



## Points to consider about moving into facilities management

**M**ANY SPORTS TURF MANAGERS that pick up this magazine every month are perfectly content with managing the playing surfaces they do presently. Another segment aspires to see if the neighbor's grass is greener. Some of us work toward the dream of being "in the big leagues," which may mean something completely different to you than to me! Others set a goal of moving into a higher level of administration. This move could mean many different things depending upon what your organization looks like. The turf management industry contains so many different job titles and opportunities it can make you dizzy!

During the fall of 2008 senior administration at Iowa State University Athletics asked me to consider expanding my role from that of the turf manager to that of Facilities and Grounds Manager and soon thereafter, Director of F&G. Primary in their focus was a planned two phase renovation for Jack Trice Stadium, a 50,000 seat on-campus stadium. During this same timeframe Athletics was also scheduled to assume management of the 14,000-seat arena, Hilton Coliseum, which

was then being managed by a third-party management company.

Even today I'm not sure if I was offered the opportunity or if it was forced on me. Bottom line is I was ready for a new challenge and had felt that way for a while. Thoughts of managing fields at a different facility had been coming daily. My expertise was in managing athletic fields so—honestly—the thought of moving into or absorbing facilities management hadn't occurred to me, let alone doing it for my present employer. As we often times do, I took the path of least resistance and started almost from scratch learning a new industry: facilities management.

In our profession, maybe more so at the college and high school levels, this transition to facilities management is fairly common. As sports turf managers we work extremely hard to be in position of influence with administrators. We know watching countless events hosting countless fans have taught us a few things about "what works and what doesn't" when discussing operations. The daily grind of field and facility preparation has taught us soft

>> **MIKE ANDRESEN, CSFM**, handed over the reins to Jack Trice Stadium's field to Tim VanLooy, CSFM.

skills important to position us to be influential in our work micro-environment. Many sports turf managers wind up walking the path I'm on. Some are very good friends and I've watched from a distance for years at how your transition played out and is playing out. Please let me say "you make it look much easier than I've found it to be!"

To be clear, by most accounts I'm doing OK but every day brings new challenges. I'm also caught thinking, "I have no idea what those people are talking about" more often than is comfortable. There are six points I'd like to make to those in position to, or who might be considering a move to directing facilities as well as the grounds departments at school or university or other entity.

**Close your mouth and open your ears.** I believe it was STMA giant, the late Dr. Henry Indyk, that spoke the following quote at a long ago National Conference and I never forgot it: "The more you talk, the dumber you get." Not sure if it was a general statement or specific to me, but as long as I live it'll be locked down to memory. I just wish it was easier to do!

My expertise is not in knowledge of the fine aspects of plumbing, electrical or mechanical systems. Knowing this, I rely on people having a basic need to help others. STMA members do it collectively better than any group in the world. Take advantage of employees, peers, commercial friends and any other quality resource to help you learn what you don't know. It sometimes takes a few times knocking on my brain before it opens up and the light of understanding turns on.

As sports turf managers know there are many ways to accomplish the same task. Since many times I don't even know one way to accomplish some of these tasks, it's in my best interest to turn the exercise of learning into multiple choice by asking numerous folks their opinion and then picking the most reasonable one. I also know that just because someone thinks they have the answer to my

problem, they may be as clueless as me. I try to be the one that doesn't claim to have all the answers.

**Know your maintenance team's role.** As the sports turf manager at ISU I understood what the job focus was. As Director of Facilities and Grounds I've been blind-sided a few days with numerous duties I didn't realize fell under our team's sphere. I have come to understand much more globally how the athletics department is put together. The politics are clearer. Our responsibilities are critical to intercollegiate team successes, fan enjoyment and customer service. Your department depends on you to "polish the crown jewels" and put the best face on your facilities and leave meaningful impressions on guests. Also, as important as I knew the recruiting process was for teams, I still had it underestimated.

**Talk to your coaches.** Coaches travel nationally and see athletics facilities at many levels during recruiting and competition seasons. They know what they like and dislike. They also know what they want. You normally don't have to ask them that! Hopefully your coaches also clearly know what they need to flourish and what they can live without.

In my new role I have a different relationship with coaches. Relationships are not necessarily fostered through daily discussions and casual chats on their fields anymore but are in more formal meeting environments. Trust between you and coaches is just as critical as ever and I'm grateful to have developed good trust with those coaches over the years. They have to trust that you and your team are as committed to their team's success as even they are. In this regard I am extremely fortunate by now working with a sports turf manager (Tim VanLoo, CSFM), facilities managers (Brett Weiland and Brian Lamb) and a key program assistant (Allison Taylor) that each understand and carry out communications better than I probably do or ever did. I honestly feel like all parts of this puzzle are heading in the same direction and we trust each other better than at any time since I've worked here. Hire smart and manage easy.

