

development of the paint mixing system, we determined that while the 10 gpm pump would be enough to keep the paint in suspension in the tank, it was not capable of efficiently transferring paint from a barrel to the tank. After discussing the situation with our pump supplier, we determined that a 20 gpm pump should do the job.

The system we designed has worked very well for many years now. We used the frame of an old three point hitch spray rig with a 110 gallon tank. Everything was removed from the frame except the tank. The diaphragm pump and engine combination was mounted. Attached to the outlet side of the pump are two, one inch pressure hoses. One hose is plumbed into the mixing tank to provide paint circulation and agitation. One pressure hose is an open ended coil with an inline ball valve. This hose is used to fill the stripers with diluted paint in the field. Two suction hoses tee into the inlet side of the pump. Each two inch hose has an inline ball valve.

One hose is attached to the bottom of the paint mixing tank and the other is an open ended coil to be dropped into the 55-gallon barrel to transfer the paint into the mixing tank. When we transfer paint from the barrel to the mixing tank, the ball valve on the open ended hose is opened after the hose is inserted into the barrel. Then the ball valve on the hose from the mixing tank is closed. This creates the suction needed to pull the undiluted paint into the mixing tank. While the undiluted paint is transferring, we are adding 55 gallons of water to the mixing tank to achieve our 1:1 dilution. When the barrel is emptied of paint, we rinse the barrel with water and continue transferring this residual paint rinse to the mix tank. When the barrel is empty, we open the ball valve on the mixing tank suction hose and close the ball valve on the open ended hose. This begins the paint mixing and agitation process. By the time the crew arrives at the first stop, the paint is mixed and ready for use.

The paint mixing tank is mounted in the front of a 24-foot enclosed gooseneck trailer. There is a walk through door on the passenger side near the tank and a fold down ramp in the rear of the trailer for stripers and other equipment loading. We installed cabinets, tool racks, tool boxes, trimmer and blower brackets and loaded the trailer with all the equipment necessary for Jim and his crew to take care of the routine maintenance on all their fields. The trailer is towed by a crew cab truck so there is plenty of room for transporting the crew.

This bulk paint system is just one of many creative labor and cost saving ideas developed by the Blue Valley grounds crew. Many thanks to John Peterman, Jim Wilson and all the members of our crew for their creativity and innovative thinking. ■

*Jody Gill, CSFM, is the Grounds Coordinator, Blue Valley Schools, Overland Park, KS.*

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# Raising a family in the sportsturf industry

» Below: **BRANDON PUTNAM**, sports turf manager for the York (PA) Revolution, proposes to his girlfriend, Megan, during the 7th inning stretch of a game this summer. The team's marketing department set up a phony promotion where three female contestants were told a gift certificate was under one of the bases. Megan was asked to stand in at second base for a "no-show" contestant. The grounds crew removed first base and then third to show there was no gift certificate. That's when Brandon knelt, pulled out the ring, and proposed at second base. By the way, Brandon also won the Atlantic League's Field of the Year award.



**I**N OUR EVENT DRIVEN INDUSTRY, we have all had our share of holidays, birthdays and anniversaries that were missed due to employment obligations. After a 35+ year career in this business, I can honestly say that I've missed a few family life events that have me wishing I could be a time traveler. Unfortunately, missing your daughter's prom or your son's birthday is a memory that can't be restored. Our trade requires us to miss a lot of family events and your main goal should be to minimize the emotional hit the family takes when you can't attend those sentimental occasions. There is really no simple recipe that will allow you to obtain a perfectly balanced lifestyle in a sportsturf career but there are things we can do to ease the emotional impact to help our families cope.

Many of the turf managers I talk with are planning to wait until they are 30+ before tying the knot.

