

REVITALIZING the *traditional* trade show

Many trade shows seem to be trapped in a Catch-22. While they continue to be a concentrated repository for contractors to explore new products and ideas, they haven't changed much in decades, which leaves some attendees indifferent to the same old show. The new team that runs the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation (OTF) show is trying to shake up that "same old" sentiment with fresh ways to present information and products. The OTF, which runs the show — Dec. 5-8 in Columbus, OH — is celebrating its 50th year as an organization. Its show is nearly as old.

"We look at OTF as a place where people who provide solutions can meet up with people who need solutions," says Steve Jurick, executive director of the Ohio Turf and Golf Trust, which oversees the show, and of OTF. "The tried and true turf care professional needs to use products that are available. Our role is to help in that stewardship between the two."

Landscape Management talked with Jurick to learn just what his organization is doing to give the show a bit of a facelift.

The new management team for the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation show breathes new life into the staid model.

BY DAN JACOBS EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

of factors in our day-to-day lives that we really don't have a lot of support in. Some of that is technology.

Also, we're trying to do more programming on the show floor so people will stay on the show floor longer. We've taken a flat, straight pathway from the entryway to a platform in the back that's a presentation stage. There will be seating for about 400 people.

We will start Tuesday and Wednesday mornings on the show floor with a keynote speaker. The idea is to have everybody start out on the show floor and they can migrate back out when they need to go to their sessions.

Is it just the education portion of OTF that's changing?

Trade shows typically have lost participation, lost vendors. The world's become more efficient. Consequently, turf conferences have struggled with how to address that efficiency. We have put a show floor plan together to allow our partners, our vendors, to be as efficient as they need to be. We know there's not a lot of order taking on the show floor, but the networking is invaluable.

Are you updating the layout of the show floor? Our conference floor has been very linear, and it really hasn't changed for a very long time. The show floor has been redesigned, so there will be pods. It won't be going up and down aisles. The idea behind the pods is to specialize in certain parts of our industry. There might be hardscaping in one particular area. That's not to say we're not going to mix some things up as well.

How are you planning to draw vendors back to the show?

We're going to give them some easier opportunities to be involved. A significant number of companies migrated away from the show floor because of the expense. We're going to have innovative product areas. They'll be something other than the traditional booth — a table or designated space on the floor. Vendors will be able to be a part of the show at a lower rate. So for the small company that's trying to get known and wants to have a presence on the floor, they can do that in what is the appropriate economic level. **LM**

Why revamp a show that's been around for nearly half a century?

Organizations often do the same thing over and over and don't look outside the box. We're able to come

into this with fresh eyes. On the conference and show side, we believe the education track is the most important. If OTF cannot provide solid education to make our members' lives better and their professional careers more rewarding, then we're not doing our job. We're not trying to be all things to everybody. It's just that we know there are weaknesses in our association based on what our members are telling us.

So what's going to change? We're working to address some of the traditional shortcomings of typical education. In the past things had been pretty heavily turf and golf-related — we talked about agronomy, mechanics. We feel there are a number