I must be honest, though. Going from being the sports turf manager to being the supervisor of the sports turf manager was a transition I was kind of nervous about. We limped for more than a year with folks doing double-duty around here in anticipation of hiring the new sports turf manager. When we posted the position it was obviously critical that a special person was needed to fill the position. Iowa State offers opportunities that are found very few other places, such as there being only one full-time turf manager on staff, a student pool that is as good as anywhere, and the opportunity to be an integral part of the university's academic mission.

Besides managing fields this person would be very much an instructor and mentor. Aside from all of this, the new sports turf manager was going to manage the baggage of being supervised by the person that held the position for 15 years before his or her coming on staff! Great candidates were interviewed but Tim VanLoo, CSFM has been a perfect fit for Iowa State. Tim's had great patience in allowing me to figure out my new role relative to field management. Honestly—and I'm not so proud of this—it was difficult at first to turn away from doing the work I'd done for 15 years and watch someone else take over that role. My hands were definitely full of other responsibilities and I knew the guy we hired could do the job better than I could but it was still challenging to find a bal-

ance that was healthy and rewarding for us both. Tim knew this would be a learning curve for me and had the utmost consideration for easing the transition with me. We checked with each other consistently to make sure one of us didn't feel like the other was feeling displaced or having difficulty. From day one, we threw that "elephant in the room" out into the open and discussed it.

I've tried to error on the side of "these are Tim's fields now" and have stayed out of the way; in hindsight possibly to a fault. There is a fine balance between my staying far enough away so that people know Tim is the sports turf manager and staying so far away from his work that Tim might feel alienated or possibly that I'm not 100% supportive. I'm being very honest that nurturing this fine dynamic is critical to each of us feeling completely comfortable with each of our new positions.

I had a year or more to plan for a new sports turf manager hire and this very crucial dynamic was one I hadn't prepared properly for—and it may be the most important chemistry element of all! After a full year I can honestly say Tim and of course the others I work with have been supportive of our vision and patient with the transition. The benefit to our employer is obvious; we have the employee with history of our fields and resources and we have an exceptionally gifted young sports turf manager to take the whole program up a notch. Believe me, I could not be prouder and it's going to be a fun ride!

**Know the department's vision.** Know your role in helping carry out or determining the department vision. Athletic directors and senior administrators have their visions. If whoever is in that role at your facility hasn't conveyed it to the facilities and grounds team, ask them to. When you go on a trip you don't just start driving and trust you'll end up somewhere nice! You define it, you map it out and you set off on the most efficient way to successfully reach the target.

Our university is not one of the "big boys" in the arms race of college athletics. We are forced to maximize budgets and often times left to do repairs or renovations in phases or settle for the Chevy fix instead of the Cadillac fix. Clearly seeing the boss's vision helps each of us understand in a nutshell that we may not have the fanciest things but we should be the hardest working or the "craftiest" at what we do.

**Know what makes people tick.** In our profession we feel as though we're climbing uphill every day of our career. Some turf managers work in facilities where it seems they're starting from scratch each day of the growing season and just the basic tasks are a challenge to accomplish in a long day. Others are able to spend adequate time working on the fine details as well as the basics of what our user groups or employers need. One might fit my style and one would probably be very challenging.

As I now serve as more of a coach than ever before, it's important to have the players put in positions where they will succeed. Our staff has dramatically changed the past 5 years. The folks I work with now have different strengths and interests than the folks before. Know what is important in the lives of your staff and ensure their batteries get recharged by getting to do them. This may mean I cover a manager's duties on the first day of deer season in exchange for his covering me on opening day of trout season. We're all more enjoyable to be around when our focus is on work and not



“wishing we were somewhere else.” Mental health sick days are allowed at our place.

When your staff is small, empower and allow each member of the staff to make decisions and then “have their back.” It’s cliché but true: we learn more by our mistakes than we do by our successes. Challenge your staff and acknowledge their value. Allow each person the opportunity for growth.

**Learn and understand the capital project process and your role in that process.** A very gratifying part of my transition is being part of the capital projects team. Since many or most capital needs are field or facility related in one way or another it’s natural that the position I serve be a player on that team. Our athletic director understands the value of deferred maintenance. His stance is that money is precious around here so it’s imperative we take care of what we do invest in.

