

Staffing Success

Building an Engaged, Enthusiastic and Effective Staff

Contributed Marci Moore & Pam Williams, The Innergized!™ Team © Innergized!, Inc. 2008

You are proud of your campground. Your location is beautiful. You've invested heavily in the technology and amenities that today's RV and camping enthusiasts demand. You've increased the size of your spaces to accommodate the ever-increasing size of rigs. Why, then, are potential customers flocking to a campground only a few miles away?

The answer may just be that the campground managers down the road have invested more time and energy in building an engaged, enthusiastic and effective staff, and by doing so, have created a more consistent and contagiously positive experience for their customers.

How do you compete with that?

1. As Jim Collins tells us in his book *Good to Great*, first get the right people on the bus.¹ Cast a wide net. The larger your pool of candidates, the more likely you are to find the best person for the job.

Ask the right questions. If you don't know what you're looking for, how will you know when you've found it?

- What type of person is the right fit for your park? Every business has a distinct personality – if yours is laid-back and Jimmy Buffet-like, a retired military officer probably won't be the best fit.
- What traits and characteristics are important for a person to be successful in each position?
- What skills must a person have in order to be successful in each position? Can you teach these skills on the job, or must the person have the skills before you bring them on board?

Use your answers to these questions to develop your interview questions. Travis Johnson, General Manager of Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park™ Camp-Resort in Robert, Louisiana, and his team collaborated on a list of 18-20 questions to ask potential employees. In addition to determining if a person has the right skill-set, the questions are designed to determine if a person is a team player with a positive, can-do attitude.

Don't be a lone-ranger. Don't interview or make hiring decisions alone. It's far too easy to let your personal biases get in the way of making the best decision. We once witnessed a manager come dangerously close to making a disastrous hiring choice because the manager and the hiring candidate discovered they both had flown helicopters in Vietnam.

2. Make sure each employee understands how their role contributes to the success of the business. Don't be a "JUST" manager by treating your people like they are "just" a janitor or "just" a summer hire. Treat them like they are important to your business and to your bottom line and let them know why their job matters.

3. Create a learning environment that begins on a new employee's first day on the job and doesn't end until their last. Provide an orientation for new employees, giving them the information and resources they need to be successful. Consider connecting new hires with a "buddy" who will not only make them feel welcome, but also help them learn the ropes. During the orientation and training period, give frequent, constructive and specific feedback so they know what is expected of them.

Invest in continuing professional development for your staff. Send them to conferences and offer in-house training sessions throughout the year. Encourage promising staff members to obtain professional certifications.

Expect excellence instead of perfection and help your employees learn from their "goofs." According to Will Sundblad of Operation PAR in St. Petersburg, Florida, "mistakes will always happen, so you need to allow them as growth experiences; if you expect perfection, people won't try and stretch for the team for fear of failing the perfection expectation."

4. Set clear, consistent expectations and hold employees accountable. Don't let one bad apple spoil the whole bunch. According to WorkUSA 2004: An Ongoing Study of Employee Attitudes and Opinions by Watson Wyatt Worldwide, only 54% of U.S. workers feel that their companies set high performance standards and only 44% believe that employees are held accountable for their performance.²

Marcia Galvin, HR Director of Normandy Farms Resorts, recalls terminating two new employees who weren't doing their jobs, even after she gave them repeated chances to improve. According to Marcia, letting these employees go sent a clear message to the entire staff that everyone on the team is expected to pull their own weight.

Reasons for hanging on to a bad apple range from a fear of confrontation to a fear that work will not get done if the person is terminated. No matter the reason, if you aren't taking action, your employees are. They are wasting precious time and energy

5 Great Interview Questions

In any interviewing situation, ask questions that require a thoughtful response rather than a simple yes/no answer.

1. Thinking ahead to the end of the season, can you think of one thing that you hope to have learned from this position? (contributed by Marcia Galvin, HR Director of Normandy Farms Resort)
2. What is the most challenging customer service situation you have ever encountered? Why was it challenging and how did you deal with it?
3. What kind of person do you find it easy to work with? What kind of person do you find it difficult to work with?
4. What accomplishment are you most proud of?
5. Tell me about a time when you failed. What did you learn from the experience?

