

CREW MANAGEMENT

# YOUR *personnel* STYLE



Sticking with the same  
old crew could cost you  
in productivity.  
Change the way you look  
at your team to build a  
better work atmosphere.

By Jason VanBuskirk



While you gear up for another golf season, you have to ask yourself: Have you truly analyzed every aspect of your operation?

- Spray programs, check.
- Equipment maintenance, check.
- Irrigation supplies, check.
- Course accessories, check.
- Tool inventory, check.
- A 10 percent cut from last year's operating budget, check (swallow hard).

Oh yeah, I almost forgot, the maintenance team, check? What percentage of your staff is returning from 2010 just because?

Here are a few "reasons." Well, for one: "It's certainly not easy to train any random person to the exact way I want things done on the course." Two: "The staff member has been here forever." Three, "I can't find many people willing to work for the wages I am able to pay." Four, "That guy, even though he has a bad attitude, knows how to do everything!"

Have you really analyzed your staff to receive maximum productivity and efficiency, or have you just carried on year to year hoping some team members would get the hint and just change? What is your style to get over this hump if you are faced with this?

At Stow Acres Country Club, located just 25 miles west of Boston in the country town of Stow in the heart of Massachusetts apple country, we use a variety of methods to ensure maximum productivity and efficiency. Each fall, our core management team evaluates and grades each staff member. We have in-depth conversations regarding five characteristics that are important to the success of our operation. Those characteristics are punctuality, versatility, aptitude, attitude and personality. Once each team

member is graded, we re-discuss the bottom five employees. If those employees are truly in the bottom five, then we do not invite them back.

We believe that getting rid of your bottom employees not only improves productivity, but it can also boost crew morale. We have slowly started encouraging a "turf atmosphere" at Stow Acres. In fact, in three years, we have been able to transform 10 people into turf students and turf professionals. We have a very good staff that is very interested in what they are accomplishing in the field.

Sometime in February, I start by sending out a "Welcome Back" letter to the employees we have selected. This allows us time to start collecting responses and make available room for new employees. I use a common requirement for employees. At one point in their lives, they must have participated on a sports team. This proves that the individual knows teamwork, competitiveness and team unity. I also revolve our operation around three values: dependability, positivity and teamwork. Although they are not always mentioned, the veteran staff members carry these with them every day, and over time, the work atmosphere slowly becomes these values.

Forming an atmosphere is only the first part. Figuring out how your employees fall into this atmosphere is the key to maximizing your efforts.

If you attended the 2009 Golf Industry Show in New Orleans and attended the opening session with Paul Azinger you may remember how he described how he picked the 2008 Ryder Cup team? He used a process called "DISC profiling."

What was neat about "DISC profiling" is it's a personality-profiling system designed to fig-

ure how to interact with people and how they may interact with others. This system is excellent for superintendents because it allows us to profile our staff and group them together to maximize productivity.

This has changed how I operate at Stow Acres, and it has definitely allowed us better results from our staff in the field. Once you have figured out what role

your players have on the team, you will be able to manage them effectively. As the coach of the team, receiving input from all players allows the team to drive toward one common goal. GCI

Jason VanBuskirk is the golf course superintendent, class A, at Stow Acres Country Club in Stow, Mass.

## DISC PROFILING

DISC is a quadrant behavioral model based on the work of Dr. William Moulton Marston (1893-1947) to examine the behavior of individuals in their environment and has become known as the universal language of behavior.

DISC is used in an assortment of areas, including by many companies, HR professionals, organizations, consultants, coaches and trainers.

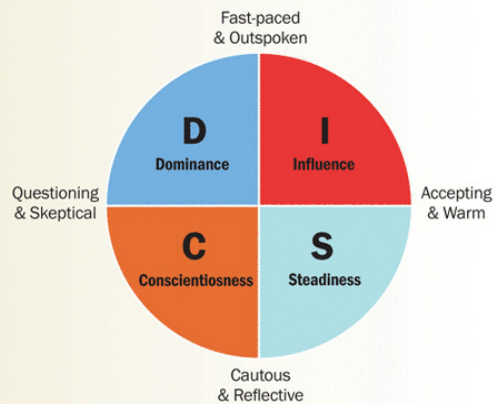
DISC is an acronym for:

- **Dominance** - relating to control, power and assertiveness
- **Influence** - relating to social situations and communication
- **Steadiness** (submission in Marston's time) - relating to patience, persistence, and thoughtfulness
- **Conscientiousness** (or caution, compliance in Marston's time) - relating to structure and organization

These four dimensions can be grouped in a grid with "D" and "I" sharing the top row and representing extroverted aspects of the personality, and "C" and "S" below representing introverted aspects. "D" and "C" then share the left column and represent task-focused aspects, and "I" and "S" share the right column and represent social aspects. In this matrix, the vertical dimension represents a factor of "Assertive" or "Passive," while the horizontal dimension represents "Open" vs. "Guarded."

For more information, check out the following Web sites:

- www.discprofile.com
- www.discusonline.com
- www.onlinediscprofile.com



ISTOCK.COM