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EQUIPMENT TECHNICIANS PREP FOR 2011 GIS

As we all prepare for the 2011 Golf Industry Show in Orlando there are a lot of new changes taking place. The biggest change affecting technicians this year is the fact that now The International Golf Course Equipment Manager's Association is a partner with the Golf Industry Show, and later in the year it will be launching their second annual Virtual Trade Show.

However, I received a few phone calls this year from superintendents saying they were planning to send their technicians to Orlando this year but they didn't see a lot of education that pertained to them. So they wanted my advice on what classes to put their technicians in. I have attended the Golf Industry Show since 1999 and have always approached it in the same way: Anything I can learn that creates value for my club and myself is worth taking.

Technicians not only need to attend classes that focus on changing oil, grinding reels and the latest EPA standards, they also need to take classes pertaining to turf, tournament prep, aerification, leadership, sprayer calibration, Spanish... I could go on and on.

Technicians need these classes so they can become another set of trained eyes on your team. With reduced staff numbers, lower budgets and the increasing demand to make pennies stretch into dollars, the more help you can get from well-rounded individuals the better. Technicians must have an appreciation for why things are done a certain way or why it's so important to have a good quality of cut or why you aerify? Most of the time I am told, "Well, if there aren't classes specific for techs, then I can't justify sending them."

The best justification for sending them is to teach them skills – such as how to better communicate or be better organized – that help you avoid having to hire another staff member. "Well, my technician barely has time to get his/her own work done. How will this help with what I need done?" Techni-

cians who are properly trained to organize themselves and their equipment will provide you with better results. And guess what, there is a class on it this year. So sign them up.

Show preparation, from a technician's point of view, consists of first mapping out what the club's needs are over the next year or two. Technicians who have the ability to speak to engineers on the show floor are going to make sure that, in the event you do purchase a piece of equipment, he/she is completely comfortable and has asked all the pertinent questions to the people who can answer them.

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The second thing a technician will do is map out what is new. What are the things we have not seen before? What are the new innovations? This is the best way to take a look at what training they need to obtain over the next few years to prepare. Lastly, they need to socialize. Technicians talking with engineers, other technicians and superintendents are important not only to the growth of the profession, but it helps get us focused and to the point of all working together for the good of the game.

We need to be more educated, more professional and better communicators so we can get through this tough time. And for right now, the best we can do is take those small steps to improve ourselves in preparation for when everything eventually begins to turn around for this industry. **GCI**