There comes a time in everyone’s personal development when all the reasons not to have the suitable training or certificate of competence have gone and it comes down to one last, all important matter – action!

When it comes to providing high quality training and offering every candidate a positive learning experience Lowe Maintenance is the place to train. Our team come from a range of industries including a long term military service-spanning twenty three years, to arboriculture and then into education. Educating has been at the heart of what we do since 2004 when Lowe Maintenance Training was established, although we do run an arboricultural service a long side our training side of the business to ensure we are keeping up with the changes in the industry.

Our key aim is to provide positive learning experiences through working closely with people to meet individual needs and requirements, we offer a comprehensive range of courses at affordable prices we strongly believe training doesn’t need to cost the earth and are totally committed to our ethos of providing high quality training.

Our newest member of the team is Demelza she comes from ten years of working in the educational sector although her rural background of living and working in the Yorkshire Dales make her a perfect edition to our team. She comes from a strong farming background but started her career in horticulture which was joked about at the time as being ‘the black sheep of the family’ (fancy going into gardening when she was a farmer). Once qualified she worked in the horticultural sector for a number of years before trying her hand at teaching in the FE sector with students from local secondary schools mainly unmotivated and disillusioned young people. This went from strength to strength and whilst teaching she qualified in environmental conservation and gained her City & Guilds (NPTC) certificates of competence in pesticides, chainsaw maintenance, tree felling, tree climbing and aerial rescue and use of a chainsaw from a rope and harness. In her time with us so far not only does she carry out training she has developed our website www.lowe-maintenance.co.uk , our Facebook page Lowe Maintenance Training and she is currently working on twitter@lowe_maintenance so feel free to keep in touch with us.

Our courses aren’t only for those who want or need the certificates we also offer training in the safe use of the equipment or techniques. Access for all is important to us so much so we offer taster sessions to injured military personnel, people who aren’t sure what is involved in the industry and those who would like refreshers.

We have run courses at a number of golf clubs and the main attraction is that we are happy to come to you and also whilst we are carrying out the courses we are working on the site (no time away for the greenkeepers though). We’re also now offering the Level 2 Award in the Safe Use of Aluminium Phosphide for Vertebrate Pest Control.

We can’t guarantee a 100% pass rate but we will guarantee you rewarding experiences that can be applied to daily situations.
Robert Laycock looks at how greenkeeper blogs can help communication within golf clubs.

It is often said that if golfers knew the reasons why maintenance activities were being carried out by greenkeepers on the golf course, they would be much more tolerant of their activities.

At one golf club where I used to advise, any attempt to improve the course by aerating the greens, for example, was met by the members replacing the Chairman of Green.

Every year a new Chairman was appointed and as a result the course condition was never allowed to improve.

You can guess why I don’t visit that club any more.

Greenkeepers use various ways to communicate with golfers - possibly word of mouth as they go about the course or a note posted on the club notice board.

Alternatively, there might be a paragraph in the club’s newsletter or in a report from the Green committee which may be posted on the phone during the day and these are easily downloaded onto the blog.

Is this the best way to get the message across? Information needs to be as up to date as possible.

A number of greenkeepers in the UK now have a blog to let members know what is going on at their course.

Richard Jacques of Malton & Norton Golf Club was encouraged to start blogging by seeing other successful blogs, such as his favourite from the team at Sawgrass.

In the UK, Richard also looked at blogs from this side of the Atlantic, including that produced by Bob Meikle at the Craig Golfing Society.

Another successful blog is Richard Lightfoot’s at Bearwood Lakes Golf Club.

Richard’s blog has a direct link from the club’s homepage, so that members can easily find it.

He says, “The greenkeeper’s blog gets a lot of visits.

We started getting visitors early on and within a few months there were many more as the blog became better known within the club and by the time we had been going for seven months we had had 5,000 hits.

“I find that if golfers know why things are being done around their course they are more supportive and tolerant.

If specific problems are being addressed to improve the course, they feel as if they are being listened to.”

