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MANAGING STRESS

Job stress is one of the banes of being a manager. But there are ways to relieve the day-to-day stress the job causes. Here are some suggestions.

by Rudd McGary, Ph.D.

The caveman comes upon a saber-tooth tiger. He has two choices to reduce the immediate threat and accompanying stress: he can fight or he can run. Most of the time the caveman runs. He reduces his stress immediately and in a physical manner.

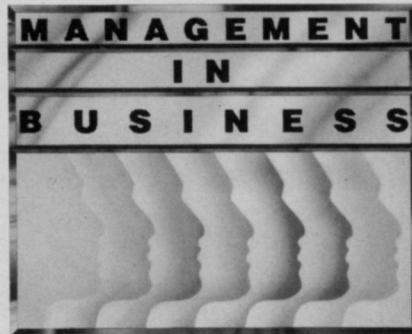
Wouldn't it be nice if, in the modern world, dealing with stress was as simple as that? But it's not. Let's show two examples of stress in the real world.

1. You are required to install some major landscaping at a golf course. It took you almost a year to land the job and a long time to plan out your materials, equipment and vehicles. You have them all ready to go on the start date. The entire crew shows up, on time. On the way to the site, your trailer loaded with the heavy equipment gets stuck on the railroad tracks and is hit by a train. You can't run and you can't fight. It's stress time.

2. In your other division, you find that a certain client—as a matter of fact, the single most important client you have—isn't happy about some construction you have done on his property. You agree to a walk-through with him. You find the staircase off his deck actually leads straight to a cesspool cover. You ask the foreman later what happened, and he replies, "That's what the architect said he wanted." You can't run and you can't fight. It's stress time.

The difference between these two examples lies in the control that you have over both. In the first illustration, having a train run over a piece of equipment isn't within your control. Sometimes things happen. But in the second illustration, communication with the production department is something you can manage.

Many green industry managers cause stress for the people who work with them because they fail either to plan, or to write down what is expected at a job site. While it isn't always possible to get everything



perfect on a drawing, the better companies seem to do it most of the time.

From the planning standpoint, you must know what is going to be needed on a given job. You also need to know if the same piece of equipment is going to be needed on two sites around the same time and plan for that ahead. I'm aware that it isn't always possible to foresee every future need. But, surprisingly, managers at better companies seem to be able to.

The key to planning, and to helping lower the stress level, is to go through contingency planning.

Remember the first time a truck broke down when it was needed on a job? Everyone ran around for a while and then decided what to do. Now you know how to deal with this type of emergency so that you can take faster action. Your stress is relieved somewhat by the fact that you know what to do. That is contingency management. Most companies learn it as they go. Some actually learn to plan for it, and that can help reduce stress.

Unfortunately, even the most brilliant planning isn't going to help if an unforeseen accident occurs: someone gets sick, a piece of equipment isn't shipped to you from the dealer on time. Different things can happen that will stress you. What can you do to help manage stress with these things that occur in every company?

Here are some general rules to follow to alleviate that type of stress:

1. Recognize when stress sets in. Usually, changes in patterns of communication occur. You start seeing

more errors of judgement and errors in performance. Be aware of these changes and when they occur, as difficult as it may be, take some time for yourself and reduce your stress. It sounds simple, and it is. Doing it is the trick part.

2. Find your own personal way of reducing stress. It might be exercising, or reading, or praying, or meditating, or talking with a confidante. What works for you?

3. Don't do something that will stress you further. For instance, having a beer or two may help reduce stress—but drinking too much will hurt you physically. The next day, you'll feel worse. Another example would be to work out so hard that you actually injure yourself. This will add to the stress. So know the limits of your stress reduction mechanisms. Don't overdo them.

4. Understand the difference between work and recreation. Sometimes people believe that simply doing physical work will relieve stress. But if the physical work is what you do for a living, it's unlikely that it'll help. For instance, taking a push mower and doing one more lawn isn't likely to reduce much stress, although it's a physical activity. You must change the pattern of the physical workout to something that is recreational.