As the baby boomers begin to retire, the next generation is growing and developing their own lifestyles to deal with marriage and children. Long gone are the traditional breadwinner type families where mom stays at home to raise the kids. Back in the early 1900's, the average age at which men tied the knot was 25.9 years while women married at an average of 22 years. In my daughter's *Bride Magazine* it states that today women are waiting until their 27 years old and 29 for men. I can only imagine this trend will continue to rise considering the current economic climate. Many of the turf managers I talk with are planning to wait until they are 30+ before tying the knot.

## HELPING FAMILY UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU DO

Spouse or partner selection and the timing of when to have children is a process that is part planning, faith and luck. If the parenting experience takes place in your life, it's important to make sure each person in your family unit understands what you do at your job. Communication as to what is



planned and expected of you shouldn't be a mystery. Pick a day each week to talk about schedules as a group so everyone knows where you will be. Talk about what the kids are doing, etc. Informing the family that you have a 10-game home stand or a turf conference coming up is better than hearing about it the day it starts. Even though you may be the head of the household doesn't mean everything revolves around your schedule.

Being open to hearing everyone's agenda really helps. Sharing goals and dreams with your life partner from the onset is crucial to the building blocks of a family and a solid sportsturf career. Understanding that you can achieve more goals by living and working together takes on a whole new meaning when everyone's on the same page.

I recall taking a position in West Palm Beach after we had just moved from Virginia to Pennsylvania. There was a brief discussion that I would go ahead of the family and set up our home and they would follow a few months later. I just couldn't see that happening and since the kids were still underage and not in school, it was a logical decision to move the entire family at once. We have all witnessed someone that took a job in another state and left their families behind and in most cases the person has no choice because they couldn't afford to move everyone right away or perhaps they didn't want to disrupt the school year as older kids have a much harder time moving and leaving friends. These decisions need to be weighed carefully because it is difficult on everyone when the family is separated. However, if you have a great network of friends and family nearby, it helps manage life's ups and downs a lot easier. As your family grows with your career, developing relationships with your spouse and children should not be secondary, but rather a part of your success.

When reviewing the family's weekly schedule, try to pinpoint and talk about things to look forward to. At family meetings:

- Give them your full attention. We are all great multi-taskers but during this time you need to live the moment and stay 100% focused on their needs.
- Turn off your cell phones, the TV, etc.
- Don't make promises you can't keep, especially with children. (To this day my kids ask me when I'm going to buy the Sea-Dos I promised when we moved to Florida.)
- Don't focus on planning for holidays or occasions you can't attend but rather the ones you can and make them really special.
- In our line of work we are always developing contingency plans just in case the first plan falls apart. You should do the same when planning your family events, especially if you're in the middle of the sports season and your work schedule fluctuates.

### BE FLEXIBLE

Our jobs have trained us to be very flexible. Our event schedules can change like the weather. Turf managers are trained to react quickly and efficiently to keep the game rolling. Use the same approach at home and you will reap the benefits. Understanding everyone has schedules and yours is not the only one will build trust that you are trying your hardest to be with the family.

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The Cook family at the Athens Olympics: Megan, Cameron, Scott, Murray and Donna.

You also need to understand that with kids, things can change very quickly. As soon as you think things are under control junior breaks an arm and all you can do is to be flexible and go with it. You are the parent that is responsible so imagine it's a rain delay and get the job done.

It's also important to take that kind of approach when you can't complete a project at home or fail to finish that "honey do" list. Whatever you were supposed to do but couldn't because of your employment you need to find a way to forgive yourself. One of the



Murray's daughter, Kate, painting a logo in Mexico.

greatest wastes of emotional energy is the feeling of guilt and no one can make you feel guiltier than your family. Everyone experiences feelings of guilt. This is where logic comes into play. Accepting the fact that you missed your daughter's music recital is the first step towards a positive outcome. Again if you have those weekly family meetings, she knows you planned to be there and that something came up that wouldn't allow you to make it.

One tip that has helped me feel less guilty when I couldn't attend a particular event is to leave a card in a place where you know they will look such as in a purse, clarinet case or above the visor in the car. It becomes a game for your family to see where you hide the cards when you can't be there, but more importantly it's letting your family know that you were thinking of them.

