



Allowing staff time to visit shows and demonstrations may cost money but actively 'giving' them the time to go to an event can help team moral. All forms of experience and training contribute to CPD, Continuing Professional Development, vital to the development of skills in the greenkeeping profession.

All I want for Christmas



James de Havilland looks at a alternative route to take when it comes to Christmas presents

If all you get for Christmas is the odd card or two from work colleagues don't worry. You are not alone. But the 'festive' season can be an opportunity to take stock on the past year and think laterally. How about using Christmas as a time to 'reward' faithful greens staff and help them meet their goals of Continuing Professional Development?

Perhaps the greatest gift you can offer any busy person is time. A bonus 'day off' is always welcome,

but that is not quite the same as allowing someone the time to go off and do something that could well enhance how they go about about the job that they do and make a real contribution to CPD, Continuing Professional Development. Some Green staff may also feel a bit overlooked. Many turn up early every day to tend the course and disappear before senior management staff will have had a chance to talk to them.

Smaller clubs may well benefit from easier communication

between everybody, but it is all too easy for some members of a team to feel somewhat left out.

Others may feel that they could benefit from a little change, no matter how much they enjoy their job.

Some may also want to know a little bit more about the tasks they are carrying out or even to progress to carry out jobs reserved for those with more experience. These are all points that BIGGA has sought to improve through its support of CPD.

John Deere has a range of Christmas gifts to include gingerbread treats and decorative tree baubles. But the company can also offer a lot more, from overalls to training courses.



So what can a Course Manager do? One consideration could be to look at offering certain members of the team the time off and resources to attend a training course. Although there will always be those, both donor and recipient, who would not consider this a 'gift', the simple fact remains that the more involved you become as the member of a greens team, the less time you may devote to 'developing' your wider experience. No one is ever too old to pick up new ideas or skills.

A training course could also be a subtle way of helping members of the team who may benefit from a bit of guidance. Talk to those who have been put through a development course they really did not think would help and many suggest they have really learned something. The way in which they are 'sold' the course will also impact upon how willingly they take part.

Tell someone you are sending them off on a course because they need some training is not as encouraging as suggesting you want to help them develop their

skills to enable them to tackle more demanding duties or add to their qualifications. Offering a course or two as a Christmas 'gift' can also give them something to look forward to and lift those suffering from the winter doldrums.

So what courses can you consider? Cutting Edge Training, an operating division of Ransomes Jacobsen, provides course managers with a wide range of operator training to ensure that mowing equipment, tractors and ATVs are being used correctly and safely.

According to the company, the training team are all highly experienced individuals with a combination of talents to ensure that everyone attending courses gains the utmost benefit from each and every session. Each has his own area of expertise to provide the operator with 'the skills to assess the working environment, ensuring that all pre-start checks are completed and that the machine is in a safe working condition.' From a golf club or any other employers perspective that has to be a good thing.



On completion of the training each candidate is assessed and, if deemed competent, will be issued a certificate of competency by either the NPTC or LANTRA Awards, depending upon the awarding body of your choice.

Certificated courses available through Cutting Edge Training include:

- Pedestrian controlled mowers – cylinder, flail and rotary
- Tractor-mounted mowers
- Remote-controlled mowers

INSET ABOVE: Tablet computers are not cheap but one can be a really useful business tool. Take an image or video of something like bunker damage. Email it to an iPad or smart 'phone. Share your pain with others or send it direct to the person faced with doing the repair.



Tractor driving and related operations – compact, utility and large agricultural

Tractor loader operation
Utility vehicle and ATVs
Brushcutters and strimmers
Hedge trimmers

All of the above are relevant to any manufacturer, not just Ransomes and Jacobsen products. Cutting Edge Training also promotes technical training aimed at experienced mechanics and technicians who carry out maintenance and repairs on Ransomes Jacobsen products including Ransomes municipal mowers, Jacobsen golf course equipment and Iseki tractors and ride-on mowers.

Lely's Toro training could also be 'gifted' to deserving greenkeeping teams by their clubs. Clubs often send one or two representatives to the company's St Neots training centre. But perhaps investing in

A training course 'gift' is something many would appreciate. Not only do you get a chance to learn about new equipment you can also get the chance to meet new people and share ideas.

the wider team, by sending a larger contingent, would be a welcome gift this Christmas? As with other courses, such an investment could be a real reward for individuals keen to progress their knowledge and skills.

By ensuring the greenkeeping team gets the training they need, a problem they have maybe been struggling to tackle this year could be turned into a positive as they learn how best to overcome it in 2012. It is also, of course, a great 'gift' to the greenkeeping and golf industry as a whole, helping to raise standards and improve health and safety. Lely can tailor training packages to suit any club's requirements.

It follows, of course, that other manufacturers to include John Deere and other key suppliers offer a cracking range of training opportunities. The easiest thing to do is to just ask. Manufacturers are keen to promote best practice to ensure customers get the best out of equipment. The same applies to 'specialist' equipment to include items as diverse as chainsaws, sprayers and fork lift trucks.

More traditional Christmas treats

On a more light-hearted note, you can also tap into the merchandise offers from manufacturers. Diaries, jotters, desk tidies, ballpoint pens, calendars and posters have long been handed out by dealer 'reps' to promote business. But mark enthusiasts may also find other items that attract them. John Deere has a strong following amongst the younger generation thanks to its high visibility in sectors that

include agriculture.

So no surprise that it offers gifts to include a chocolate advent calendar, a tractor themed gingerbread and electric Christmas lights. You can even buy green and yellow Christmas tree baubles decorated with the John Deere logo.

In fact Christmas can be a good time to renew staff work clothing too. How about a nice set of overalls or coat with a key supplier logo on it? Decent work wear does not come cheap, so why not tap into some manufacturer goodwill for this Christmas!

Technology

Those of a certain generation may bemoan the increasing dependence some seem to have upon smart 'phones, tablet computers and other digital wizardry. These tools, however, can be really useful. Those who use a tablet computer can carry it with them. This can then be used to access daily work instructions for anything from a bunker repair to detailing exactly where you would like a little extra top dressing applying – this can even be done via a video clip. The key is that you can 'gift' staff a bit of tech that will help you work with them in imaginative ways. Technology can improve communication.

A key to good staff moral is of course to foster a team spirit. A surprise Christmas lunch or 'works outing' can really help lift spirits, but a gift that lasts will always be more valued. So think beyond a simple Christmas card and you may end up giving a gift that really does more than add a little festive cheer.



An employee cannot just pick up a chainsaw and start using it. A training course can be a way of not only helping the club make use of its own personnel but also benefit the individual by adding an extra qualification to their portfolio.