



Stephen Tucker is the equipment manager at the Ritz-Carlton Members Golf Club in Bradenton, Fla., and a member of the International Golf Course Equipment Managers Association. He can be reached at 941-309-2913 or stephen.tucker@ritzcarlton.com.

THE TECH'S VIEW OF THE GIS

The GIS experience, as I like to call attending the Golf Industry Show, happens during one of the most exciting times of the year. It's when you have the opportunity to take a look at all the product innovations, meet with industry colleagues, build relationships and expand your knowledge base.

There are always positives and negatives to attending trade shows, but having the opportunity to attend one can be a blessing for an equipment technician. It seems managers don't always have a clear picture of what technicians could gain from attending a national event versus an equipment field day or state trade show. While the GIS isn't designed for technicians, it can be beneficial.

For technicians, the GIS is an opportunity to discuss equipment with individuals on your level who understand what you're talking about. When you ask about the rake angle of a reel, someone there will be able to answer that question. Many times ideas are born on the show floor, whether it's a technician seeing a piece of equipment that could be useful at the facility or identifying

something he could build on his own to save the club money.

The education offered at the GIS is another benefit for equipment technicians. While the content doesn't exactly meet technicians' needs and could certainly be improved, there's always something that pertains to our jobs.

Believe it or not, technicians should have some knowledge of agronomy, environmental awareness, tournament setup, computers and many other offerings that are geared for superintendents. Many times in these classes, you learn what pertains to your position and how your superintendent comes to conclusions when making decisions. The more trained your eyes are on the golf course, the better your operation will run. Think about having another person who can see disease when it pops up or someone else who can see when a hot spot needs water. The benefits of trained technicians are endless.

The GCSAA is dedicated to educating superintendents, which should be its focus; however, there are many superintendents who also serve as technicians, and they

need more technical education so they to can learn the correct ways of maintaining equipment. One of the most worthwhile programs the GCSAA provides is one about superintendent/technician relationships. This program should be a prerequisite to certification. The relationship between these two people at a facility is pertinent when managing a successful operation. The GCSAA is expanding its opportunities in this arena, and I hope to see more of them in the future.

The International Golf Course Equipment Management Association continues to support technicians in this educational effort along with sponsoring equipment manufacturers. During the past two years, manufacturers have managed to send six technicians to the GIS, which has allowed those individuals to write about their experiences. Every one of the technicians stated how overwhelming the conference was and what a huge benefit it was to finally see it firsthand. Many of them didn't realize all the different equipment options that were available, and each of them took back something that benefited his facility. The manufacturers realize the important role equipment technicians play, and sponsoring them to attend the conference is just one of the many ways they recognize that.

Finally, consider how sending a technician to the GIS can build the superintendent/technician relationship, benefit your facility and motivate your technician. While travel expenses aren't becoming any cheaper and budgets continue to decline, sending a technician to the GIS may be unrealistic. But if you get a quote on a new fairway mower or greens triplex, you'll notice those prices aren't declining either. Because of the size of the investment, making the right decisions about purchasing and maintaining equipment is more important than ever.

So, the next time your equipment package is up for renewal, think about sending your equipment technician to the GIS to find what you need equipmentwise for your operation. I assure you, it won't be disappointing. **GCI**



The GIS is an opportunity for technicians to discuss equipment with individuals on their level.