5. Find time to do it. If you say that you're going to take some time off and go fishing, do it. Talking about it won't get you relief. Most of the time, it's possible to take some time off: the manager who is certain that he is the only one who can do the job is going to crash and burn sooner or later. He'll be short with his people, probably make a few more errors than normal, and generally not be a very good manager. Sure, it's often hard to find time, but being under constant stress isn't macho, it's stupid, and it hurts both yourself and the company. **LM**

Rudd McGary is a green industry consultant with AGMA, Inc., Columbus, Ohio.



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ORGANIZING SELF-SUFFICIENT CREWS

From the people need to be empowered to respond to changes in our businesses. Highly productive, on-site crews can work to a higher standard than ever before.

By Bill Christman



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ORGANIZING SELF-SUFFICIENT CREWS

Front line people need to be empowered to respond to changes in our businesses. Highly productive, on-site crews can work to a higher standard than ever before.

By Phil Christian

If all, or part of your business includes delivering services to the exterior of existing residential or commercial real estate, then you and your company are subject to the natural laws we call "The Nature of the Business."

The "Natural Laws:"

1. We must deliver our service to the property because the customer does not have the option of bringing the property to us.

2. One or more of our people form a mobile crew to bring the material, equipment and technical skills to the customer's property to perform the services.

3. The service is mostly intangible and varies with each delivery.

4. The outside environment can not be controlled by us. It is ever-changing and often unpredictable.

5. The needs, moods, and focus of the customer are subject to change—without notice.

Most landscape owners and managers gained their experience in companies that had a headquarters, a base, with on-site support systems: information and communication systems; access to tools and equipment, materials; and training.

Today we manage mobile crews that by "the nature of the business" do not enjoy those support systems. We try to extend this support system to the mobile crews and are frustrated because it simply does not work.

We try in vain to supply supervision by meeting with the crews on-site, bringing information, instructions and directions. We even coddle



• We try in vain to extend headquarters support to on-site crews.

• We must structure crews to face the needs of the business.

• Crew chiefs must be able to work on-site with little supervision.

• Wean crews from middle management interference and watch them soar!

the customer and do a little training while we are there! We then rush to catch up with the next crew, reminding the dependent crew to "call us on the radio if you need support."

No long-distance

The fact is, you can not supervise or support mobile crews long distance. They must be self-sufficient, self-sustaining, temporarily self-contained, self-motivated and—above all—self-

supervised. That is a lot to ask of hourly or minimum wage people.

We must re-define the role of the mobile crew and structure them to face the needs dictated by the "nature of the business."

The solution is to have a trained and experienced crew chief or crew leader that can provide the needed support for a limited amount of time, perhaps one working day. The knowledge, experience, and skills that now exist in middle management must be rolled down to the front line on-site people.

The benefits, which can be enormous, will include:

- Increased productivity and profit
- Increased customer and employee retention
- Increased quality
- Reduced management hassles
- More efficient use of overhead

The solution

The solution to this problem is not easy: *hire, train, equip, direct, and empower competent crew chiefs who can produce the work on site with minimum or no supervision.*

This seems too simple. If the benefits are so great, why is "empowerment of the front line" not more popular in our industry?

The landscaping industry has a fear—with some justification—of spawning our own competition. We are afraid that if we make crew chiefs truly self sufficient they will chose to do it for themselves or move to a competitor in our market.

Added to that is the belief that we

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have valuable or proprietary information that, if revealed to competitors, could destroy the company. This need for secrecy is left over from the developing days of landscape services.

The reality is, today your competitors already know what they want to know about your business, and don't care about the rest.

Routine legal precautions should discourage your crew chief from "opening shop" in your immediate market. The future will judge us in terms of how much our people know. Jan Carlzon, president of Scandinavian Airlines wrote, "An individual without information cannot take responsibility, and an individual that is given information cannot help but take responsibility."