BONUS: Ask your current employees to respond to this question: "If you could ask every potential employee just one question to determine if the person would be a good fit here, what would it be?" Use the responses to craft interview questions that you ask all potential employees.

energy training programs. Williams and Moore, who offer a unique team approach to their speaking, coaching, and consulting, presented Coach Your Team to Supercharged Success and Managing Conflict with Confidence: 7 Skills You Didn't Learn on the Playground at InSites 2007. Visit www.innergized.com to download 10 Tips for More Powerful Listening, to subscribe to the free Innergizing Tips e-newsletter and to see a recommended reading list for building an effective team.

creating elaborate workaround systems or complaining to one another.

5. Recognize, reward and celebrate successes. Acknowledge and reward individual wins and successes frequently. Be generous and genuine with praise! It's not enough to wait until performance review time, and the rewards don't have to break the bank to be meaningful. At Normandy Farms, employees, supervisors and guests can complete "catch me at my best" cards when they catch employees doing something right. These cards are posted where everyone can see them. At the end of each month, one card is randomly drawn for "Normandy Notes" that can be used in the store or snack bar.

In addition to setting goals and expectations for individuals, set goals for individual teams and for the business. Reward the team when the goals are reached. By rewarding the team as well as individuals, team members will begin to hold one another accountable for results.

Recognition and celebration, when used appropriately and sincerely, make people feel good, and "when people feel good their thinking becomes more creative, integrative, flexible and open to information."³ And that's good for your business.

6. Share information clearly, widely and frequently with all members of your staff.

Make sure your employees have all of the information they need to do a good job. Don't hoard information. Instead of sharing information on a "need-to-know" basis, ask yourself why your employees "don't need to know" the information. If there's no good reason, share it. By communicating transparently, you will build trust.

Consider an employee newsletter. Normandy Farms' newsletter includes tidbits about each department, stress-reducing tips, jokes, and news about individual employees. Instead of a newsletter, smaller campgrounds can use a journal where employees record information that other team members need to know. And of course, regularly scheduled meetings give you a double bonus – the opportunity for employees to interact with one another and the chance to share information with everyone at the same time.

7. Listen. It's easy to listen half-heartedly while you simultaneously check your email, mentally update your to-do lists, answer your phone and respond to interruptions. By doing this, you may be creating an atmosphere that discourages your staff from fully communicating with you.

Be approachable and available to the members of your team. Schedule times where you can interact informally with

employees (like a coffee-talk or "brown-bag" lunch) as well as opportunities for more structured conversations.


Take the time to listen deeply and actively to the ideas and concerns of your employees. Ask questions to help you understand what is being said. Reflect back what you've heard using phrases such as "tell me more" and "what do you suggest we do?" Your team will appreciate the fact that you took the time to listen, and you might just get some great ideas!

8. Encourage interdependence.

Indianapolis Colts coach Tony Dungy says that "hard work and togetherness go hand in hand. You need the hard work because it's such a tough atmosphere to win week in and week out. You need togetherness because you don't always win, and you gotta hang tough together." Or as Johnson says, "once our staff members grasp the concept that each of our departments are interdependent on one another, life is good!"

Create opportunities for your employees to interact and have fun with one another on a regular basis. Encourage cross-training so employees know that they can rely on and support one another. Have employees "shadow" another department or team so they understand how the work of the other team relates to their own.

9. Respect individuality. What? Everyone isn't just like me? Sometimes we forget that our staff is made up of individuals with their own strengths, hopes, motivations, communication styles and goals. The best managers are excellent "people detectives" who take the time to really get to know their employees and flex their own styles accordingly.

Recruiting and developing an engaged, enthusiastic and effective staff takes an investment of your time, money and energy. Do it right, and the investment will pay off in a happier staff and a more positive and consistent experience for your customers. 

1 Collins, Jim. Good to Great. New York: Collins. 2001.

2 "U.S. Workers Say Performance Management Doesn't Make the Grade." June 2004. Watson Wyatt Insider. <http://www.watsonwyatt.com/us/pubs/Insider/showarticle.asp?ArticleID=13243>

3 Frederickson, Barbara. The Value of Positive Emotions. American Scientist, July – August 2003, volume 91, p 300-335. <http://www.americanscientist.org>

Marci Moore, ACC and Pam Williams, ACC, co-founders of Innergized!™, Inc. are speakers, coaches and consultants who champion positive change from the inside out through teambuilding, individual and group coaching and fun, high