

CAREER NOTES

By Dick Bradow, PGA Career Consultant

Working with hundreds of golf facilities and PGA Professionals over the past several years, I have gained an appreciation for the uniqueness of each situation. It's not uncommon to have two facilities in the same local area with similar structures, fees, and cultures, but with two very different perspectives of their PGA Professionals.

At one facility, the PGA Professional is universally liked and respected by the customers; has a loyal and well trained staff; continually receives accolades for the level of service and quality of the facility's programs and activities; and has an excellent relationship with his/her employer. The PGA Professional can't imagine working anywhere else, and the customers can't imagine having anyone else as their golf professional.

At the other facility, it's quite a different story – customers talk about their PGA Professional in less than glowing terms; the staff is unhappy and prone to frequent turnover; service is poor and participation in activities and tournaments is declining; and the PGA Professional always seems to be at odds with his/her employer. The PGA Professional is full of negative feelings about the facility and its customers, and the customers are longing for a new golf professional.

So what are the elements that can help create the scenario at the first facility? Here are some "common threads" that I have observed:

1. Make your customers feel special.

Everyone that comes into your shop should feel that you and your staff have a sincere interest in their needs. The importance of treating customers in a friendly, respectful, and professional manner is obvious but is often neglected amid the many responsibilities PGA Professionals deal with every day.

2. Provide service "above and beyond" their expectations.

If you can continually surprise your customers with all the things you do for them, you'll build loyalty and keep them coming back.

3. Hire the best people.

Nothing makes a better impression than a team of friendly, well-trained, and knowledgeable employees. Fill your staff with the best people and instill in them your vision and expectations.

4. Be consistent.

If you are not consistent with policies, rules enforcement, pricing, etc., it will eventually come back to haunt you. You can't afford to give the impression that you care only about a select few "VIP's."

5. Assume more responsibility.

Rather than saying, "It's not my job," your willingness to take on more responsibility and do more than your share (within reason, of course) will be appreciated by your employer. In addition, more responsibility can give you a greater influence at your facility.

6. Be a team player.

Make sure your employer knows your top priority is the overall success of the facility. Keep the lines of communication open, discuss your goals and ideas, and let your employer know what you are doing to make it happen.

7. Be there when it counts.

Every facility has times when it's critical for key staff personnel to be there – peak playing times, tournaments, special events, etc. Make sure you know when to be "visible."

8. Use discretion with playing.

Playing the game is an important part of your identity as a PGA Professional. However, you should use good judgment with how much you play, when you play, and who you play with.

9. Choose your battles wisely.

Working with an owner, manager, or board is a constant negotiation – not just with your own compensation, but also over policies, procedures, budgets, staffing, funding for improvements, etc. If

you fight them on every issue, you'll create the impression that you do not have their best interests at heart, and it will ultimately cost you on the things you feel strongly about.

10. Be enthusiastic and help your golfers enjoy the game.

If you can keep your golfers happy and feeling good about doing business with you, everybody wins!

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