Our colleagues

We are in the information age and landscape service crew chiefs are examples of knowledge workers of the 1990s. They are specialists who should be treated as colleagues. They have the skills and mobility to change jobs, and they cherish professional dignity as much as money.

It will become normal in the

1990s for landscape service specialists to change jobs more often than in the past. Most will leave, not to form

The reality is, today your competitors already know what they want to know about your business, and don't care about the rest.

their own company, but to work for another company that will allow them to practice their speciality without undue interference.

There will be fewer middle managers in the future because fewer are needed when the "power to get it done" rests with on-site people. Middle managers who are left will be coaches, facilitators, and trainers rather than line supervisors.

Self-sufficient crews, managed by working empowered crew chiefs, make better use of overhead. The existing overhead structure can sup-

port more self sufficient than dependent crews reducing the overhead that must be recovered by each crew.

Start now with your best crew and work with them until they reach an acceptable level of self-sufficiency. Wean them from the interference of middle management clutter, and watch them soar. **LM**



Phil Christian of Alpharetta, Ga., is a green industry consultant with pdc consultants.

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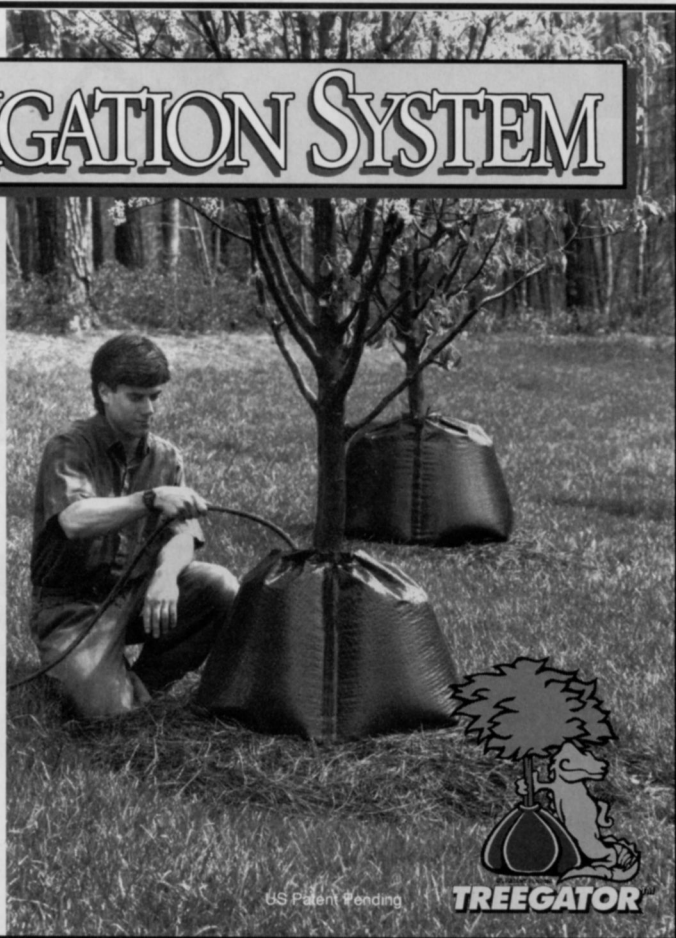
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25TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE & SHOW

The Ohio Turfgrass Foundation is proud to sponsor the 25th Annual OTF Conference And Show in Cincinnati, Ohio, December 2-5. This year marks the silver anniversary of the OTF show and is sure to be the most exciting ever.

THE REGIONAL SHOW THAT APPEALS TO PROFESSIONALS NATION-WIDE

In 1990, professional lawn care, golf course, maintenance, athletic field, and public turf managers came to Cincinnati from 35 states.

