



What is CPD?

...and how can it benefit your career? BIGGA's Learning and Development Executive (Technical) Stuart Green explains how CPD will transform your personal and professional development

C - CONTINUING P - PROFESSIONAL D - DEVELOPMENT

Right, now that's been established let's discuss what it really means. When you enter the industry, you may have little knowledge of grass or how it's maintained. So you attend college, learn how to maintain turf and will be assessed as being competent to use the equipment.

However, it doesn't stop there. You are then put on a spraying or chainsaw course. Then the following year you may go to BTME, attend seminars and/or go to a Regional Conference. You get your copy of Greenkeeper International each month and read articles on subjects, such as, aeration and disease identification.

That's a small example of what CPD may be. You are updating your

skills and knowledge, boosting your confidence, strengthening your professional credibility and ensuring your employer has a competent and well-motivated employee. However, CPD is not only for your employer, it is about YOU. It is a strategy to help you succeed and go succeeding.

Let's look at CPD and what it means to you, your employer and to the industry. The profession of greenkeeper has greatly improved in the last 40 years, with the introduction of formal education specifically designed for the turf professional, the establishment of a professional body to act as a voice for its members and the commitment of its members to continuing self improvement to drive up standards of turf care. This ultimately has led to a greater respect for the profession from all corners of the industry. Perhaps the most significant part of this journey has been for BIGGA members and their desire to be recognised by their clubs and members as a professional.

So, in truth, greenkeepers have been carrying out CPD for years but didn't know it and also didn't know they could be recognised for it.

CPD Commitment

A commitment to CPD is really a frame of mind rather than a process. You are probably doing all the right things - CPD is the way of formalising this frame of mind and being recognised for your commitment. By committing to CPD it identifies you as a competent professional. Your commitment to your own development, both personal and professional, is up to you. It could take five minutes or five hours - it depends on how much time you are willing to invest.

Learning

I have taught many sports turf students, over the years, who have varied hugely in age, yet apart from turf care, they have all learnt some-

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www.bigga.org.uk/education/continuing-professional-development

thing about themselves. It may have been how they learn best, they may have improved their reading or writing or how to ask the right question. It should be remembered that learning is deeper than just knowledge; it is a fundamental part of our evolution. Without it, I may have been chiselling this article out of stone! CPD provides the opportunity to explore and develop not only our professional skills but to discover who we are, what makes us tick or how we can challenge ourselves.

CPD -A Cunning Plan...

So where should you start? Firstly, join the BIGGA CPD Scheme. This will help and it should be the first step on your development plan. The next step is to sit down with a piece of paper and think about where you are NOW. What skills do you have, what are your strengths and weaknesses and what are your goals? At this point, be really honest with yourself. Now take another piece of paper and draw a line across it. Start at the far end, with what you would like to achieve. It could be Course Manager, Club Manager, Stockbroker or Film Director. Then work backwards along it putting down what steps you need to reach your desired goal. This is where you may need to do some research or take some advice, because you will need to decide what skills you need to develop to achieve this goal.

For example, completing a course in management or undertaking an evening class in French.

At this point, you can begin to break this down into years or months and schedule them. This is called 'chunking'.

Breaking down your plan into manageable chunks makes the end goal more attainable, as you will be completing steps towards it. If your goal is to be a Deputy in five years and a Course Manager in ten, break that down by achieving your Level 3 by year two and then even further by achieving a unit by July.

That's just an example, but research has shown by achieving smaller goals on the way to a bigger goal, you are more likely to achieve it. Fig.1. shows an example of this timeline.

So everything you do to achieve this goal will be classed as CPD. Also, it is now compulsory in all Level Two, Three and Four qualifications to complete a Personal Development Plan, so by compiling one now you will have the evidence already in place. It can also be good to include personal goals in this process, such as starting a family or saving for a car.

One of the most fundamental tasks is REVIEW it on a regular basis. Your goals and lives are not cast in tablets of stone and need to be flexible, especially in the current economic climate.

