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Today's facility manager must carefully consider the competencies of their staff and how they will remain current and up to date. The ORFA professional designation program helps set attainable accreditation goals for both managerial and operational staff, but it should not be considered the sole source of worker competency. To be effective, it must be enhanced with ongoing workplace specific training and up to date policies and procedures.

Since the introduction of the ORFA's Certified Ice Technician (CIT) designation 20-years ago the acceptance and demand for this certification continues to be significantly recognized by employers. Some members invested in having all frontline ice arena staff obtain a CIT. However, the question becomes, is the operation as committed to all aspects of their environment. The ORFA is often asked how a facility might best protect itself from liability and legislative accountability. The following hypothetical analysis of a community we will call "Anywhere, Ontario" will discuss short and long term staff planning. Consider how your operation might reflect on this situation.

The community of Anywhere, Ontario has recently hired a new facility manager to replace a long serving practitioner who spent his entire career with the department. The retired facility manager was committed to his position ensuring that all operations met the needs of the user, while controlling finances to meet the expectations of the finance department, but may have lacked in meeting legislative responsibilities. Over time, the community centre has developed from a single ice sheet operation with 175hp of refrigeration to include two ball fields, an outdoor seasonal pool, playgrounds and a senior centre. Most recently, the department has assumed the responsibility of the cemeteries and four soccer fields. There is discussions on the development of a year-round artificial turf field that is to be covered by an inflatable dome, and increasing the traditional ice in operations from September to April to late July to May to meet the increase in demand.

The operation has four full time operational staff and adds three seasonal staff during the warm summer months. Three of the full time staff have gained and maintained their CIT. They have learned their other operational responsibilities through trial and error. The new facility manager wants to set out a staff training and development plan.

1. **Work Assessment** – the facility manager should become part of the frontline team working a long side staff to best understand what is expected. The reality show, "Under Cover Boss" often reveals obvious flaws in the business when this process is engaged. Facility management does not need to be covert, but should see firsthand if in fact staff has the skills and tools to do what is expected of them.
2. **Review of Current Policies and Procedures** – are there clearly defined and up to date policies and procedures. If not, this task needs to be immediately undertaken by facility management.
3. **Workplace Health and Safety Culture** – what is the commitment by all staff in creating and maintaining a safe and healthy workplace?
4. **Proven Staff Competency Assessment** – staff may be able to perform their duties, but do they meet the minimum expectation of "competency" as outlined in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

Quality leadership is key to success. The new facility manager has arrived with a post-secondary education in recreation leadership and has spent over 10 years in a middle supervisory position within the industry. The manager has attended a variety of workshops and a few courses offered by their past employer. He holds no professional designation. The manager has assessed that the operation has equal responsibilities in aquatics, grounds, ice and buildings. The manager begins to outline the staff professional development plan.

A. Facility Management Professional Development

The facility manager begins to focus on obtaining the ORFA Certified Recreation Facilities Professional (CRFP) designation. This professional designation is designed to enhance current skills and education specific to the recreation industry, while helping to ensure that the practitioner is current with what is evolving within the business of recreation facility operations.

B. Operational Staff Professional Development

Three full time staff hold a CIT, but no accreditation in the other operational responsibilities. To have each staff member obtain a variety of certifications could be a long term objective, but a more immediate short term plan might be to have each staff obtain a separate certification. Having one staff member hold the Certified Grounds Technician (CGT), another with a Certified Aquatics Technician (CAT), another with the Certified Building Technician (CBT) and another with the Certified Arena Refrigeration Plant Technician (CARPT) designation covering all aspects of the operation.

C. Ongoing Workplace Specific Training

Creating an ongoing workplace specific training plan is essential to success. Working with suppliers of products and services to the operation, or tapping into local expertise, such as, fire, health and other departments, are all within reach.

D. Policies and Procedures Updating

Facility management must then commit to regularly updating policies and procedures to ensure they remain current.

Conclusion

This discussion paper obviously focuses on ORFA professional development and accreditation – it should be merely viewed as an option as facility management conducts their staff professional development planning activities. On-line courses, local access to post-secondary institutions, or other appropriate professional recreation associations should all be explored. While considering what skill sets new staff should arrive with is considered an important part of the hiring process. Whether a manager or staff member you should consider where you want to be in five or ten years and reflect upon what role professional development will play in your personal growth.

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