

FRONT LINES

by Dave Ashman

Simpler is better. . .

A colleague of mine is experiencing some difficulties in getting his operation on track and keeping it on track. The same problems keep coming back, despite his best efforts to keep the program moving in the right direction. The situation reminds me of that old saying about not seeing the forest because of the trees. . .

Sometimes you have to color outside the lines. . .

My friend has one of the best turf management programs in his area. He has a definite vision of what wants. He has a good plan for the area and has written clearly defined policies and procedures to realize his goals. He has invested in state of the art equipment. He has adequate funds, a good crew and knowledgeable supervisors. He seems to have all of the tools for a cutting edge program in place. He even

called in a consultant to evaluate the situation to see if anything was missing.

After surveying the program, the consultant concluded that it lacked one key element that is crucial to success: training. My friend immediately dismissed the evaluation. How could training be the problem? He has one of the best computer programs for work order management, irrigation control, labor management, etc. He has an operations manual which outlines the protocols for all of the work performed by the staff. He has regular safety training meetings with the entire crew, and weekly staff meetings with the supervisors and management. There is an excellent exchange of information within the office. How could training be the problem?

The problem was in the organization's definition of training. Training is a never ending process. A good training program should include the following characteristics: a well defined plan of how to do things; a system for pre-

senting the information to the crew in a "classroom" setting; a system for demonstrating the protocols in the field; a system of benchmarks for measuring progress; and finally, a system for trainers to follow up in the field and in the classroom at regular intervals.

My friend's training program presented information to the crew in meetings, but there was no mechanism for following-up in the field. Another colleague gave him the example of the California Highway Patrol. Field supervisors stop CHP officers out on the road to quiz them on information presented in the morning briefing. My friend was finally willing to concede that his program could be improved. □

If you have a story or anecdote you would like to share, call (562) 425-2449, or write it down with your name and phone number and mail it to: Ashman & Associates, 3164 North Greenbrier Road, Long Beach, CA. 90808.

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