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HACIENDA GOLF CLUB STAFF PICTURED L-R BACK ROW: MIGUEL NAJERA, NICKO LIAUW, RAFAEL MARTINEZ, ALEX VILLAGOMEZ, DAVID SUTTON. **FOURTH ROW:** EVELYN HARRIS, JONATHAN GOGLIA. **THIRD ROW:** CARINA NAJERA, NAOMI MARINCA. **SECOND ROW:** KRISTAL CANALES. **FRONT ROW:** HACIENDA GOLF CLUB GENERAL MANAGER RUSSELL SYLTE, TJ JACINTO

MINDFULNESS
LEADS TO A SUSTAINABLE CULTURE

What does sustainability mean to Russell Sylte, general manager of Hacienda Golf Club, a Boardroom Distinguished Club ? A couple of things for sure.

For the La Habra Heights, CA club, it represents "meeting our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Profit, People and Planet backs the notion of taking action spending less on utilities, pesticides, fertilizers, trash and recycling and more on member experience, retention and attracting new members.

In the mind of the empathic Sylte, "Sustainability also means a culture that thrives in education and adaptability." Here Hacienda is setting the bar for other 21st Century private clubs.

Mindfulness is an idea whose time has come and amid the current uncertainties (COVID-19, social and political unrest, and unemployment), and Sylte has viewed this as the moment to incorporate mindfulness practices into the day-to-day life at Hacienda Golf Club.

"Mindfulness is a critical leadership skill and we're building a sustainable culture as a progressive 'new normal,'" explained GM Sylte.

Hacienda has achieved this standard after 13 department managers and GM Sylte embarked on a journey with *Mindful "U"* in July 2019 to become *Certified Mindful Professionals (CMP)*. Topics for the weekly classes included: Stress reduction, listening skills, meditation, managing angry people, creating a safe learning environment and the relationship between the mind and body. Students received tools for decision-making, time management and conflict resolution.

All 13 graduated as a team 12 months later, the first corporate team to graduate together, an outstanding achievement as Hacienda Golf Club celebrates with its 100th anniversary this year.

"It's helped us chart an innovative course, even with the challenges facing us today," explained their visionary leader Sylte, GM/COO and a PGA Master Professional.

"Certifying my team leaders as *Mindful Professionals* has taken all of us to a new level. Our team has never been so collaborative and creative. We are breaking down departmental silos, reducing drama and making our club's vision a daily reality," he said.

"The *Mindful "U"* leadership engagement program has been one of the most important tools I've been given to become a better leader," offered Jonathan Goglia, the club's head golf professional.

"The lessons lead by Craig Marshall and Rick Ladendorf, *the Monk & Mastermind*, are priceless and will serve my personal and professional momentum for a lifetime. I am truly proud and grateful to call myself a *Certified Mindful Professional*," he added.

"The mindfulness training has been instrumental in my personal and professional growth. I've been given tools that have taught me to slow down and not be so reactive. I've learned to listen and not judge, " said Carina Najera, Hacienda's controller.

"Above all, this training could not have come at a better time as we live through uncertainty. I'm not afraid of tomorrow; I am looking forward to conquering it alongside a team of mindful professionals," she added.

"Hacienda's management team led by GM Sylte has earned the reputation of being the club-of-choice, a great employer and a good neighbor. The entire Hacienda management team unanimously voted to participate in this 26-Lesson ***Leadership Engagement Program***. Their stellar reputation is a direct result of Russell's mindful leadership skills and his uncompromising focus on forming a safe learning environment. Together, they have created a world-class culture," Mindful Master Ladendorf emphasized.

"One of my favorite ways to measure my leadership style is to ask this question: How do I measure myself? Answer: I measure myself by the people who measure themselves by me. Answers to this question such as, 'We feel empowered, creative and take ownership in our departments', are a sure sign of a sustainable culture," Sylte stressed.

So how does Sylte and his staff incorporate these concepts into the *BoardRoom Distinguished Club*'s culture?

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"Mindfulness encompasses the concept of 'Seeking to Understand.' We incorporate this concept into our daily decision making by doing two things. First, practice meditation regularly as time allows, either weekly in our training classes or privately at our desks or during breaks. This small exercise allows us to clear our minds and be more receptive to constant stimuli.

"Secondly, we often invert the question and seek unintended consequences. These are just two examples of how we integrate mindful training into our daily actions," Sylte said.

What created the impetus for Sylte to engage *Mindful "U"*?

"Upon completing an anonymous 360-degree personal evaluation, my team told me they wanted more structured leadership training than what I was providing. Soon after, Rick and Craig contacted me, and the timing and subject matter has been a perfect fit for us.

"For each team member, it has meant something different. However, the commonality has been the cross-benefit of improving both work and home atmospheres," he explained.

And how does Hacienda take advantage of mindful sustainability for club members?

"It can be considered retention training. In other words, a more empathetic team is bound to take greater initiative and follow through. *Empathy, initiative and follow through* are all key components of mindfulness and these fundamentals certainly strengthen the compelling experience of why a member feels connected to their club. We listen, care and act, in that order," Sylte stressed.

"Sustainability within Hacienda's culture does two things. First, the environment is enhanced by a 'vibe' or 'spirit' of enthusiasm by the team to serve. This enthusiasm is contagious with all employees and you can't help but ask, 'What's in the sauce here?'

"Secondly, as a proprietary club, members expect more than the traditional private for-profit model. Our commitment to growing ourselves both personally and professionally spills over into our attitudes and energy in serving our membership. Our vision, *Pride in Belonging*, is not only for our members but for the staff too.

"The result is continued recommendation of membership to the club from our current members, as well as a continued recommendation of employment from our current staff," Sylte added.

"I remember a quote by Phil Knight, *'To study the self is to forget the self,'*" Sylte opined. "As a tenured executive, I have found that when growing myself, or helping another grow, it always begins with this quote.

"When unable to leave the ego behind, it's difficult to climb the next step on the leadership ladder. What mindfulness gives my team and me is this awareness, as well as the tools to ask ourselves, once the ego has been left at the door. My team members are growing with these new tools, and more importantly, I see them correct quickly when defaulting to an old way.

"As the noun definition of sustainability states, 'The ability to be maintained at a certain rate or level,' I can assure you that this training and use of resources in our people may be the most important of any resources that we expend in creating a member and staff experience that's fun and professional," Sylte concluded. BR

HACIENDA GOLF CLUB STAFF (PICTURED HOLDING CERTIFICATES) WITH MINDFUL "U" LEADERS CRAIG MARSHALL (FAR LEFT) AND RICK LADENDORF (FAR RIGHT)