

# TO TRAIN OR NOT?

A booming green industry is becoming more competitive. Those who train employees may have an edge. Or do they?

by Rudd McGary and Ed Wandtke

The green industry is just now realizing the value of training courses.

We see trade magazine articles on the use of training systems to bring personnel into full production more quickly. Whether you are a golf course superintendent, a lawn care operator, or are working in lawn maintenance, the need for some type of systematic training becomes more and more important as market pressure in the green industry increases.

You can only maximize your personnel investment after you've properly trained your employees.

## OJT training

The old style of training, still very much alive today, is called either apprenticeship or OJT (on-the-job training).

A new employee learns from an experienced one. Generally this is accomplished while doing the actual work required for the position.

However, there are some issues to consider with this method.

First, does the person doing the training have any teaching skills? They may, but certainly they weren't hired as a teacher.

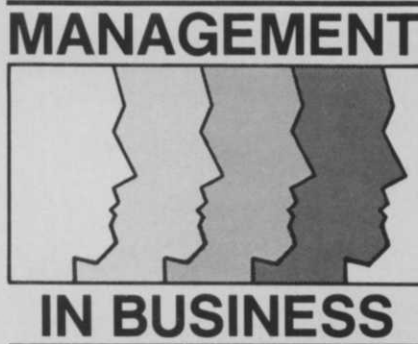
Second, is there a systematic training process that goes on during this OJT? Most often there is not.

Third, is everyone in the company aware of the particular tasks and responsibilities of their position? Usually not unless there is a central effort to educate and train.

Given the drawbacks of appren-



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ticeship training, you should look at how to set up a training system which can be used to help train personnel more effectively. The system will help reduce employee turnover and increase the contribution of each individual to the company.

Here are some key points in setting up a training system (warning- it may look simpler than it actually is):

1. **Define the reasons for the training.** Are you doing it to set the lowest acceptable levels of performance for the personnel? Is it to infuse new information into the organization? Is the training to raise the current level of personnel to a higher plane? Is it done to make the personnel more efficient in current positions? Why are you doing it? If you can't answer this basic question, don't bother to train. It will be expensive, and training for training's sake is a waste of effort and capital.

2. **Define the specific objectives of the training.** Each training course should have a concrete educational objective before beginning. Without an educational objective you won't know if the training is beneficial.

3. **Assess the resources available for doing the training.** You may find that you have valuable resources inside your own organization. If you don't have someone qualified to teach the course, go outside the organization. It may cost more but at least the training will be done professionally. In many cases training done by outside resources is better received than training done by in-house personnel.

4. **Determine the sequence of training.** Training for companies should be sequenced so that one course can lead

to another. If you're only going to do one course a year, this isn't a problem. If you can relate everything you desire to your personnel in one course, call us. We can use someone who can do that. We can't.

5. **Determine the dates and costs of the training.** In the green industry, much of the training is done in the off-season. This is often the best time to bring all the personnel together and to have them free of outside pressures. This is particularly true if you're going to do longer two- and three-day courses. You might also consider some short courses during the season when the information given in the course is more immediately applicable.

Costs of the training involve the teaching staff, the facilities to be used, and time spent by the personnel in the course. Each of these is important in assessing the total expenditure for training.

6. **Design the materials to be used in the training.** Will you have manuals? Will the instruction be primarily verbal? Will you use audiovisual devices? Will you be doing hands-on training? Just how will the information be delivered? Answering these questions will help the instructor be effective during the presentation.

7. **Finally, you must have some sort of assessment of the training.** This is the one aspect of training that is most often overlooked. Many companies have training programs and then fail to assess their effectiveness. If you can set educational objectives you should be able to construct some means of assessing how well the participants learned the materials. Failure to do this may mean that you're simply giving courses which no one understands. That's expensive.

What type of organizations need training? All of them.

The green industry is growing, as is competition and costs.

Effective training systems will better assist in preparing personnel for their jobs and if done correctly, should be beneficial to both the participants and the company. **WT&T**