



MANAGING YOUR STAFF

Ray Burniston writes, arriving at a new job, it is vital that you get the staff on your side and working towards the greater good as quickly as possible.

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It would be fair to say that the new Secretary starting at his/her Club will need to get to know the staff and make an assessment fairly quickly. Probably the best advice one can give is as follows:

First and foremost, make your own assessment and do not be swayed by committee members or others however well meaning and helpful they may try to be. Management and control of staff is an important part of your job and if you fail in this area you will have little chance of succeeding.

It is important to have well written Job Descriptions and Contracts for all your staff. If you find that there are none of these then you will need to spend much time at the start to get these items in place. You will need to discuss this matter with each member of staff and the head of department. This is often a very good way of meeting all your staff in a formal interview when you can go over in detail their duties. You can learn an awful amount in this manner which will give you an idea of the morale and keenness of the staff.

It is probably sensible to have each of the Heads of Department with you at these interviews although do not be afraid of doing it on your own if you feel this is the best way.

It is important to get over to staff that you are in charge but at the same time you need their help and support. The more you know about the strengths and weaknesses of your staff the more likely you are to succeed. The Secretary/Manager at the end of the day will only be as good as the staff and if they feel that you are fair and support them then half the battle is won.

You need to look very carefully at staffing levels as these can be both too high and too low. The golf course is always a particular problem to assess exactly the staffing requirements. It will depend on the policy of the club regarding the standard they wish to maintain and also the layout and design of the course. A small compact course covering 70/80 acres will most likely require less staff than one that covers 150/200 acres. Additional facilities such as practice areas and holes along with driving ranges also add to the work of the staff. Remember that flower beds and shrubs around the clubhouse area need regular maintenance otherwise they become an eyesore. Staffing levels within the clubhouse will depend on what is the policy of the club added to which the catering may be operated by an independent contractor. Your job will be to see that they maintain adequate levels.

You will have to start by looking at the personal records that are available at the club. If they are all up-to-date and well documented then you will have few worries but many clubs are notorious for having incomplete or no records. This is often the case when the employees have been with the club for many years and so there has been no need to up-date records when new staff are brought in. It is important to record all training and courses completed by your staff along with any discipline matters. Any verbal or written warnings only have a certain time limit usually about six months. So it is no good producing a written warning of two years ago and thinking this can be used in dismissing a member of staff.

There are many ways of keeping these records, from a simple filing system through to keeping the records on a computer. If the club has annually reviewed and assessed each member of staff, then you will have a good basis on which to make your own assessments.

It is important to plan and work through an induction process for new members of the staff. This is particularly important in areas of the club in which the staff deal directly with the members and their guests. You can often judge a club by the way the staff serve and attend to you in the bar and restaurant. Smartly turned out staff with a pleasant and helpful attitude can melt the ice of the most difficult member. So try to make sure that they greet them with a smile. More clubs these days provide smart clean uniforms for their staff and these certainly give a good first impression.

The recent changes in the law in the Employment Act now only gives employers a one year term before their employee comes under the protection of the Act. Therefore the need to assess and make sure an employee is satisfactory becomes even more important. It is probably a sensible solution to draw up an induction programme for each job within the club and have the means of seeing that the process has been properly carried out. It is also essential to establish that employees have the correct training in areas such Hygiene, Health & Safety and use of Machinery and Chemicals.

Staffing costs represent a major portion of the expenditure at all clubs and therefore it is important that this investment in people is properly controlled and assessed.

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