## ESTABLISHING BOUNDARIES

The social media explosion over the past few years has allowed us to communicate with ease. We can tweet, Skype, SMS, MMS, Facebook, MySpace, IM, AIM, Meebo, our families instantly. We can use these wonderful medias to keep up with family activities as they unfold throughout the day however the down side is it also opens up more ways for friends and peers to contact you. I do quite a bit of work internationally, so for the family to see me tapping away on my Blackberry at night or weekends is pretty common.

It's tough to do but everyone needs to create personal and professional boundaries. You need to decide what are acceptable and unacceptable actions that you will allow from others as it relates to using your time. This is a huge step in taking charge of your life. Everyone needs to set boundaries or limits so people will respect you. For example not taking cell calls during family dinner is no different than turning your phone off during a 2-hour movie in the theater. Which is more important? I would say the family dinner. Everyone knows how to say "no" and respecting those boundaries is a personal and professional reflection on you.

Our industry requires that we hold ourselves to high standards. Finding the balance of what you will accept via compromise in all facets with your spouse, kids, job etc. is needed but be mindful that personal standards are about who you are and when you lower them it can be a reflection on you as well.

You need personal time so get organized. Try to delegate responsi-

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bility to others at your work. To many times we see where young turf managers believe they need to water the clay, drag the infield and mow the grass themselves. Many times we feel there's more control if we can do everything. Unfortunately while you are performing all of these tasks, you are burning up time to use for other personal and professional goals.

Delegating duties by developing a work plan and keeping to it is building trust in your staff. One of the work plans we have used in our home over the years is the "official" kitchen calendar. It has everything on it from birthdays to travel schedules, appointments, etc. In fact, it has become somewhat of a family diary of events that is great to look back on as the kids get older. Just remember, being successful at your job doesn't mean you need to be a workaholic.

Delegate and educate.

### FIND RELIABLE CHILDCARE

Outside of your spouse we turn to extended family such as grandparents, uncles' aunts to help watch the kids. If not them, you will need to find someone that you are extremely comfortable with to care for your children. If you attend a church it's a great first step to finding childcare options. Remember children are pretty smart so even if you are not pleased with the child sitting arrangement, don't show it or let your kids see it because they will pick up on the negative vibes. Now the guilt sets in, so step back look at the situation logically and



From left to right: Cameron Cook, Murray Cook, and Scott Cook, in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

positively and makes a decision. Sometimes it's better to make a change than do nothing.

During this holiday season take the time to attend those important events in your family life. If something is important enough, you can probably make time for it. For a New Year's resolution, start out the year with a plan to bring harmony and balance into your lifestyle because it will lead to both personal and professional rewards at your job and with the family. ■

*Murray Cook, former STMA president, is president of Brickman Sportsturf and the Field & Venue consultant to Major League Baseball.*



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# TAKE THE ANXIETY

## OUT OF GIVING PRESENTATIONS



**WHAT'S SCARIER** to most Americans than spiders, heights, or even death? There hasn't been a horror movie made about it yet, but more than 75% of Americans surveyed report that they suffer from "glossophobia," a debilitating fear of public speaking. Statistically, far more of us claim that we would prefer death to giving a speech; even comedian Jerry Seinfeld used to joke that at a funeral, most people would rather be lying in the casket than delivering the eulogy.

Why is the prospect of trying to communicate information in front of even one person so horrifying? Most glossophobes fear looking bad, being criticized, suffering rejection, and losing business or friends, all because they are certain they will forget what they'd planned to say. Maybe you have had the experience of forgetting a speech or presentation, or you've seen it happen to someone else, and you don't want it to happen to you. Ever.

Most people memorize speeches by word-for-word repetition and try to deliver it exactly as they've written it. You probably don't realize that this method of learning is actually setting you up to forget what you're supposed to say because it creates tremendous stress, which is in turn the number one killer of memory.

