

Human Resource Executive®

A "Hole-istic" Approach

Can golf teach important lessons about leadership? Nicholas Horney, president of Greensboro, N.C.-based Agility Consulting and Training, has created a program he believes does just that.

Horney, an industrial-organizational psychologist and retired U.S. Navy diver, says he created the Leadership Insights, Nimbleness and Knowledge Seminar (LINKS) after realizing that "the golf course is a safe environment, where we can teach the fundamentals of leadership ability and managing change in a turbulent environment."

During the two-and-a-half-day program, players are divided into teams and must overcome a different challenge at each hole of the golf course.

"The normal rules of the game are disrupted, and the teams have to work together



to overcome each new challenge. For example, at one hole you may be told you can only play with a driver, or you are limited to using only three clubs, or you must play left-handed if you are right-handed, and vice versa. The challenges give the players new ways of thinking about and dealing with dramatic change," he says.

Robert Lee, a vice president at Optima Services, a national cleaning-services company based in Greensboro, says the course helped him in his work.

"[LINKS] teaches you how to look at things differently, about looking at many points of view, and evaluating them before you react," he says. "One of the important things I learned was how to focus, and that helped my swing, and it helped me deal with my sales staff."

Can non-golfers get something from LINKS? Horney says novices take the course all the time, and that in some ways their inexperience helps them. "The changes in the rules sometimes disrupt the better golfers more than the rookies," he says. "It often evens out the playing field, and that can be very humbling for the experienced players."

—Christopher Cornell

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