

How Do You Do...?

The Question -- How Do You Explain the Benefits of Attending Conferences/Educational Sessions to Include them in Your Budget?

Answered by Mike Boekholder, Durham (NC) Bulls Baseball Club

Attending conferences is an excellent way to not only improve your knowledge but to also network with other individuals within your field. When I am asked to justify conference registration, travel and expenses to my general manager during our yearly budget sessions, I give the following reasons why conference attendance is so important:

By allowing staff to attend conferences, it accomplishes a few things. First off, the educational sessions give you and your staff the opportunity to stay current on the latest trends and techniques being used by others in your field. Second, it gives you the opportunity to meet and interact with other individuals within your industry from all parts of the country (if it is a national conference) or at least from your geographic area (if it is a regional conference), something you normally wouldn't have the opportunity to do. These contacts will more than likely help you solve some problem down the road and can be as valuable a resource as the information you gain during the educational sessions. In addition, conferences allow your staff in many instances to gain valuable CEU's that are required by most states to maintain a current pesticide applicators license.

All of these reasons can help you justify the expense of attending conferences to your organization. They can also help your boss better understand how these educational opportunities benefit the organization as a whole, allowing your department to become more effective in doing its job for the company.

Answered by Bob Milano, Jr., University of California-Berkeley

I feel very strongly that

attending educational seminars and conferences is not an option but a requirement for any sports turf manager. I would highly recommend that you take a strong proactive stance and include these costs in your budget for yourself as well as your staff. Explain to your administration that these training sessions will yield much more than the investment in the following areas: 1) Improve networking for advice and troubleshooting 2) New materials, methods and techniques 3) Increase vendor contacts for competitive pricing, and 4) Safer more effective chemical use and environmental sensitivity

AND MOST IMPORTANTLY
- Allowing staff to participate demonstrates to them that they are important, valuable components of the program, thus improving morale, productivity and staff self esteem. Good Luck!

Answered by David Flumbaum, University of Maryland Campus Recreation

Practice can make perfect, but consulting with and learning

from leading sports turf experts and other sports turf managers is a more practical and better use of your resources. Most sports turf managers have very limited resources and justifying the use of some of these resources on a conference, seminar or trade show can be a challenge.

Justification of conference expenses requires demonstrating the practical benefits that you and your organization will gain from your attendance and participation in the conference, as well as the resourcefulness of doing so.

Some practical benefits include: State or local recertification of pesticide licenses/permits through session attendance, continuing education credit for certain session participation, and the demonstration of products and equipment at trade shows that provide valuable information for future purchases.

Demonstrating the resourcefulness of conference participation
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can be done in several ways: Conference attendance can actually pay for itself through savings resulting from new knowledge gained at the conference. Finding a more cost effective product, learning about a new time saving approach, finding out how to better manage disease and insect problems, learning how to do minor repairs and preventive maintenance on equipment, and learning about athletic field safety and liability issues are some examples of how knowledge learned at a conference will save time and money. Also, being an effective sports turf manager requires a broad range of knowledge, from diseases, insects, agricultural practices, pesticide application, seed and product selection, irrigation operation, maintenance procedures, equipment selection and operation, budget management, etc. No one has all the

knowledge and expertise in every one of these areas, nor should they be expected to. More important is knowing who to ask or where to get the information you need. Networking at conferences and seminars provides the opportunity for making contacts and developing relationships with extension agents, professors, sports turf consultants, other sports turf managers, and vendors. It is these contacts that allow one to quickly get the information needed when new problems arise. Getting the proper information will save time and money. These examples demonstrate how conference attendance can help make better use of available resources.

Justification of conference expenses can take some explaining, but the benefits are well worth the cost and effort.

STM

Call For Nominations

Your nominating committee is seeking individuals willing to serve as board members in the following categories: Category I -- Professional facility sports turf manager and Category III -- Other schools, research, extension agents, teaching.

If you feel a strong commitment to STMA and would like to get involved, contact Nominating Committee Chair, Mike Schiller. If you would like to recommend someone, contact them and make sure they are willing to serve before contacting Mike.

STMA has a WORKING Board. The Board meets four times a year: once in conjunction with the annual Conference, then once in March, July and November. The 1-1/2-day meetings are usually held on Friday afternoons and all day Saturday.

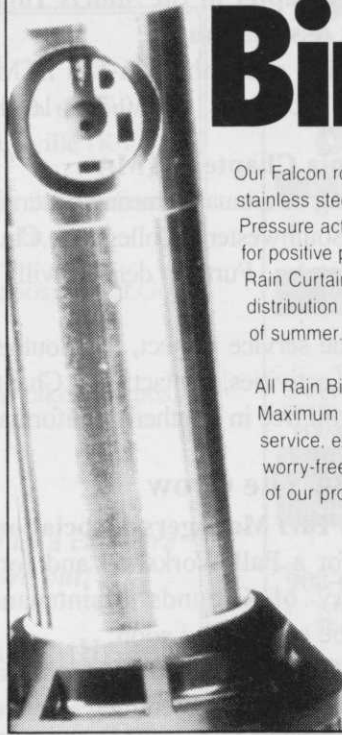
In addition, board members are asked to serve on one or more committees, provide input to other committees, review and vote on key issues affecting the direction of STMA and be responsive to the needs of the membership.

As with most national and international associations, the Nominating Committee traditionally selects officer nominees from among those who have previously served as Board members and are thus familiar with the administrative and financial functions of the Association.

As well as nominations, any questions or requests for further information may be directed to committee chair, Mike Schiller, Rolling Meadows

Park Maintenance Facility, 3900 Berdnick Street, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008, phone: (847) 963-0550, fax: (847) 963-0549 or e-mail: mobygrape@aol.com.

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