

How get your employer to support Certification

Twenty-five percent of STMA members who are eligible to take the Certification Exam plan to take the exam within a year, and an additional 35% who are eligible to test plan to take the exam sometime in the future. The support of an employer can be a significant asset before, during, and after certification. But, how do you approach your employer for that support? Simply asking for financial assistance may work for some, or earmarking it as a budget line item may work for others. However, for most members it will require you to educate your employer about the value that your certification brings to the athletic facility.

What is the value of certification to your employer? It can be summed up in one word: results. Going through the process to become certified and to maintain that certification will improve your skills and leadership capabilities. The enhancement of your skills will help you better use resources, manage operations, apply critical thinking to problems, and provide solutions—all attributes that produce results and are highly desired by employers.

Most likely, your employer is not familiar with the STMA Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) program. A good way to begin is to explain the program, starting with when you are eligible to take the test. Cover the detailed scope and length of the test. By design, the certification process is no easy task. Provide to your employer the costs to apply to the program and the testing and renewal fees. Make certain you include how your continuing education and service to the industry provide direct benefits to the facility. By enhancing your skills and knowledge to meet the demands of your ever-advancing profession, you are providing more value to your employer.

Translate these improvements into ROI (return on investment) language for your employer. Focus on the safety aspect of the playing surfaces for the athletes and the quality of the aesthetics for fan appeal and enjoyment. Employers who are concerned about safe, quality conditions for their players should easily make the connection that a CSFM has the extensive knowledge and

experience needed to ensure a superior field. Correlate your continuing education to future field projects and talk in terms of saving time and money through better management strategies.

Becoming certified helps you to raise your credibility and perceived authority with your employer and within the industry. Greater credibility also creates greater expectations for high performance. Maintaining your CSFM credential is a solid way to deliver that performance.

A rewarding experience

One hundred million Americans volunteer their time to worthy causes every year. That's a staggering number; one out of every two people over the age of 13. Volunteering for many is a way of returning some benefit received. In STMA, many who volunteer their time to a committee see that service as a way to "give back" to the association.

David Schlotthauer, a member of the Bylaws and Information

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