Or if you do manage to remember every single word you'd planned to say, the effort requires so

much mental energy that you come off as a terrible communicator. You're not really there while you're speaking because all of your efforts go into remembering what comes next. If, heaven forbid, something distracts you, or someone interrupts you with a question during a memorized presentation, thinking about anything other than "What comes next?" can throw you completely off-track. Your mind may literally go blank, just as you feared.

And there's one more problem with word-for-word learning: 93% of our communication happens non-verbally. The majority of the message your audience receives has very little to do with the actual words you say but with body language, tone of voice, gestures, and facial expressions. So you can't expect to convey ease and expertise non-verbally if your mental and physical energies are completely preoccupied with delivering a verbatim speech. You'll simply be too tense, and it will show.

What about the security blanket of an outline or notes? You may feel you need notes to stay on track when giving a presentation, but if you're tied to those notes, you aren't free to make eye contact, a key element of non-verbal communication. You'll also be stuck behind a podium, and if people can't see two-thirds of your body, that has a serious impact on the 93% non-verbal communication aspect of your presentation. Notes may make you feel a little better, but they also take away a crucial tool for your effectiveness.

If you're fluent in your topic, you shouldn't need to consult your notes, and your audience of one or many will sense this on a subconscious level. However, if you feel you must use notes, consult them very little or not at all, and you'll gain huge credibility as an expert.

When you know what you're going to say and that your presentation is strong, public speaking may still be a little nerve-racking, but it's exciting, too. Try these tips to help turn that stomach-turning anxiety into the rush of great communication.

### → 1. Know what you're talking about.

When you prepare an organized presentation of any kind, you must be knowledgeable about the company, product, or situation. Talk about things you actually know well. If you're not confident that you know all that you need to, commit to doing thorough research and learn what

you need to know to feel and look expert. If you truly don't know what you're talking about, it will show, and all the tricks and techniques in the world won't help.

→ 2. **Decide on a few key points.** Good keynote speakers typically don't have more than three or four key things for the audience to take away from their presentations. The classic presentation formula is a story that makes the audience laugh in the beginning, a few key points for them to take away (usually illustrated with stories), followed by an emotionally moving story at the end.

Another basic formula for effective communication is to tell your audience what you're going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you told them.

→ 3. **Create visual triggers.** Invent pictures in your mind and "store" them in various places around the room where you'll deliver the presentation. The pictures then become your speech.

For example, if one of your points is about achieving goals, you can envision a set of goal posts as a visual representation of that concept.

→ 4. **Relax, have fun and be you.** People respond best to a message when the person delivering it is genuine. With sufficient preparation of the right type, you'll feel comfortable enough to be yourself in front of a group. You can then demonstrate how much you believe in what you're saying. When you can relax and be an authentic human being, you tap into powerful communication.

You've undoubtedly heard a few presentations both good and bad, so you know it's a fact: you listen to and respect those speakers who talk to you, not at you. A conversation is always better than a lecture, isn't it? When you are preparing to make a presentation, know that people don't mind if you stumble over a couple of words; in most cases they don't even notice. What they will notice, though, and mind a great deal, is being read to or BS'd. If your audience feels as if you're insincere or unknowledgeable, they may give you real reason to be a glossophobe! But if you're prepared, knowledgeable, and relaxed, you can expect to get the results you want. ■

Roger Seip's company, *Freedom Speakers and Trainers*, specializes in memory training. [www.deliverfreedom.com](http://www.deliverfreedom.com).



Background illustration courtesy of istockphoto.com



# JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ

John Mascaro is President of Turf-Tec International

*Can you identify this sports turf problem?*

**Problem:** Irregular brown areas, some in straight lines

**Turfgrass area:** FirstEnergy Stadium

**Location:** Reading, PA

**Grass Variety:** Kentucky bluegrass

**Answer to John Mascaro's Photo Quiz on Page 33**

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# 10 Tips to Better Crew Training

**Y**OU KNOW THAT TRAINING IS VITAL for the safety and productivity of your crew. Obviously, you instruct your staff about what tasks to do and train them on how to do them. You may pop in a training video occasionally on a rainy day. But, have you developed a formalized crew training program that will improve the effectiveness, efficiency and morale of your staff? If you do not have a program in place, consider these techniques to get the most out of your training time.

