




SCORE A FACILITIES **HAT TRICK**

» *“Hat Trick”—the achievement of a positive feat three times during a game, or other achievements based on threes.*



Granted, it might be a bit of a stretch to find comparable attributes between an ice hockey team and facilities management organizations. However, if you are open-minded to the possibility and begin to analyze each of these entities, you will find there are some distinct similarities.

Ice hockey is a fast-paced and ever-changing game, much like a normal day in our facilities world. Our teams maneuver about our campuses and complete tasks with a specific goal in mind—customer satisfaction. We have similar organizational structures. Hockey teams have an owner, general manager, coach, team captain, and players. We have governing boards, presidents and vice presidents, directors, frontline supervisors, and staff. Poor performance, miscommunication, inadequate training, or a lack of understanding of job expectations send us to the penalty box. We lose the “game” because we’ve failed at providing the services promised.

It is imperative as “coaches” that we do everything possible to achieve a win by focusing on a hat trick: three strategic goals for success that include effective hiring, continuous training, and team commitment. Lee Iacocca once stated, “Start with good people, lay out the rules, communicate with your employees, motivate them, and reward them. If you do all those things effectively, you can’t miss.”

STRATEGIC GOALS FOR SUCCESSFUL HIRING, TRAINING, AND TEAM COMMITMENT

BY DARCY LOY

GOAL #1: SUCCESSFUL HIRING

Winning the Stanley Cup requires effort. It takes several components to achieve that goal, a vital one being the players on the team. From the general manager to the goalie, hockey organization can't be successful if they don't have exceptional team members. This is just as relevant in a facilities organization. We need to hire talented candidates so that our organizations can flourish.

It is important to note that during this process we are hiring not just to fill a position today, but ultimately are hiring for the future of the institution. Candidates must possess skills necessary to assist the team as it moves toward the vision of the organization. Carol Hacker, author of *The Costs of Bad Hiring Decisions and How to Avoid Them*, recommends that you divide the hiring process into four stages—preparation, search, interview, and final decision. (Fey, July 2002, p.1)

Determine the needs of the organization and look at alternatives; could you redistribute job duties or promote from within? Know what you're looking for. Whether you choose to advance from within or advertise outside, have a comprehensive job description in place. Perform a detailed job analysis. This provides you with a concise list of attributes necessary to select the most qualified candidate.

Once you've identified these assets, you can begin scouting for the ideal player. Utilize available advertising media, such as newspapers, magazines, APPA's online Facilities Career Center, and other organizational job posting boards. Word-of-mouth is an excellent way to communicate your need. Discuss the open position with your frontline employees and let them assist in passing the word.

There are numerous approaches to the interview process. Some departments rely solely on job skills; other look for the perfect "fit." Others may use performance tests or a pre-interview assignment to assist in their decision making.

A strong interview combines all for a successful result. Ask open-ended questions, read the candidates' body language, listen to what they have to say, and follow all legal protocol.



"Hiring is something many people need to do and yet few seem to do it effectively." Bob Tvrdik

It's the end of the first period. You have seconds left on the clock, the puck is in your end of the court and the opposing net is wide open. It's time to score! Check references that the candidate has provided you. Past employers may be reluctant to pass on a personal opinion, but you can validate facts such as job titles and employment dates. With references confirmed you are ready to make the offer. Once the individual has accepted, inform the other candidates of your decision and thank them for their interest.

The shot is attempted, and goal #1 is good! You've acquired the best player.

GOAL #2: TRAINING

Hiring qualified players is the first step to the development of a successful team. Hockey players rigorously train in the off-season as a preparation tool. They work on mobility, linear movement, and total body power. They must stay sharp mentally, needing to comprehend positional play and understand how to make smart decisions at critical times in a game. Being mentally and physically strong made them an asset to their team.

Training our facilities staff has the same results. Training keeps us competitive and motivates our players to reach their full potential. Jeffrey Wilke, in "The Importance of Employee Training," states, "Training is linked to employee performance and retention. In addition, employees will not reach their full potential and higher levels of productivity will not be achieved unless employees are adequately trained. A poorly trained workforce will eventually lead to poor performance and result in costly mistakes." (Wilke, July 18, 2006, p. 2)

Training isn't only desired for seasoned staff; it is crucial for the success of a new hire. The candidate may come in with the necessary skill sets, but needs guidance in the culture of the organization. They need a clear understanding of the vision and mission of the unit, as well as job



expectations and their role in the department.

