

Impacting an Industry through Professionalism

Demands on the profession continue to rise. Environmental regulations, personnel management, changing technology, resource utilization, athlete and fan safety ...the list of areas for which a sports turf manager has responsibility continues to expand in complexity. Obviously, doing a great job at your sports turf facility is paramount to your career success, but it takes more than doing a great job to garner respect and recognition. Your abilities as a sports turf manager will form other's opinions of the profession, but your personal professionalism speaks volumes to your staff, your employer, your colleagues, the athletes who use your fields and the fans. Sports turf managers should view the non-technical aspects of their work as a critical aspect of their jobs.

Here are 10 ideas to help you gain recognition and bring respect to you personally, professionally and ultimately to the entire profession.

1. Do a great job. No amount of publicity, communication or civic goodwill will overcome poor job performance.
2. Be visible and talk daily with other managers. Make a point of talking with other departments' staff. Your interest and sincerity will make them want to be a supporter and promoter of you.
3. Control your reactions and watch your non-verbal communication. The champions in business are able to shrug off distressing situations and regroup emotionally – that's one reason they are successful. They also keep in check their non-verbal body language and facial expressions.
4. Promote your education and training. Put your diploma, STMA membership certificate and plaques in visible areas. Talk about concepts and ideas you learned at the STMA conference and at other educational events when you are in meetings with peers and with your employer.
5. Take responsibility for your own mistakes and for those of your subordinates. Blaming others, even if justifiable, makes you look small-minded and weak. Earn a reputation as a "fixer" of errors, someone who can snap back from setbacks and learn from mistakes.
6. Always answer criticism in a professional and courteous manner. Explain why there is a problem and what you plan to do about it. Never let it be assumed that you do not care. Take immediate action on complaints.
7. Adopt a "no surprises" philosophy. If there is a problem with the field, communicate the issue immediately and honestly to those who need to know, along with how you are addressing the problem. Proactive communication, even when it is bad news, contributes to your stature as a professional.
8. Hire a top flight team and support continuing education for them. Your image is affected by the image of your staff. Make them aware of their important role in promoting professionalism in the field of sports turf management. This includes their attitudes, care of equipment and courtesy to all with whom they come in contact with while on the job.
9. Be responsive and on-time. Return telephone calls and answer requests promptly, no matter how trivial they seem. Be on time for meetings. A reputation for always being late can influence people's opinion of your performance.

Pay attention to the details. It's the little things that can make or break you. For example, what does your work space say about you? A cluttered and dirty desk may make others think you don't care or that you lack organization in all areas of your work.