"CPD is about YOU taking responsibility for your career and personal development and aspiring to the highest standards"

Fig 1

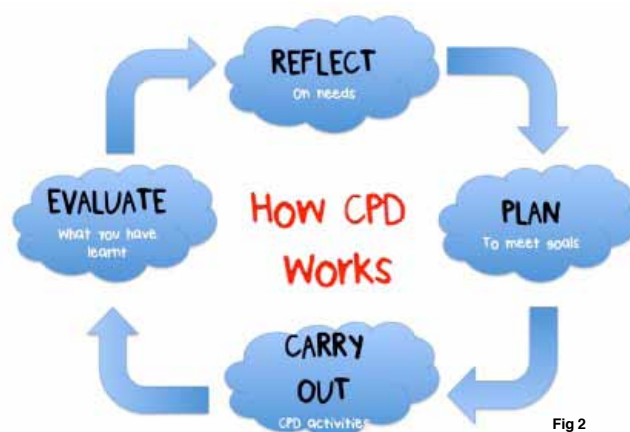
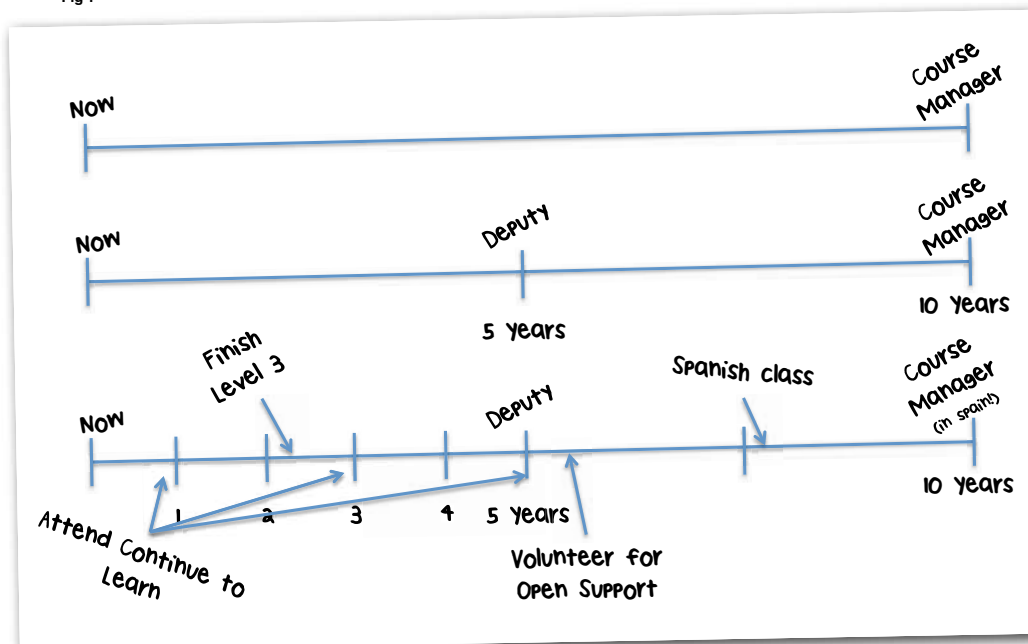


Fig 2

You have your plan and are undertaking CPD activities. How do you ensure that the activities are of benefit and how could you use what you have learnt? This is something called REFLECTION. Fig 2 shows the CPD cycle. It is very easy to confuse evaluation and reflection, so what's the difference? Simply put, your Personal Development Plan is a reflection on what you FEEL your needs are. Evaluation is a CRITICAL and OBJECTIVE review of a course, such as filling in the feedback forms after a seminar. As Fig 2 highlights, reflection comes after the evaluation.

Reflection is a very personal thing and is a great benefit to your personal development. During my own teacher training course I had to maintain a Reflective Learning Journal for two years. It took me three years to actually work out how to use it! However, by using reflection in a formal structure, it greatly improves learning and the depth it takes place.

So, after two years of struggling to fill in the journal, the penny finally dropped and I still maintain one now. Depending on my circumstances, I may put entries in on a daily/weekly basis or after a seminar.

However, I find it refreshing to take my feelings out of my head and put them on paper. It makes them easy to refer back to and I needn't worry about forgetting what I felt. My best piece of advice is to try it. I was sceptical until I started doing it.

In summary, CPD is a state of mind, it is the basis to a lifelong journey of learning and a commitment to your personal and professional development. By embracing change it will ensure our profession grows and strengthens.

Next month - New changes to CPD and what constitutes CPD