As turf managers we always aspire to be a bigger player in the decision making process of project design. We toil on our fields and analyze many things while on the seat of those mowers and machines! We’re fortunate to see other facilities while traveling with teams or through chapter workshops or National Conference Tour on Wheels events. Through networking we learn many do’s-and-don’ts from our colleagues, practitioner and commercial, around the country. Develop a good mental filing system of things you’ve heard about or seen first-hand and roll the best of those into your facilities. Better yet, take pictures! When you’re asked to step to the plate and represent your department in the design phase rather than after the fact during the maintenance phase, swing the bat! We’re able to bring to the table all those opinions and comments we’ve heard or spoken throughout the years of managing fields and facilities. Some properly get shot down but even more of them have validity and end up improving the project.

Know that there are days that my new position is a great struggle. I was looking for a new challenge when this one was set in front of me and it certainly has been and still is a formidable challenge. I make mistakes every day but I think I’m learning from those mistakes and thank goodness my employer and the great people I work with keep showing patience.

On the other hand this has been a very gratifying journey in many ways. For years as a sports turf manager I heard about and then professed the “soft skills are critical to success” philosophy of management. I’m certainly a work-in-progress (aren’t we all?) and struggle every day to feel worthy of leading a department. Skills I learned from fellow sports turf managers are the skills I rely on every day. It doesn’t matter what the environment is, we succeed or fail based very much on communication and soft skills; with customers, contractors, designers and certainly with fellow employees. If you’re offered an opportunity to expand your position jump in with both feet! Know that the skills you learned as a sports turf manager and as a member of STMA will be the ones you can lean on throughout your career. I’m still a sports turf manager, now just from a different perspective. ■

*Mike Andresen, CSFM is Facilities & Ground Director at Iowa State University in Ames. He is a past president of the Sports Turf Managers Association and one helluva fisherman.*



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## STMA members serving their communities

**Editor's note:** Here are some outstanding examples of Sports Turf Managers Association members' volunteering time and effort to improve their communities. Of course there are many, many such examples throughout the country, these are just a few high-profile examples.

>> **STMA MEMBERS** have been volunteering at the Little League World Series for 15 years.

### LITTLE LEAGUE WORLD SERIES

Come the end of summer, millions from around the world turn their eyes to South Williamsport, PA when kids from all over the world play in the Little League World Series. With the players, coaches, managers and umpires on the field, announcers, scorekeepers, security, ushers, cameramen and television production crews in place everything is set to play ball.

But wait, what about the field, is it ready? Is it safe for play? Will it look good on television? That portion of the series is left to members of Keystone Athletic Field Managers Organization (KAFMO) the Pennsylvania chapter of the STMA.

"The chapter has been honored to assist Little League Baseball with field preparation

for 15 years" says Jeffrey T. Fowler, Penn State Cooperative Extension educator and Board member for the KAFMO Chapter and national STMA. "We arrive before the series begins, we level the playing surface, edge the fields, resod any areas that are worn from summer play, all in preparation for the games that will be played and televised during the 10 days of the series.

"Our number one goal is providing a safe playing surface for the kids to play on," says Fowler, "our goal is to provide the safest fields possible.

"We have approximately 40 volunteers that are a part of the grounds crew. These volunteers are members of the state and/or national chapter of Sports Turf Managers. People take vacation time from their own work schedules and leave family at home to come to the series to assist with field preparations. Some stay for the entire time (2 weeks), others help out for a few days," Fowler continues. "The crew that we assemble is second to none for the LLWS, not only do they have the fields at the forefront of their minds, but their professionalism is second

to none. Having people realize that there is more to having safe field than putting down lines and mowing grass is also a goal of the group. Every night we remove the lines, groom and water the infield, broom the edges of the grass, repair clay in the home plate circle and on the pitcher's mound, we tarp those areas as well, we groom the warning track and have the field ready for the next day."

Thirty-four televised games in 10 days during late August takes its toll of the fields. Yet every year the grounds crew manages to battle through

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whatever is thrown their way to pull off one of the greatest youth sporting events in the world. The grounds crew is proud of what they are able to help out with during the series. Many of the crew members have



» Left: **WORKING** at The Boys and Girls Club of Metropolitan Phoenix. Right: **PATAKI PLAYFIELD** at Bear Mountain, NY, an ideal location for demonstrating the efficacy of modern, environmentally friendly turf management strategies.

The 10-acre lawn, leveled by inmates from Sing Sing Prison when the site was intended as their new prison yard, has hosted countless sports gatherings, parties, and lazy afternoons in the sun since the Harriman



been attending for 15 years or more. Some have been bring their own children with them to help out. According to Fowler, "That is the next generation of sports turf managers; I tell kids all the time, the fastest way to the major leagues is with a rake in your hand."

### STABILIZER SOLUTIONS, INC.

As Phoenix geared up for the Major League Baseball All-Star Game this past July, the future pros of America were being given the opportunity to play on the same field as their heroes. Stabilizer Solutions, Inc. a Phoenix-based soil technology company, joined with the MLB, the Arizona Diamondbacks and other local companies to renovate the Boys and Girls Club of Metropolitan Phoenix. Stabilizer Solutions donated nearly 70 tons of infield mix to help the field maintain optimal moisture levels. The product has been used on each of the "Diamondback" charity field renovations to date.