Even in winter, the blog has to be kept fresh.

If the course is closed or work such as bunker renovation and drainage is being carried out which many of the members don’t ordinarily see, the blog emphasises the unseen work goes on day by day around the course.

Blogs are not for everyone and, if not kept up to date, visitors will lose interest.

However it only takes minutes to download a few pictures which have been taken on the phone during the day and these are easily downloaded onto the blog.

Bob Meikle, Richard Jacques and Richard Lightfoot all use Google Blogger, but there is other software, such as WordPress.

So what are the secrets of success?

Richard says: “If you are going to blog, it is important to do it frequently so that it remains topical and worthwhile for visitors to return to.

All the greenkeeper bloggers I know have told me that if you can do it several times a week, so much the better.

It is important to keep it interesting and up to date, with lots of pictures.

“Done well, a blog is better than a paragraph in the monthly newsletter provided it is kept up to date and members can easily find it.

The blog also forms a good record – both of jobs that have been done on the course and also the effects of weather on areas of the course.

“Tell the members about it early on and within a few months they will be better known within the club and by the time we had been going for seven months we had had 5,000 hits.”

A link from the club’s website homepage so that members can easily access it is also a good idea.

Does the presence of the blog improve the golf club membership’s understanding of the greenkeepers’ role? Or are the people who read it the usual suspects who show up to trips to the workshop to see the machinery or who attend course walks? Does it draw in the people who are still sitting around in the bar and who would benefit most from this education? Hopefully, by making the information easily accessible, the message will get through to golfers.

The greenkeepers I have spoken to think blogging is a worthwhile thing to do, so I say get signed up to Wordpress or Blogger and start blogging.
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**Head Greenkeeper**
Little Aston Golf Club

Little Aston is a top 100 course and regularly hosts top national amateur events and will host Regional Qualifying for The Open Championship for 5 years from 2013.

The successful candidate will be highly motivated and will ensure the delivery of top quality standards with the attention to detail expected from our members and visitors.

The individual will have a flexible approach along with the ability to motivate, lead and develop a team of six greenkeepers.

Suitably qualified, with relevant chainsaw & spraying licenses, the successful candidate will have experience in working in a similar role or as a deputy in a larger operation. Excellent working knowledge of Health & Safety regulations is also essential.

You must be able to demonstrate financial management competency along with strong communication, time management, decision making and computer skills.

A full driving licence is required.

A job description is available on our web site, www.littleastongolf.co.uk, we would be pleased to receive a copy of your CV and a covering letter explaining how you fit the job requirements to:

Glyn Ridley, Club Manager, Little Aston Golf Club, Streetly, Sutton Coldfield B74 3AN

or manager@littleastongolf.co.uk by 24th December 2012.

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**NORTH HANTS GOLF CLUB**

**MECHANIC / GREENKEEPER**

Founded in 1904, North Hants Golf Club is an 18 hole private members’ club.

We currently have a vacancy for a reliable, hard working and motivated Mechanic / Greenkeeper. The successful candidate will be responsible for the day to day running of the workshop and have the following qualifications and skills:

- Recognised qualifications / experience in machine engineering
- Knowledge of Health and Safety Regulations
- Ability to produce and maintain high standards of work
- Ensure all machinery is serviced and maintained to manufacturers specifications
- Keep up to date records of machinery service history
- Sound knowledge of green keeping practices
- Experience of grinding equipment
- Good team player

No accommodation available.

Please apply with current CV to:

The Course Manager, North Hants Golf Club
Minley Road, Fleet, Hampshire GU51 1RF

Email: coursemanager@northhantsgolf.co.uk

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**Bicester Hotel Golf and Spa**

We have an exciting opportunity for a Head Greenkeeper to manage the operation of our successful 18 hole Golf Course at Bicester Hotel Golf and Spa.

The ideal candidate will be highly motivated with a passion for the industry and will ensure the delivery of high standards with the attention to detail expected from our members and visitors. The individual will have a flexible approach along with the ability to motivate, lead and develop a team of four greenkeepers, which is integral to this role.

