

# Training is a Constant

by Greg Petry, Waukegan Park District

People are the key to success for any facility, department or business. Start right by hiring people who are willing and eager to learn and improve; those who want a career in the industry and expect to expend the time and effort necessary to move ahead. You want qualified individuals, with sufficient education and experience to fill the position for which they are hired - but - you don't want someone who thinks they already know everything they'll need to know.

Learning is a life-long experience.

Training and continuing education programs should provide useful and relevant information. Employees should want to participate in these programs and, by doing so, improve their skills and become more motivated to perform them.

Make training accessible. Most programs should be offered during "normal" working hours. Give personnel sufficient time to make arrangements to attend training sessions offered at other times or offsite. Training is a legitimate business expense. Employees should receive regular compensation for attendance at mandatory training programs. The organization must decide and establish a policy concerning time and expense reimbursement for optional career enhancement training opportunities.

Remember, effective training programs focus on both internal and external training.

Internal training keeps people aware of things going on in the organization. This would include training in broad areas such as new employee orientation, organizational policies and safety procedures, and in specifics such as proper use of upgraded computer systems, or how to fill out new forms for purchase orders or expense payment authorizations. The majority of these programs are conducted in-house by organization personnel.

You may set up on-going internal training pro-

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grams which allow employees to "tap into" sessions as their skills reach specific levels or they move up to new positions. You may offer certain basic internal training programs several times during the year to meet the needs of different departments. You may have a training check-off system that provides one-on-one training in specific policies and procedures as an employee advances to a new position or takes on added responsibilities.

External training programs generally focus on a specific area such as customer service initiatives, diversity training or advanced technological issues which require the expertise of outside trainers.

These programs may range from single sessions that last a few hours, through one or two days of focused sessions, to extensive, multi-session, multi-year training.

External training includes sessions focused on proper operation of new equipment or machines. These are usually conducted by manufacturer or supplier personnel for all organizational personnel who will operate those units. Many organizations specify that such training be a part of the purchase contract for all new equipment.

External training extends to the continuing education programs offered through key industry-

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## President's Message

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making STMA what it is today. I also want to thank Trusty & Associates, especially, Steve, Suz and Stephanie, for all the support and hard work they have done over the years. Without them, all the growth and provided services would not have happened. But most of all, I want to thank each and every member who makes up this great organization. You're the greatest. It gives me great pride to have been involved with STMA and see all the things we've accomplished for the sports turf industry and people. I still believe at the root of all our success is the people. I've made so many great friends and had a lot of fun. We've come a long way. Thank you for allowing me the honor of being President.

I wish you joy and blessings during the Holiday Season, and a productive and prosperous 2002.



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related associations, such as the STMA Annual Conference & Exhibition, STMA Chapter Meetings and hands-on training sessions.

External training also could include tuition reimbursement to individuals for college courses related to completing an industry-related degree or for specific job-related enhancement. Generally, certain criteria must be met in course performance to qualify for reimbursement.

Internal and external training programs might be offered to everyone in the organization or only to certain departments or personnel.

The constant change of today's world requires on-going training and continuing education programs and the networking interaction with other professionals offered through industry associations.

We must keep up with new developments, not necessarily to try every new technique as it comes out, but to know about and understand advancing technology. No organization has the time or resources to reinvent the wheel. We need to observe the procedures, techniques and policies used in situations similar to our

own and find ways to innovatively adapt them to fit our organization's needs.

People who are interested in doing the best possible job in their current position, who use training and continuing education programs to enhance their skills and keep up with new developments, products and techniques, and apply all this to their job, not only improve the quality of their performance, they improve the quality of the organization.

These people are more likely to feel, act and talk positively about the organization that cares enough about them to provide programs to help them improve.

It becomes self-fulfilling. More efficient, productive employees, with positive attitudes, move up in the organization. They become long-term employees, with long-term goals and a long string of successes. Other individuals interested in a similar career path are attracted by the organization's positive attributes and image - and the cycle repeats - and the organization grows and prospers.



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### It's not too late!

If you haven't already done so, send in your donations for our SAFE Raffle and Live and Silent Auctions. These will be held during the STMA 13th Annual Conference & Exhibition in Las Vegas, Nevada, January 16-20, 2002. Your donations may be fully tax deductible - check with your accountant. Proceeds of the auctions will continue to fund the SAFE Scholarships Program.

We need your help to make the 2002 raffle prize pool and silent auction an even greater success. We will accept almost anything you or your organization has to offer. Donations in the past have included team gear and logo items such as shirts, hats, jackets, autographed baseballs and footballs, and vendor products (mowers, field rakes, chemicals, fertilizer, etc.). Several years ago, Dale Getz, CSFM, offered an autographed section of bleachers from the University of Notre Dame stadium. Be creative - any donation is appreciated.

You can contact Tom Curran at 954/786-4013, Scott Phippen, Village of Lincolnshire (IL), at 847/883-8600 x2102, or, SAFE Headquarters at 800/323-3875. Please send all donations to Jaci Pettie, SAFE Headquarters, 1375 Rolling Hills Loop, Council Bluffs, IA 51503-8552. Of course we'll take donations at the Conference as well.