### PATAKI PLAYFIELD AT BEAR MOUNTAIN, NY

What do millions of people, the Brooklyn Dodgers, the New York Giants, the New York Knicks, a team of turf management experts, the 1940 National Archery Championships, and thousands of classic cars on balmy summer evenings all have in common? They've all loved the George E. Pataki Playfield at Bear Mountain, frequently called "The greatest playground in the world."

Gift of 1910 stopped the prison and created Bear Mountain and Harriman State Parks.

It is an oasis of green and in the past 2 years has been the subject of an unusual "green" partnership between the Palisades Interstate Park Commission and a team of turf management experts.

Bear Mountain park managers, Elizabeth O'Loughlin and David Bourne, in conjunction with the PIPC Research and Development Department, have worked with Kevin Trotta, a turfgrass specialist, STMA member, and the New York Team Captain of the Global Sports Alliance (GSA) and Jennifer Grant, an Assistant Director of the New York State Integrated Pest Management Program (IPM) at Cornell University, and Coordinator for Community IPM on this eco-friendly playfield project.

As a highly visible, much loved and much used turfgrass field, the area is an ideal location for a demonstration lawn project to show the efficacy of modern, environmentally friendly turf management strategies. Soil tests have been used to reduce the risk of excess nutrients and runoff, by fine-tuning the amount and source of fertilization inputs in an effort to facilitate the strategic management of soils to promote healthy grass growth. As a means of promoting sustainable systems, preference has been given to natural organic fertilizers over synthetic organic and there has been no use of chemical pesticides.

In addition to the obvious recreation and other lifestyle gains from turf, there are many environmental benefits: the bioreme-

diation and filtration properties of turfgrass allow it to clean our air and water; the photosynthetic process captures atmospheric carbon and generates oxygen; the green, evapotranspirative leaf canopy cools the air; and turf's biomass secures and protects top soil and reduces runoff. The art and science of turfgrass management have developed to the point where a high visibility, intensively used playfield can be maintained at an acceptable ecological cost and at a desirable level of functionality and aesthetic appeal.

### EWING IRRIGATION

Special-needs children in Arizona now have a safe place to play ball thanks to the Miracle League of Arizona. Last spring, Ewing Irrigation contributed to the new Dan Haren Miracle League Field in Scottsdale with the donation of a water-efficient irrigation system for the turf, trees and desert landscaping around the field.

Ewing President, Doug York, also enlisted the help of DTR Landscape Development for the landscape construction. Owner Dick Roberts said he saw the benefits of the field firsthand, as a girl with cerebral palsy ran the bases for the first time. "Her face lit up," Roberts said.

Ewing's contribution to the landscape included about \$5,000 in irrigation and other landscape products. Hunter Industries also donated water-efficient MP Rotators and an I-CORE controller with flow sensing capabilities. Plant material was provided by Southwest Sod and Baseline Trees.

Mike Gausden, West Division Manager of Hunt Construction, one of the major contributing businesses, said suppliers and vendors like Ewing contributed a total of \$300,000 of in-kind materials for the project.

The Dan Haren Miracle League Field's inaugural season began in April. The idea for the field was sparked in 2008 when Los Angeles Angel pitcher Dan Haren (then an Arizona Diamondback) told his father, Dan Haren Sr., that he wanted to do something to benefit the community. Haren Sr. then founded the Miracle League of Arizona with the purpose of giving children with physical and mental challenges the opportunity to play baseball. Though the fundraising efforts were difficult, various community organizations helped the Miracle League raise \$1.7 million for the field in just 3 years. ■

# Advice for maintaining non-turf surfaces



» JAMES CORNELIUS, CSFM

**I**N TODAY'S WORLD of turf management the object of responsibility under one's feet has gone full circle. Long before the turf manager (as known and respected today) evolved, playing surfaces were typically the responsibility of the maintenance department, facility manager, owner, highway department and sometimes the custodial department (with the exception of the golf industry) and many fields were left in a state of despair.

Early in the evolution of today's turf manager their main responsibility was natural turf, with a few exceptions for artificial turf; these modern day turf managers, many from the golf industry, were regarded as leaders in the industry and they were challenged with a true learning curve. Not only did the ball change but the amount of feet on a square foot of turf became astronomical. With the onslaught of the new generation infill turf, the manager's responsibility and continues to grow with no end in sight.