**Develop a cross training plan within your team and cross departmentally.** Among life's inevitabilities are employee absences and your having to plan for them. If your staffers are cross-trained, you can quickly plug critical gaps without calling in temporary workers, running up overtime costs, or filling in for the absent worker yourself. Cross training of your crew outside of your team has many benefits, too. It exposes your staff to the responsibilities of other departments, which creates a better understanding and appreciation for that department's efforts. The end result is a lessening of "competitiveness", an increase in camaraderie, an opportunity to share staff during vacations and illnesses, and a focus on achieving the facilities' goals. Your employee retention will increase due to the satisfaction of your crew learning of new tasks. This also can create new job opportunities within your organization.

It's a simple fact that employees fail in their jobs because of an inability to develop a trusting relationship with you and others.

**Consider developing a regular training schedule.** Institutionalize a regular time for formalized training, i.e., the 3rd Monday of every month at 8 a.m. Putting it on the schedule and publicizing it helps you and your team to commit to it.

**Seize the moment.** Training is very effective when it occurs in quick response to a need. So even though you are elbow deep in something else, and you have formal training slotted for a different timeframe, you should make every effort to satisfy an immediate need for information.

**Involve your crew in planning.** People gravitate to what they like and are more engaged if they are involved. Rather than selecting the training topics, ask your crew what they need and what they want to learn. If you have a large crew, consider appointing a small subgroup to bring forward ideas.

**Involve your crew in teaching.** Consider having a different crew member teach a training session each time. It is a fact that peer-taught training is a successful method that helps the trainees to more quickly grasp concepts and apply the learning to their jobs. This is also an excellent professional development exercise for the trainer.

**Use training time for non-technical improvement.** It's a simple fact that employees fail in their jobs because of an inability to develop a trusting relationship with you and others. Building good relationships is a direct result of being able to communicate well. Consider bringing in a speaker from a local community college, the Dale Carnegie chapter or a trainer from a large corporation in your area, to present techniques to your group about how to strengthen their communications skills. Other good topics to consider are improving your writing skills, improving your presentation skills, stress management, the importance of good ethics, etc.

**Create a better work environment through diversity.** Meeting your facilities expectations demands that you incorporate strategies to understand other cultures. Consider hosting brown bag lunches (provide lunch) and have discussion about the various cultures represented on your staff and by your constituencies. Do you have anyone on your crew who is Hispanic? Consider having lunchtime training on learning basic Spanish, taught by these crew members.

**Use demonstration techniques.** When training your crew on a new technique, product

or piece of equipment follow this process:

- Begin the process by having the trainees observe, from alongside, the trainer as the trainer actually performs the job.
- Show the workers how to perform the task and explain the key elements. Be sure to explain why this task must be done, when it is done, why it is important that it be done correctly and the impact if it is not done correctly.
- Allow the workers a second opportunity to watch the trainer to perform the task. The first time through, the trainer was probably not performing the task at the same rate of speed as normal because conversation is interspersed with the demonstration. This second time through, the workers are simply watching so that the trainer can perform the task at "production speed."
- Allow the workers to perform simple elements of the task. In this phase of the instruction, the trainer and trainees are performing the task together with the trainee performing at least some of the task and the trainer coaching as necessary.
- Allow worker to perform the entire task with coaching as necessary from the trainer. Ideally, this is a one-try operation.
- Observe the workers performing the entire task without supervision. For each task, this is the "final test." When each worker can perform the task without supervision, he or she is considered trained.
- Allow workers to perform task without continued supervision. At this point the trainee's training for that particular task has been completed.

