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Learn to communicate

Many grounds managers across the country tell me how difficult it is to get their point across to their supervisors. Some even feel they must constantly justify their position or their department.

For the most part, grounds managers are a rare group who are dedicated to their profession. They know how to grow turf, plant trees and move snow. The difficulty comes when everyone around them "seems" to know their job better than they do. This may happen because many grounds managers don't know how to present their own ideas and thoughts through memos, reports or careful budget preparation.

We may know more than those above us when it comes to grounds care, but it matters little if we can't communicate our ideas. That's why it's equally important for the grounds manager or supervisor to know how to communicate effectively.

In order to have your supervisors' understanding and support, you need to be as good as they are in writing, speaking and computing skills, budgeting, knowledge of labor laws, gender issues, etc. This won't happen overnight, but here's how you can start to improve those skills.

1. Attend workshops, seminars or classes. Don't just attend something that pertains to the technical aspect of grounds management. Look for a skill you need to improve as a manager or supervisor.

If you have difficulties working with your computer, take courses that will assist you. Most work is done through a computer. Get on top of this to be an effective communicator.

If you have trouble conveying your thoughts or recommendations on paper, look for a class or workshop that will

help in that area. As a grounds manager, it's important to stay current with the laws and regulations that pertain to labor, gender and diversity as well as have a knowledge of the budget procedures at your place of employment.

2. Join and get involved with a professional association. Becoming involved with an association that represents who you are and what you do is a great way to expand your role as a grounds manager. I've found networking and building professional relationships with other grounds managers to be a tremendous asset in dealing with problems and finding solutions. Getting involved means attending national and local meetings and being an active member, not just being a dues payer.

3. Become certified. One of the most important decisions I made in my professional career was to become a Certified Grounds Manager because it showed my administration that I was committed to my job and profession.

I'm convinced certification gives more weight to our requests for funds and equipment, as well as our presentations to the administration. Face it: anyone can call themselves a grounds manager, and John Q. Public has no way of evaluating the reliability of that claim. Certification provides one undeniable barometer for everyone.

The real benefit of certification for grounds managers will come when many more of us become certified and our employees and employers begin recognizing it.

We're in a profession that requires an ever-increasing amount of technical and management ability. We, individually and collectively, must draw attention to that fact.

— *The author is Director of Grounds Operations at the Dwight-Englewood School in Englewood, NJ and current president of the Professional Grounds Management Society. He can be reached at 201/569-9500.*