Training is expensive, and in tough economic times it is oftentimes the first thing eliminated from the budget. Paul Sarvadi, CEO and co-founder of Administaff, states, “In any economic environment, the training expense should be determined by the targeted business results you want, not other budget-related factors.” (Sarvadi, May 1, 2005, p. 2)

We must make sure that we don't waste money on insignificant training. Know how a specific program is going to benefit your organization and that it will have a positive impact. Investigate and understand the training that staff will be attending. Schedule time with your team member upon their return; ask questions about what they learned and how new concepts might be implanted with the organization. This shows the staff member your support and appreciation for their willingness to advance their education. It provides them with a sense of value and self worth.

If budget is an issue, look for training alternatives. Every organization has employees who are proficient at a specific task. Utilize their expertise to train other team members. Ask a business partner if they would be willing to present a program. The options are there, so don't just push training to the side because you can't afford it.

We've reached the end of the second period and the “training shot” has been taken. It's in the net, and goal #2 has been scored. The facilities hat trick is within your reach.

GOAL #3: EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT

Be it a hockey team or a facilities organization, success is dependent on both individual and team commitment. The goalie of a hockey team can't be expected to save every shot. He relies on his defenders to intercept the puck before it reaches the net. No matter where one falls within the organizational chart, success is dependent upon guidance and assistance from leadership and other team members.

Vince Lombardi once stated that “Individual commitment to a group effort—that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.” Many think that loyalty is dead; that people are searching for a job that brings them financial satisfaction. This is not necessarily true. Studies have shown that more often than not, good employees leave their organizations because they are unsatisfied with their job. Employee commitment is imperative today more than ever. In the next few years we will be losing a significant number of baby boomers to retirement and we need to plan accordingly so that our units don't lose momentum.

So how do we foster commitment within our organizations?



Quite simply, we recognize the value that our players bring to the team every day. This means allowing and trusting them to make decisions on their own and acknowledging personal achievements on a regular basis. As leaders we need to make sure that they clearly understand the expectations of the job and the consequences of not meeting those expectations. We need to utilize the strong skill sets employees bring to the table and provide them with opportunities to grow.

Strong leaders listen to staff's ideas and explore how they can be implemented. Frontline employees are a wealth of knowledge, and we need develop their ideas in order achieve team goals. Take an active interest in each team member; take time to ask them how their day is going. Treat them fairly, and give them the respect that you'd expect from them. Look for personal strengths, and coach staff members that might be underperforming. Provide performance feedback on a regular basis and address serious issues as they occur; don't wait for an evaluation to bring forth a problem. A quotation from Donald Trump states it best, “When employees and employers, even coworkers, have a commitment to one another, everyone benefits. I have people who have been in business with me for decades. I reward their loyalty to the organization and to me. I know that they'll always be dedicated to what we're trying to accomplish.”

With the end of the third period looming and a third goal well within reach, that final shot is taken. Goal #3 hits the net. Congratulations, you've just scored a facilities hat trick!

“I work collaboratively with each staff member to develop a personal growth plan, and support their acquiring new skills and provide opportunities for them to use their newly acquired knowledge” Linda R. Schwartz

SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY

Having an open mind has been key in regards to finding relevance in the comparison of hockey teams and facilities organizations. However, both do have numerous similarities. Both require and seek out skilled, competent players that will provide the advantage needed to achieve the visions of the organization. It takes time and effort to find and hire the right candidate; but the “shot” must hit the net. When we do score with the right individual, the entire team wins.

Once a strong team is in place, we must provide endless opportunities for training and growth. Like a hockey team, if we don't continue to work our minds and increase our knowledge, or train to consistently improve, we lose our momentum and our ability to “win the game.” We also must remember that winning teams require a strong coach. As leaders we need to set the game plan for success. For organizations such as ours, winning consists of providing excellent service to our “fans,” our customers. This needs to be our ultimate goal.

Having a highly skilled and trained team in place is one thing; keeping it intact is by far a more difficult challenge. Employee loyalty isn't a given; it must be earned. We can accomplish this by showing our players that we value their expertise and

“Your employees are your principal business asset. Invest in them thoughtfully and strategically, and you'll reap rewards that pay off now and for years to come.” Paul Savardi

contributions. Acknowledge achievements on a regular basis and offer opportunities for individual growth. As leaders, we provide them with detailed expectations and explain their role within the organization. If they struggle, we coach them so they can feel good about their contributions to the team.

In the fast-paced, ever-changing world of facilities management, we must seize every advantage that we can to win our Stanley Cup—customer satisfaction. However, *customer* satisfaction cannot exist without *employee* satisfaction. With strong hiring practices in place, dedication to essential team training, and valuing our players so that they are committed to our cause, we can't help but score a facilities hat trick and ultimately win the game. ☺

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