**Use your equipment and product suppliers for industry insights.** Of course this group provides a logical, ready-made cadre of trainers for your staff on products and equipment. But, these sales and technical representatives also have a wealth of industry insight. They visit many athletic facilities and see many different aspects of the industry. Invite them to provide an "Industry Insights" session, which should create a lot of discussion.

**Leverage local chapters, university extension programs, STMA annual conference, and other sources of education.** Everyone on your staff will likely not be able attend every educational session offered by KAFMO or STMA national. Hold a brown bag (provide lunch) session and have each person who was able to attend give a short synopsis of what they learned at the external educational event.-Compiled by STMA Headquarters staff ■





Grant Trenbeath  
Head Groundskeeper  
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>> THE UNIFORMITY of a field, in terms of both its appearance and its playability is also dependent upon proper upkeep. Photo courtesy of Gale Associates, Inc., Weymouth, MA

# What facility managers NEED TO KNOW about artificial turf

**O**NE OF THE GREAT THINGS about artificial turf is, well, it's artificial turf. No weeding, no need to rest the field between uses no worries that a lacrosse game on a muddy day is going to tear up the surface. That's not to say, though, that an artificial turf field is the invincible super-hero of sports facilities. Like Superman who wants to avoid Kryptonite, your artificial field has vulnerabilities, and part of being a good manager is being able to keep it safe. Here are some pointers compiled from sports facility construction veterans who have expertise in artificial turf.

## MARCHING ORDERS

While it's traditional for the school's marching band to play during halftime, track builders caution against having the band hold regular practices on the artificial turf field.

"Bands can be hard on a turf field," says David Clapp of Baseline Sports Construction LLC in Knoxville, TN "since you have scores of marchers making sharp turns at exactly the same spot, creating worn and depressed areas. This happened on a field that we built in 2005. The band started using it for practice, and by 2008, we had to go back and patch several of those spots."

Builders advise turfgrass managers to request that marching bands practice in a gym, parking lot or elsewhere and to reserve their field time for games only.

## RUNNING IN PLACE

Another problem for athletic fields? Running exercises or routines that are always held in the same area. Whether it's soccer players running drills, runners

## Biggest foe of all: lack of maintenance

**LACK OF MAINTENANCE** can make a turf field look old and worn before its time. Unfortunately, says Dan Wright of Sports Turf Company, Inc. in Whitesburg, GA too many facility owners assume that like a plastic plant, an artificial turf field requires nothing in the way of upkeep.

"Lack of proper maintenance for the synthetic turf field is one of the biggest problems out there," says Wright. "Contrary to popular belief, a synthetic turf field is not maintenance free. It requires regular brooming to maintain the infill level and to keep the turf fibers looking good."

Food and beverages should not be allowed on the field; both can fall onto the field's surface and soak into or be ground into the infill. It should go without saying that smoking and chew tobacco should similarly be forbidden, but reminders never hurt. Remove all litter and debris from the field (and the area around it) immediately using tools approved by the installer and/or manufacturer. Depending upon the product, such tools may include leaf blowers, soft brooms, rubber-tined rakes, special vacuums, or hands wearing rubber gloves.

Try to remove any spilled material

before it causes a stain. Appropriate cleaning will help break down and remove vomit, blood and other fluids from the surface. (Recommendations on cleaning solutions should be obtained from the installer or manufacturer).

Groom the fibers by brushing them so that they continue to stand upright. If the field is groomed regularly, make sure the grooming pattern is varied in order to keep the fibers standing upright and to prevent patterns of wear.

"Keeping the infill at the specified level ensures optimum safety and performance as well as protecting the fiber. Decompacting the infill by grooming and sweeping helps to keep the infill high on the fiber," says Schedler.

Inspect all seams and edges, check the rubber depth (particularly in high-traffic areas), and ascertain the drainage system is working correctly. In addition, stand back from the field and make sure the markings and lines are all straight; in practice areas for athletic teams (or marching bands), the constant force of turning and pivoting in the same direction can actually twist the turf, making the lines appear crooked.-Mary Helen Sprecher. ■