By Scott Beachy

**MAKING THE EXPERIENCED OPERATORS OF TOMORROW**

Think about your starting day at your first job in this industry. You did not have any experience and never used any of what seemed like large equipment, whatever it was, dedicated mowers, sprayers, and tractors with different attachments or even loaders, backhoes or dump trucks. You were either one of two types: scared and unsure of yourself as far as running equipment or you were over confident and thought, “where are the keys?”

Now, jump ahead to today. Every year seems to bring one or two new employees to our department and at least half have no experience, yet they are still unsure and overconfident. So, how do you train them? First, I would check with your insurance company. Sometimes they will have training available that is at least partially relevant (usually the safety aspect) to the equipment you use. If not, ask them for any recommendations.

At our department, we do a blended program. We have employees attend classes and in-house training. Also, do not forget about continuous training. We try to send employees to some of these classes every one to three years to keep them safe and current. A lot of factors come into play when it comes to deciding when a person is ready to run a piece of equipment. It may be a time factor or if you have one, it may be a union issue. Once all the other issues involved have been satisfied, it is important to point out that you have to feel comfortable with an employee using a piece of equipment. I try to get through these issues to get at least one training session done as early as possible. I find that once a person starts to learn the controls and operation of a piece of equipment while watching other operators they will be able to learn a lot faster. They will ask themselves, “How is that done?” and pay close attention to that particular operation. They will pick-up on things that they would not have without that first training.

The first thing I say to a new trainee is, “This is the most important thing I am going to tell you.” Then, I say slowly and clearly, “TAKE YOUR TIME.” That also means when you train someone make sure you have plenty of time and are not in a rush. You want to give this person a sense that he/she has all day. I start by explaining the controls and what they do. I also strongly encourage them to ask questions. When I am done explaining something I ask them if they understand and have them repeat back to me the functions of those particular controls. I give them an open area where they cannot do any damage or hurt anyone. I have them perform one function at a time and if I see them doing something wrong I will stop them right away to prevent them from forming any bad habits. If it is a complex piece of equipment I may only teach them a portion of the equipment’s operation. Once they are comfortable with that, I will teach them the remaining portion.

We never put a maximum on the number of training sessions. We always want to do a minimum, but are willing to do more. Even if I think they are ready I will want them to feel comfortable and vice versa. Again, I do not want them to feel rushed in any way because being rushed is how accidents happen.

Finally, when they start using the equipment on their own, do not give them jobs that precision or speed are necessary. That is what your experienced operators are for. Let them get enough time under their belt before expecting these things out of them. After all, experience is the best teacher.

Scott Beachy is Crew Chief, Department of Public Works, Township of Millstone, NJ.

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**PLANNING NEXT YEAR’S BUDGET**

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By Don Savard, CSFM, CGM

It’s that time of year again and sports field and grounds managers are planning the Operating Budget for the next fiscal year. Unlike a Capital Budget which is for the purchase of major pieces of equipment, or a Program Budget which is for special projects such as a major field renovation or construction, an Operating Budget is a financial plan for managing the day-to-day operations of a sports field or grounds maintenance operation. We are talking about things like grass seed, mowing and marking paint. Whether you have been given a dollar amount to work with or are starting from zero and must justify every expense, your must mission is to learn what your costs are and estimate what you expect to spend. If you don’t know where to begin, here are some tips to help you get started.

Track your historical data. Collect receipts, and all records pertaining to your facilities grounds or sports field operations for the last fiscal year. A ledger book or a computer spread sheet program will be very helpful for organizing this data.

Find out what is expected. You must know exactly what the site will be used for. For example, is it an open space used for a variety of activities, or will it be used for a single purpose such as exhibition baseball games? What are the expectations of the owner? Will certain rules or conditions apply such as the amount and severity of use, during inclement weather? Different sites will have different budgets based on their maintenance levels. Find out the expectation of the owner first. Without the support of the owner, it will likely waste your time to budgeting for a higher level than what your owner envisions. Consider the following differences in maintenance levels.

**Maintenance Levels**

- **Level 1** Showpiece facility (professional sports facility)
- **Level 2** Comprehensive stewardship (College facility or high end sports facility)

(continued on page 17)
Present your proposal neatly, in an easy to read format. Include any overhead expenses that your operation is charged, such as rent, utilities, or other line items. Check your figures carefully and submit your budget.

Create a calendar showing when the activities will occur. This is helpful for scheduling resources and time around scheduled events. This will help you create a realistic picture of what tasks your organization can do in-house, outsource or eliminate. Be sure to include any overhead expenses that your operation is charged, such as rent, utilities, or other line items.

The people we work for often are unaware of the true costs of maintaining a safe and playable sports field, so remember to be tactful, diplomatic and professional.

Venerable Yankee Stadium will host the 79th annual Major League Baseball All-Star Game on July 15, 2008. The Yanks will be moving across the street to a new Yankee Stadium for the 2009 season.

The “Green Industry” Supplier

Do You Know Your Costs?

DID YOU KNOW?

A stolon is an elongated stem (or shoot) that grows along the surface of the ground and from which leaves and adventitious roots develop at the nodes.

sports field managers association of new jersey

PLANNING NEXT YEAR’S BUDGET - Do You Know Your Costs?

By Don Savard, CSFM, CGM

Create a calendar showing when the activities will occur. This is helpful for scheduling resources and time around scheduled events. This will help you create a realistic picture of what tasks your organization can do in-house, outsource or eliminate. Be sure to include any overhead expenses that your operation is charged, such as rent, utilities, or other line items.

Check your figures carefully and submit your budget. Present your proposal neatly, in an easy to read and understandable format such as a spread sheet. It is likely that your budget will be challenged by a budget committee. Above all, remain flexible.