Today our responsibilities range far and wide, from those who manage one or two playing surfaces to those having a multitude of trades to manage and yet we hardly look at what is below our feet. You will find those who are responsible for the turf are also responsible for the tennis courts, driveways, walkways, trails of all sorts, playgrounds, planting beds, retention basins and ponds, and some even building roofs, and a variety of indoor flooring materials from terrazzo to carpet, wood to vinyl and more. The knowledge or lack of

how each of these surfaces is constructed, maintained, affected and reacts is mind boggling and very broad much like natural turf depending on the climate. What may work or is available in the South may or may not work in the North, etc.

Dealing with the responsibilities of a manmade hard surface is not much different than a natural turf field, yet there are huge differences that make a difference. In natural turf we attempt to reduce compaction at all levels from construction to the end use, in manmade hard surfaces we want as much compaction that is possible and then some. Natural turf is a living environment, manmade hard surfaces are not. We paint natural turf for events as we do with some manmade hard surfaces. All surfaces require maintenance and care to survive the expected life span, although a good well designed, constructed natural turf field can last multiple generations or centuries manmade hard surfaces will not survive near as long.

Here is some advice about maintaining some different surfaces from my more than 30 years in business:

## TENNIS COURTS

The typical foundation of most hard surface (not clay or grass) tennis courts is an asphalt base with sports surface applied and the systems available are far and wide as are the colors. They are multi layered, single component, compound component, etc. Like most things the uneducated users and the environment are the worst enemies; in cold regions the frost can lift net bases, and expansion/contraction, if not considered, will tear the sports surface. The surface needs to be compatible with the base system that allows water to infiltrate the layers; any separations, splits, holes, etc. need to be addressed immediately to prevent further damage.

Water lying on the courts (aka "bird baths") can discolor the surface or worst get between the base and top surface creating bubbles and/or wear areas that are not easily repaired. Once bird bathing occurs it requires more extensive costly repairs un-

less caught during construction. The surface will need to be recoated or refreshed depending on the wear and the environment.

Maintenance procedures should involve removing puddles and/or ponds of water as soon as possible, keeping the surface free of trash, leaves, food residues and all sport drinks and sodas as most of these will mark, bleach or stain the playing surface. In areas where cold weather and frost are persistent net tension should be released to prevent stress on the net posts, this will reduce the effects of frost heave.

Fencing around the courts if not maintained securely will begin to bow and stretch due to athletes leaning, striking and running into it. Most tennis courts have wind screening attached to the fencing and this should be done with breakaway ties (allows wind screen to break loose of fence) to prevent high wind damage by the added wind shear load from the added wind screens. Fence rails and gates are notorious places for yellow jackets to build nests and will need to be treated, removed or prevented to protect the users from stings. Gates should be installed to swing out to prevent damage to the playing surface, hinges should be adjusted annually or as needed and gate latches should be aligned and kept in good working order.

Cost estimate: One complete "new" court with fence, asphalt, concrete, nets and playing surface, \$27,300-\$34,100. Renovation of one court surface with no fencing or netting \$39.00-\$45.70 per square yard

## WOODEN BASKETBALL FLOORS

These come in a variety of materials from natural maple tongue and groove, oak (yellow and white) tongue and groove to the newer engineered wood fiber materials. Most of these floors are installed on sleepers over concrete some having ventilation between the layers and some without. Natural wood floors are typically finished with an oil base epoxy or the newer latex based single and dual part epoxy finishes.

Installation of these floors requires that

moisture be non-existent in the concrete and use of a vapor barrier is recommended before installing the sleeper system on which you mount the floor. Once installation of the floors is complete and sanded smooth lines required for the end users are typically painted with a material to match the future finish. To obtain the best results the flooring must be dust free before applying the finish. Multiple coats will be required to protect the natural wood from liquid spills, cleaning practices and the daily usage.

It is crucial that during construction of the sleepers that adequate support be built in for the retractable bleacher sections if being installed or are already present.

The new pre-engineered wood floors are installed using the same techniques but have a higher tolerance for moisture between it and the concrete.

Maintenance procedures include daily dry mopping to remove trash, dust and debris. Wet or damp mopping (some finish manufacturers require or recommend that no water be used and will supply one of their water free cleaners) as needed to clean up spills and liquids, during heavy use times a disinfectant would be recommended using daily.

Annual screening (abrasive screens typically used under pads of a scrubbing machine) to remove the top layer of finish and provide a scuffed layer for new layers of finish to be applied.

Sanding off all the finish is rarely needed unless there is damage repairs done to the existing flooring or if new lines are required due to rules changes, mascot design changes, etc.

Cost estimate: Depending on the type of floor Polyethylene rolls begin around \$4.29 per square foot to the ½-inch thick wooden maple floor at approximately \$10.10 per square foot.

