

Four-Way Management Works

By Dave Doherty

Four-way management, what's that?

After spending three days at a wonderful golf club in Mohnton, Pa., I couldn't help but comment to the club's superintendent about the friendliness and professionalism of every one with whom I came in contact.

How is the club able to maintain this atmosphere? He answered: Four-way management to *those above, below and to each side of him.*

The general manager, green committee and the board of directors are above him.

Below him is the grounds crew; to his right are his two assistants and mechanic, and to his left is the club's members and their guests.

What a simple and respectful code of conduct. When I asked his two assistants how long they had been at this course they each answered about 10 years. The mechanic who is as good as any I have worked with apparently had a reputation of not staying at one place very long, yet he had been at this course for four years.

When I asked the question to each of why they stayed, the answer I received was the same from everyone – they were treated fairly and with respect. They were family.

During dinner with the superintendent one evening, I observed the general manager still working and conversing with the entire staff. She was practicing four-way management to the staff, board members, entire families, golfing members and their guests. The GM was pleasant, professional, and friendly, and this after a 12-hour day.

Just before visiting this Pennsylvania course (which is now one of my top five all-time courses to visit), I encountered a completely different and opposite atmosphere at another course, which by the way, was in tremendous playing condition.

The superintendent shared that the relatively new general manager knew very little about golf course agronomics and therefore was not in a position to explain to the club's board and members practices that needed to be conducted to keep the course in tip top shape. The superintendent felt his job was in jeopardy, and he was right.

In spite of the course being in excellent condition the superintendent was fired shortly after my visit. Apparently the president didn't appreciate some of the superintendent's practices – aerifying the greens – when he, the president, wanted to play golf, even though the aerifying was conducted at a time approved by the green committee and the previous board.

In my opinion, the aerifying procedure used was the least disruptive and the main reason why this club's greens have remained firm and maintained the speed as required by the members.

This club's president definitely does not practice four-way management.

The successful clubs I visit have one thing in common. There's no micromanagement...the board sets the policies and then lets the general manager and superintendent carry out and implement those policies. Why hire someone to do a job and then not allow them to do it?

Four-way management must start at the top and be implemented throughout the entire club if quality employees are going to be able to provide the type of service and atmosphere that members deserve and to which they are entitled, and if the club wishes to retain its quality staff members,

Four-way management must start at the top and be implemented to all levels from the agronomic side if we are going to achieve and maintain the quality course conditions that club members deserve. Micromanagement be gone!

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