

the front office

The 10,000-lb. elephant

There's an old line about everyone "ignoring the elephant in the middle of the room," a euphemism for avoiding discussing an unpleasant topic. So here I go: "Hey, *Sportsturf* readers, there's a 10,000-lb bull elephant in the room!"

The big (pun intended) *elephas maximus* in our room is the redesigned format of this magazine. At the STMA show last January, I received feedback from some members that they didn't like the tabloid size—too large for their shelves or filing systems. And though STMA members make up only about 13% of our total readership, we take what they say seriously, both because this is their official publication and because they represent the epitome of sportsturf professionals.

So why did we choose a larger format? First and foremost, we wanted to make the magazine more friendly for today's reading habits, which means making it easier for you to leaf through and find something of interest—a photograph, a headline, an advertisement. Turf managers, like fertilizer salesmen, magazine editors, and heck, even bosses, are busy people who most likely don't have time to read 3,000-word stories. What's the last work-related magazine you read cover to cover? (The *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue doesn't count, fellas!)

We're fighting for our readers' time. We chose our new format to be different, to stand out, to make us be the first magazine on your desk to get picked up. Storage problems notwithstanding, this magazine is easier to read and gives us more room to provide information and run great photographs. Besides, with everything in the world becoming more miniature every day, isn't it nice to see at least one thing (besides your waist) get larger?

Yes, there are business practicalities that make this size magazine more efficient, but hey, what business do you know of that never changes? You've probably changed how you handle more than one task to get more productive; that's what we've done. And I trust you'll think of some way to store us; you've conquered tougher problems than that!

How about those covers?

Because the magazine's covers are so different than they have been traditionally, I'm sure there's some unrest about them among the faithful. To me the ideal cover shot for our readership would be of some action on a field that would allow you to see all or most of the field, as well as relate directly to a story inside. Needless to say, finding quality photographs that correspond to this ideal is not easy.

So far we've opted for "action" over "field" to get away from static shots that don't entice readers to pick us up. While overview shots of fields can be stunning and beautiful, they are not "unique" in the way a single golf hole can be; no matter how good it looks, a football field is always 120 yards long with sidelines, hash marks, etc.

Every proud turf manager should want quality pictures of her or his work. Even if it were more trouble to get, wouldn't a shot of the athletes, for whom you make that field safe and enjoyable, performing on your work be worth it? Your showpiece might even make a great magazine cover!



Comments always welcome.
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