### ASPHALT DRIVEWAYS

Asphalt driveways and parking lots are the second most used surfacing in the world, even though they vary in color or materials used to produce it they are typically stone, shells, and tar epoxy mixture that requires a lot of attention. If the sub soils and stone base are not properly com-

pacted and constructed the finish material will not survive the torture that today's vehicles and end users. Vehicles get heavier, their numbers are increasing daily and most are not constructed to help balance the weight and distribute it evenly across the wheels. These surfaces are susceptible to all of the weather from sun, rain, snow, sleet, freeze and thaw that Mother Nature dishes out.

Line painting is typically done with either a latex or petroleum based paint and can be very time consuming and labor intensive and like the asphalt is susceptible to all the weather even during the installation process, too hot and the paint dries too fast, too cold and it doesn't adhere, moisture or high humidity present and the drying time increases or worst yet a quick storm moves in and washes it off (if using latex paint)

Then there is the aesthetics that have to be dealt with, when asphalt is first installed it typically has a rich color mostly black (some areas of the country it is red or brown) and as it ages the color wears off the top surface, this aging/wear process is natural since it is next to impossible to keep the stone coated with the binding agent that is used. Most people drive across the roads unaware of the color, and yet many demand that their driveways and parking lots be recoated unaware that this is only a temporary fix to the discoloring. Recoating only minimally repairs the fine cracks which will come back each year and get bigger as each year passes, these cracks are typical of the expansion and contraction that the asphalt goes through each year and in many areas this occurs several times a day every day of the year.

Maintenance procedures. Although there is little to no daily or monthly maintenance there are tasks that need to be done from time to time. For example, line painting when needed or requested; recoating to give an aesthetically pleasing appearance; patching heavily alligator areas by removing the wearing course, sometimes the base and compacting new material back in.

Cost estimate: Typical driveway construction of a 6-inch stone base, 2-inch binder course with a 1-inch topping or wearing course will average approximately \$2.04 per square foot.

### CONCRETE WALKWAYS

Concrete walks can be costly to install properly and yet easy to maintain, the biggest problem with them is found in the cold regions where frost heave and road salt plays havoc on the structural integrity of them. Without a proper stone base and good drainage the walks will lift during the winter season and sometimes they don't settle back or they settle too deep causing tripping hazards for those who use them.

Road salt will eat at the surface and cause pitting and spalling creating an unsightly surface as well as an uneven one. Many architects today require that all joints be sealed with a caulk and this can cause problems as well. When joints are sealed (typically with a butyl caulk) it traps moisture and does not allow for release when the concrete begins to heat up, this in turn creates a condensate that during the winter freeze can cause fracturing of the concrete slabs from the underneath side.

In the South many owners and contractors paint or stain the concrete with decorative designs and if improper materials are used this can cause the surfaces to become slippery when wet. The painted or stained designs also become problematic when it is time to repair the concrete or if the design becomes damaged.

Maintenance procedures, typically reduced or ignored in average work place; sweeping or blowing debris from them is usually only when needed. Removal of chewing gum and other debris quickly can help to preserve aesthetics. Repairing or replacing sections when the surface becomes pitted, deteriorated, or panels/sections have heaved or sunk will prevent tripping hazards

Cost estimate: Costs vary depending on amount of crushed stone, type of wire, amount of expansion material and the final finish of the product. Ranging from \$3.58-\$9.05 per square foot.

### TRAILS

Trails can vary in types of materials from natural earth, concrete, blacktop, stone/screenings, wood chips, rubber, wood and asphalt shingle leftovers. The most important to remember when constructing and maintaining trails is the objective, the setting and who will be the end users. There



are too many different scenarios to list and explain and is best left to the engineers/architects/designers that designs them, in the case where they are built in house keep in mind that if trails are to be ADA compliant the construction and maintenance should be designed around or with ADA regulations and laws in mind.

Maintenance varies as much as the materials that can be used to make the trails, and yet with all trails (unless true nature trails) some items of concern are removing any/all trash in a timely manner, eliminating, preventing or repairing issues such as pot holes, washouts from storms, fallen trees, branches, and other obstacles that can cause hazards to the users. If the trails are considered ADA compliant then the maintenance may be increased depending on the materials used to construct the trails.

Construction costs as well as maintenance costs vary greatly depending on what materials are used, readily available, and labor that is needed to construct them.

## PLAYGROUNDS

From a single sliding board, a couple swings and maybe a homemade see saw most playgrounds are becoming small cities of intricate and elaborate sections that seem to have no end in sight. With most manufacturers working with professionals to understand how a child develops mentally, physically and socially the equipment has taken on new meaning and new looks. The playgrounds of today are unlike anything that the older generations ever remember, today's equipment has something for everyone and no one is left out, whether the child is an aspiring major league athlete, physically or mentally challenged or bound the equipment today speaks to all.

