

Management's Job: Setting Attitude and Mood for Entire Organization

Instilling Personal Pride Can Pay Off in a Variety of Commercial and Non-Commercial Ways

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Recently a client confided in me that that some of his sizable staff was a little upset that I had been asked to visit the park. I suppose when it is known that a "consultant" is coming to visit a park, all kinds of mental images can evolve. After all, few employees will have had any direct contact with a "consultant," and the fear of the unknown is always a potential tiger.

This client confided that one attitude was, "Why do you need a consultant, we know the park and what needs to be done." The client went on to say that some staff and seasonal campers become almost possessive of the park and sometimes act like it "belongs to them."

At times this "possessiveness" can be a problem with staff, as well as with seasonal or extended stay campers. I have heard similar comments even from public park managers who accommodated seasonal or extended stay occupants. While this attitude can be troublesome in some cases, it can be advantageous and a real asset with proper cultivation and direction from management.

I recall that prior to selling our park our employees sometimes referred to it as "our park." I always felt that they were simply using a figure of speech to indicate that they had an interest in the park - not financial, but emotional. It was the place where they worked and some lived. They liked being part of a business of which they could be proud. To them, saying "our park" was like saying, "I am associated with this organization and proud of it. "

Ruth and I found their pride to be a huge benefit to us, the park and even our guests. It built a tremendous trust allowing us to act as absentee owners much of the time. I recall twice being gone for a three-week period and returning to find things exactly like they would have been had we been there. Why? Because, to them, how the park was managed and maintained while we were away was a matter of personal pride.

The staff's pride must be obvious to all guests at first glance and at every glance - at the entrance, at the office and store, at the restrooms, at the laundry, in the playground and yes, even at the trash receptacles. But like all other aspects of the park's operation, it must be instituted at the manager/owner level. Like water, a sense of pride runs downward from the management. It can spread downward throughout the entire organization to the guests. But it will not spread upward from a great guest or staff member to management.

As I have said before, the most important job of management is to set the attitude and mood of the entire organization. The pride must show in every detail if the park is to reach its full potential for success.

If management does not care how the restrooms are cleaned, no one else will. If the management does not care how the staff dresses at work, no one else will. If management does not care how the maintenance is done or if the lawns are cared for, no one else will.

But beyond setting the mood, organizational policies and practices must be set in place to obtain the full luster of everyone's pride. Here are a few ideas to get the pride showing in your park.

For the staff, run a "Neatest Work Area" contest and give an award to the team member who maintains the neatest work area. Give an "Atta Boy" or "Girl" award for Special Handling of Guest's Issues. "Just Did It" award for an outstanding handling of a maintenance problem on their own without being told to do so. A "Super Innovator" award can be given for an outstanding suggestion to improve customer service.

Contests can be for any time period you choose, and the awards can be a plaque, cash, special dinner, etc. Recognizing and awarding your team's efforts will bring out the pride in them. . The amount of the award is of less importance than the recognition.

When hiring new team members, look for signs of personal pride during the interview. Note such things as language used, writing on application and personal appearance. You may even wish to walk them to their automobile at the conclusion of the interview to observe its general condition, inside and out. It might be a good idea to drive by their home to see if their pride is showing.

If there is no pride taken in these areas of their lives, do not expect it to appear out of nowhere when, or just because, they are working in your park.

For your seasonal or extended stay guests, try an ongoing "Most Attractive Space" contest. A "Neatest Space" or "Most Improved Space" contest can be done at special intervals depending upon whether your guests are seasonal or extended stay. Provide special recognition by printing their names and site numbers in your monthly or periodic newsletter, or post them with a picture in the office for other guests to see. A cash award or dinner could also be used. Again, the amount of the award is of less importance than the recognition.

I am sure that the list could go on and on of various ways to bring out the pride in your park, staff and guests. Again the use of your imagination will come in handy as you find that special approach that will work for you.

Remember, if your park is to reach its maximum level of potential, there must be your own pride, your team members' pride and even your guests' pride showing at first glance and at every glance.

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