They'll be in Cincinnati again this December to learn from the industry's top experts, to share ideas with over 4,000 other pros like themselves, and to take a close look at one of the nation's largest displays of equipment, turf care products and supplies available to the turf industry.

FOUR OF THE MOST ACTION-PACKED DAYS OF THE TURFGRASS YEAR

Whatever your business or career, you'll find what you need at OTF. The huge show floor of the Cincinnati Convention center will be filled with all the tools of your trade. The educational conference includes university researchers and industry professionals offering sessions and workshops on:

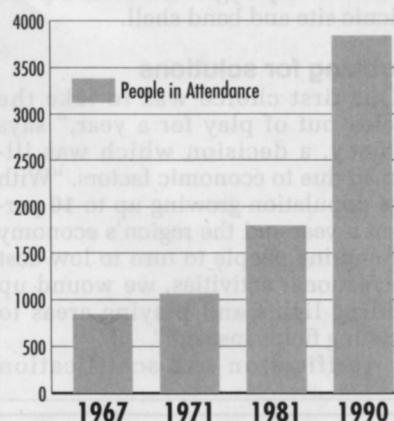
- Golf Turf
- Lawn Care
- Grounds Maintenance
- Sports Turf

Many of these sessions qualify for pesticide recertification credits.

NEW! FOR THE '91 OTF SHOW

New for 1991 will be **Buckeye Beer Garden** on the show floor, and a **Silent Auction** to give you the chance for some fantastic bargains. Be there, and join the fun!

25 YEARS OF STEADY OTF GROWTH



Steady growth for 25 years has attracted over 45,000 green industry professionals to the OTF. Plan now to be in Cincinnati December 2-5 to help celebrate 25 years of industry excellence.

YES! PLEASE SEND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE 1991 OTF CONFERENCE & SHOW.

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'91

CINCINNATI, OHIO • DECEMBER 2-5, 1991

Controlled release solves lazy turf green-up

How do you cope with tired turf, a rising demand for recreational land, and a frozen budget? Frank Dorsey, superintendent of the parks and recreation department of Nashua, N.H., was recently faced with those questions.

"Fifty thousand people use our fields every day from early April to mid-December, and we tried everything we could to keep them safe and playable," says Dorsey, who tends 648 acres. Included in his list of responsibilities are a multi-purpose stadium, a softball and soccer complex and a playground with a pool, picnic site and band shell.

Looking for solutions

"Our first choice was to take the fields out of play for a year," says Dorsey, a decision which was ill-timed due to economic factors. "With the population growing up to 10 percent a year and the region's economy prompting people to turn to low-cost recreational activities, we wound up adding lights and playing areas to existing fields instead."

Aerification and scarification



Frank Dorsey, right, of Nashua, N.H., found that the Once fertilizer product brought deep green color and even, sustained growth to recreational areas.

were the last resorts, culturally.

"Instead of rebuilding a field or tearing out damaged roots as we might have done with more

resources," Dorsey explains, "we overseeded worn areas and bare spots without disturbing the existing mature grass."

A 33-3-10 water soluble fertilizer applied every August, November and May brought short-term results. Spring fertilization created a similar temporary green-up, plus extra mowing and uneven clippings.

Results all season long

A visit to a New Hampshire parks and recreation trade show provided Dorsey with a solution. Once, a controlled release fertilizer described as an "environmentally-sensitive product" by its manufacturer, Grace-Sierra, released nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium continuously for up to a full season with only a single application.


Unlike any slow release product Dorsey had used previously, Once has a special-release mechanism. The nutrients respond to ground temperature rather than water, pH or bacteria.

"Our growth was even and sustained. We sharply decreased our mowing, and our disease problem was a lot less than in the past," says Dorsey.

"Because this new technology eliminates the blushes and fading that leaves turf vulnerable to disease," says Dorsey, "we're able to maintain a higher level of vegetation, which allows a sensitive plant like bluegrass to thrive." **LM**

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 **The National Arbor Day Foundation**

