

Here's the deal: for \$35 each, you can treat your employees to lunch and a day of educational sessions designed to help them become better assets to your company.

That's what the Green Industry Expo is doing in Nashville this year with "Green Team Day."

Sure, you have to get them there, which, may or may not be a challenge, depending on where you are. But if your office is within one or two days of Nashville, you really ought to consider driving at least two or three of your crew in.

The GIE is held from Nov. 14-17, with Green Team Day on the 17th. The day starts early, so you'll probably want to get your crew there the night before.

If you feel your crew could use a brush-up on these topics, or if it's their first time exposure to the show, you should send them in for the day.

The GIE is the main event within the landscape, lawn care and grounds management industries. It's co-produced

by the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA); Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS); and Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA).

PLCAA sessions during Green Team Day include: Six Sure Fire Ways to Make Your Day Shorter; Taming an Ormery Engine; How to Use a Spreader Correctly; and How to Reduce Call-Aheads.

The Professional Grounds Management Society's educational topics include: Pitfalls in Sports-field Construction; Customer Service from the Ground Up; Common Sense Tips for Landscape Design; and Growing Good Employees.

The Associated Landscape Contractors of America will offer sessions on How to Read Your Customer's Mind; Fleet Management; Equip-

ment Selection and Maintenance; and Ways to Make Your Day Shorter, among others.

The responsibility here cuts both ways. As a company manager or owner, you owe it to yourself, your employees and your company to ensure your employees have a well-rounded education. If you are stressing Green Industry "career opportunities" within your company, this is one way to show it. Employees often feel they are not learning enough, that they don't know enough about what this industry is all about. They need to see how other people work, what's going on in the Green Industry.

Your role has to be that of a mentor as well as a boss. If you take the time to nurture and educate the career-oriented members of your team, they will likely pay you back with dedication, quality work and much thanks.

Anyone we've asked has told us that yes, the employee retention equation includes opportunities for personal and professional growth.

It's getting to be a tired story, hearing about how hard it is to find good employees. Well, it's partly because not enough employers are making Green Industry jobs attractive, challenging, and career-based. It's no wonder that workers bolt for 50 cents an hour more. What are you offering them besides the work, which is hot, hard and sometimes exhausting?

If you send your team to the show alone, you have to make them accountable for what they do there. Let them know they will have to be teachers when they get back to the office, and will be expected to pass along what they learned to others in a classroom setting.

If all they can tell you is what they had for lunch, and hand you an unopened binder filled with unread handouts, you've made a mistake, and they slept in.

For more information, call ALCA: 800/395-2522; PLCAA: 800/458-3466; or PGMS: 410/584-9754.

Send your team to the GIE. It's well worth it.



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