chapter, community and national association. Taking on leadership roles in these organizations gives you visibility and positions you as someone who can be counted on to follow through. Volunteering adds another dimension to your work experience and can provide professional recognition, a clearer view of the industry, networking contacts, and speaking experience.

2) Continue with your Education. Be proactive in continuing your education and promote it. You must stay current in a broad range of disciplines including agronomics, business management, communication, financial management, environmental regulations, etc. View non-technical continuing education as equally important to the technical areas of your job. Make certain that your employer knows that you value professional development. Learning and knowing how to learn is the most important skill needed by employers according to a study conducted jointly by the US Department of Labor and the American Society for Training and Development.

3) Over-communicate. Continually communicate with your employer, your staff, facility management team, users of your fields, and fans. Communicating helps to build trust and confidence. Clear and continuous communication ensures that expectations are verbalized, progress is discussed, and challenges are addressed.

4) Ask Questions. Asking questions lets your employer know that you are interested in learning “why.” The more you know, the more you can add value and be valued.

5) Develop good relationships within your own organization. Being known as a responsive leader outside of your department adds to your credibility and possible mobility to the next step up your career ladder. Employers who have smart, solution-oriented employees are more apt to pro-

mote from within rather than hiring new talent.

6) Put yourself in the role. Determine what you want to do, where you want to be, and become that person. If you are in an assistant’s role, ask to take on new projects and challenges that are typically the responsibility of the head position, so that you acquire skills beyond what is needed for your current position.

7) It’s who you know. Vendors, architects, builders, coaches, colleagues...this is the network that can help to alert you to new job opportunities. Be sure to cultivate these relationships. One-half or more of all jobs come through informal channels—connections to friends, families, and colleagues—according to “Limited Network Connections and the Distribution of Wages,” by Kenneth J. Arrow of Stanford University and Ron Borzekowski of the Federal Reserve Board. Networking is the only way to tap into “unpublished” jobs. When it is time to move from an assistant to a head position, your supervisor can be your greatest advocate. Although your employer is sorry to lose you, he/she takes great pride in helping you move to your next career stage. After all, your employer invested in you.

8) Your facility is your résumé. The work that you do in preparing your fields for play is visible to athletes, coaches, fans and potential employers. When ready to move to another position consider creating a pictorial résumé that showcases the projects that you have accomplished with links to your own web page where you have posted career highlights.

9) Remember who is hiring you. As you move up to a head position or change employers, remember that the person hiring you is most likely someone who is not intimately familiar with your job. Write your résumé to focus on solutions and achievements, and be prepared in your interview to talk comfortably about what you do.

10) Be a professional in everything that you do and say. Your image is constantly being changed, reshaped and reformed based on many things including the way you communicate, dress, manage your staff and do your job. Being aware of how you are perceived by others can help you shape their perceptions of you. Be sure to maintain high ethical standards. It takes just the hint of impropriety to derail a career that you have spent years building. ■

This article was supplied by the headquarters staff of the Sports Turf Managers Association, Lawrence, KS, www.stma.org.