The construction of these complex structures can be comprised of powder coated metals, recycled plastic lumber, wood, chain, rubber, and a multitude of miscellaneous other materials that make them fun to play on and fun to look at. Whether they are installed by professional,

volunteers or those responsible for maintaining them it is most important to follow the manufacturer's instructions and understand the importance of safety guidelines when combining equipment. All construction projects should be inspected by a certified National Playground Safety Inspector (NPSI) prior to being used. In many cases the equipment manufacturer has at least one if not several staff members with NPSI certification who should be able to help with initial layout to prevent unforeseen costs if not properly installed. All installations should be done in accordance with the most current CPSC and ASTM regulations and guidelines.

The protective safety surfacing used in the fall zone of these systems is almost as broad as the configurations of the units, from stone, sand, wood chips, engineered wood fibers, chipped rubber, shredded rubber, safety matting, rolled matting, poured in place vinyl/rubber matting, and now syn-

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## BUILDING YOUR BRAND *via*



**R**enowned author and business speaker Tom Peters' article "The Brand Called You" for *Fast Company* from 1997 is a seminal piece in building your personal brand, and business schools. Fortune 500 companies pay vast sums of money to Peters to help their students and employees achieve new heights. Almost 14 years later, the basic tenet remains the same: take what major companies have been doing effectively for decades, and replace the company, logo, tagline, etc. with... YOU. With today's social media tools and other cost-effective methods, developing and marketing Brand You has never been easier.

Just hearing the words "personal brand" turns most people off. What does a sports turf manager need a personal brand for anyway? Who actually has time to build a personal brand? With all of the privacy concerns floating about, why would I put myself out there on social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn? I can't answer those questions for any sports turf manager specifically, but I can tell you this: social media is here to stay, and if you don't get started, you're simply delaying the inevitable.

But you need to approach building your brand through social media with a plan. There are some excellent resources online that can be found by simply searching "building your personal brand" online. I have also provided a list of useful websites and links to check out. But here, I will try and give you a basic roadmap to building your brand via social media.

First and foremost, you must get permis-

sion from your employer. Everything I'm about to tell you requires you to be honest with those who take in your content, and if your employer isn't on board with it, do not proceed. However, you can make your employer see that by writing a blog, tweeting about a challenge you're experiencing on the job, or simply passing on pertinent information to an audience relevant to your organization, you are extending the reach of the company brand while doing the same with Brand You.

In order to effectively do this, you must pick the social platforms relevant to your customers, clients or your business. The varied constituencies that you as a sports turf manager must deal with (parents, coaches, athletes, school boards, etc.) mean that you have to create your own audience, and do so proactively. For most sports turf managers, that would be Twitter and Facebook. Commercial companies likely would include

LinkedIn in the discussion. Google+ is a very young platform, but likely will have some relevancy going forward, so keep an eye on it. All of these are very simple sites to join, usually only requiring an email address and name to get started. Being in the right social arena allows you to gather the most followers in your desired area (customers, friends, etc.) and provide them with the most relevant information.

### **Speaking of relevancy, ALWAYS BE RELEVANT!**

Speaking of relevancy, ALWAYS BE RELEVANT! This is how you keep an audience engaged and coming back to you for more information, in essence becoming the expert on a topic. By using Twitter and Facebook to post the field conditions after inclement weather, you're not only relevant to all of the parents trying to schedule their families' lives; you can become a resource for your employer outside of their own website or call-in line.

Posting links to white papers on mowing, fertilizer or water use is pertinent to sports turf managers, but also are of interest to anyone who tends to their own lawn and now extends your brand beyond just your athletic field. Local reporters and other news mediums constantly monitor social media outlets for stories, so if you've got one to tell, share it. I can almost guarantee that your employer will not be unhappy with you garnering positive press for your organization.

This leads to becoming an asset for your organization. As an asset, both to the company and to yourself, you increase your cross functional capabilities and your job stability. As Lisa Barone, Chief Brand Officer for Outspoken Media says, "It's not about being there 9 to 5, it's about figuring out how you can bring the most value to the company you work for and then putting that idea into action."

I'm not telling you to go blog about

### **Search these terms for more information:**

- ⊙ Lisa Barone Get Over Yourself and Start Building Your Personal Brand
- ⊙ Bruce Clay How to Build Your Brand While Working for Someone Else (also a Lisa Barone blog post)
- ⊙ Fast Company Building the Brand Called You (also Tom Peters Building the Brand Called You)

every detail of your workday, or hop on Twitter immediately and start checking in on Foursquare everywhere you go. Simply become a content generator that your company and constituencies can rely on for a steady stream of reliable, useful information.