Educated to a minimum of NVQ level 3 or equivalent in Green Keeping, with relevant chainsaw & spraying licenses, the successful candidate will have experience in working in a similar role or as a deputy in a larger operation. Excellent working knowledge of Health & Safety regulations is also essential.

You must be able to prove financial management competency along with strong communication, time management, decision making and computer skills along with a full clean driving license.

If you are interested in this role, please send a copy of your CV along with a covering letter to tracy.horn@bicestergps.com

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Contact Jill Rodham on 01347 833 832

Quick ‘Wine Hole’ Quiz Answers:

1) Essex
2) Rowing
3) Rowan Atkinson
4) Three
5) Didier Drogba
6) Five – won one, lost four
7) 3-2
8) Bradley Wiggins
9) York City

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**CROSSWORD**

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**MONSTER SUDOKO**

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**SQUIGGLY SUDOKO**

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**in the shed answers**

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CROSSWORD

MONSTER SUDOKO

SQUIGGLY SUDOKO

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The Back Nine
A column for writers and members to air and share their views on golf greenkeeping topics

As a busy year comes to an end, Richard Campey explains why BTME will remain 2013’s premier event

Well another year has flown by and despite the misgivings and apprehensions most of us are still here and have kept our jobs. I know that in our immediate vicinity some golf clubs have made rash decisions, and made qualified Head Greenkeepers and Course Managers redundant. Two years down the line they may well be paying the penalty for this.

Here at Campey Turf Care we have been active throughout the year with shows, seminars and demo tours here in the UK, as well as further afield.

We started the year attending the Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) at Long Beach, California. A week later we were at BTME, and the following month back in the USA for the Golf Industry Show (GIS) in Las Vegas.

We are looking forward to attending BTME in January. Campeys has always placed a high value on showcasing new and established products and will maximise the potential BTME offers.

With BRGGA putting 100% effort into promoting and encouraging its members to visit the show, we hope it will be a well-attended, successful platform for everyone concerned.

Our first field day in the UK saw us at Birch Grove Estate, a private enclosed golf club in East Sussex. We showed and demonstrated our products, carrying out a total renovation on greens and tees in the most atrocious weather conditions I have ever seen in my few years in the industry.

Despite this, our methods worked and greens, tees and fairways are now fit to play on.

This was then followed by our 2012 European Demo Tour to North Germany, Denmark, Norway, Finland and back on to Jutland, Denmark. Many hundreds of turf professionals had the opportunity to see our Koro, Insants, Dakota and Vredo machines carrying out actual jobs of work, not just a quick run up and down. This left all absolutely impressed.

It is amazing how far our fellow European counterparts will travel to see machinery working, and how eager they are to see and learn new methods and techniques.

It would be good to see more of this enthusiasm in the UK.

Summer came and went, but we never saw much of it at all as we were busy with demonstrations and seminars in the USA, Japan, and Malaysia.

Then it was home for a disappointing Sultan at which attendance was well down.

Despite being disillusioned with Sultan, a week later this was soon dispelled when we were back in Germany for GaLaBau, where we exhibited with our German distributor, GT Equipment.

Attendance over the three days was over 60,000 visitors.

Successful demos have been carried out this wet autumn, resulting in immediate orders from some golf clubs, so it is not all doom and gloom on the golf front.

The present economic climate has certainly made greenkeepers more resourceful. Instead of going for those large package deals, more are recentring back to how they used to purchase – buying the best individual machines – which smaller companies can offer.

At the end of the day the club will benefit too.

Well here we are now in December.

Regional greenkeeping seminars are nearly over; we have just attended the Slovenia Golf Conference last month.

The 10G Conference and Awards night will soon have come and gone and it will be time for some of us to have a well earned few days off, ready for The Big One – BTME!

Campey Turf Care will be exhibiting again this year and hope to see you all there supporting your industry at your show.

Best wishes for the festive season to all.

― richard Campey

The views expressed within this column are not necessarily those of Greenkeeper International
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