Building your personal brand through social media doesn't have to take hours outside of your job. A common phrase in social media is, "The art of Twitter is in the re-tweet." Passing on relevant tweets is a quick and easy way to stay in front of your audience with relevant info. Another timesaver is using a program like TweetDeck to manage multiple accounts and post in different places with one click. TweetDeck links your Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts all in one, easy-to-use dashboard. However, creating original content is always the best way to keep your audience engaged. Allot a block of time and come up with some short blog posts, tweets or Facebook posts and save them in one place. That way, you have some original content in the can that can be

posted when you're short on time.

My last point is that there can be a dark side to being the face of an organization's online community. At some point, you will invariably come across a very loud complainer about something that you or your organization has done. Always, and I mean ALWAYS, take the high-road when dealing with someone like this. Never get into an argument because everything you post, tweet, or share is recorded for posterity. However, this also presents a unique opportunity for you and your group. If you can, in a timely and effective manner, reduce or eliminate their level of unhappiness, you can create what people in marketing call a "brand evangelist." These are people who, when you and/or your employer are under attack next time, will valiantly come to your defense, without you even asking. They will write letters to the editor about your environmental practices, help you out by chatting with coaches or administrators on your behalf to help get you more resources and

always be in your corner if there is a crisis beyond your control.

Using social media to build your brand, and by extension the brand of your employer, is an exciting and fun way to create a dialogue with your user groups, especially when that dialogue might be one of the only ways you have access to those groups when other marketing options are not available to individuals (ads in magazines, radio, TV, etc.). Being timely, relevant and honest with information allows you to stay ahead of problems, thus becoming an asset to your company and your community. Not only does this provide you with a sense of accomplishment and contribution, but it also gives your employer another positive outlet to their most important stakeholders- the user groups they rely on for organizational security. ■

*Patrick Allen is the Sales and Marketing Manager for STMA. He can be found online by following @rockchalkpa on Facebook and on LinkedIn. His opinions here are his own.*



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**1 What is your company's primary business? (check ONLY ONE)**

- F ☐ Sports Complex G ☐ Athletic Field and/or Park Architect/Designer  
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H ☐ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**2 Which of the following best describes your title? (check ONLY ONE)**

- A ☐ EXECUTIVE/ADMINISTRATOR — President, Owner, Partner, Director, General Manager, Chairman of the Board, Purchasing Agent, Athletic Director  
B ☐ MANAGER/SUPERINTENDENT — Superintendent, Landscape/Ground Maintenance Manager, Foreman, Supervisor  
C ☐ GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL — Government Commissioner, Agent, Other Government Official  
D ☐ SPECIALIST — Architect, Designer, Consultant, Agronomist, Horticulturist, Certified Specialist  
F ☐ COACH E ☐ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**3 Do you have the authority to buy, specify or recommend products and/or services for your business or organization?**

- Y ☐ Yes N ☐ No

**4 Yearly operating expenditures (excluding salaries)**

- F ☐ Over \$1 million C ☐ \$50,001 - \$100,000  
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World Class Athletic Surfaces	35	<a href="http://www.worldclasspaints.com">www.worldclasspaints.com</a>

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thetic turf with crumb rubber infill they all require maintenance and special care.

The following is a brief description and all maintenance should be done in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations and guidelines.

Daily inspections of the playground area is advised as after hour users can leave an array of debris (bottles, cans, trash, etc.) that can become hazardous to identified user. This is also a good time to correct any damages or movement of the surfacing if it a loose-fill material that moves with usage of the equipment (under swings, bottom of slides, etc.)

Monthly inspections for excessive wear, loose hardware, cracked plastics, swing

chain wear, "S" hook openings is recommended by almost all manufacturers and should be done by a competent individual who has been shown what to look for.

Annual inspections should be done similar to the monthly inspections but in more detail. This is a great time to take care of touch up painting, replenishing the safety surfacing (loose-fill if organic material), replacement of swing chains if required, etc.

Cost estimate: The cost of equipment is reflected in the size of the pieces and the complexity of the unit. Equipment costs can range from a couple hundred dollars to thousands of dollars with installation costing anywhere from 50% - 100% of the equipment costs.

Operating or maintenance costs is purely represented by what materials are used for both the equipment and the safety fall zone, wooden structures with loose-fill surfacing will demand more maintenance weekly, monthly and annually then a powder coated steel structure installed over a pour-n-place or rigid surfacing (tiles, synthetic turf, matting, etc.).

Cost estimate prices were obtained from the 2006 RSMeans Building Construction Cost Data within the Philadelphia region and should in no way be considered current or used for budgeting purposes. ■

*James Cornelius, CSFM, now works for Fisher and Son, Coatesville, PA after a long career with the West Chester School District.*