

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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Outreach committees, wants to return something to the association for the value he receives by being a member. "Foremost is the opportunity to attend the annual conventions, as well as publishing informative articles in *SportsTurf* magazine and the opportunity to network with fellow STMA members," says Schlotthauer. "None of which I would have been able to do if I was not an STMA member. I feel a responsibility to give something back to STMA for what STMA has done for me."

Dan Douglas, who is on the Chapter Relations Committee, echoes Schlotthauer and adds, "Also, working closely with other volunteers that I may not otherwise meet, I am able to expand my network of peers."

Darian Daily, Information Outreach Chair, believes his committee service is like the old saying, "You get out of it what you put into it." Daily says, "I find the more involved I get in working with committees the more I get back personally with knowledge and friendships."

Kevin Meredith, a member of the Information Outreach, Chapter Relations and the Editorial Committees, jumped into national committee service for the first time in 2007. He was not sure he had the time to volunteer. "Not only did it take far less time than I had imagined, the experience was empowering. It was worth the time invested and more rewarding than I ever imagined it would be," says Meredith.

Volunteer service can be an ineffable experience that makes the volunteer "feel good." For others, it provides a sense of ownership and responsibility. Meredith believes sports turf managers should be involved in committee service to help guide the association. "First and foremost, this is our association in the truest sense, which means that the decision makers are us. It is not some other group that determines the direction we will take, it is Sports Turf Managers volunteering and leading us," says Meredith.

STMA has more than 200 members volunteering for committee service, who serve one-year terms from March through January. President Mike Andresen, CSFM will be appointing members to the committees listed below by early March for 2008. Almost all of the committees meet via conference calls several times a year. Please consider volunteering for a committee. Mark your interest on the Committee Volunteer form and return it by February 1 to STMA Headquarters.

STMA Committees

Awards: To judge the association's awards program applicants selecting the Field of the Year winners and the Minor League Baseball Sports Turf Manager of the Year; to develop strategies to enhance the programs.

Bylaws: To develop association bylaws, which are fair and enforceable, and clearly define the expectations for membership, governance processes and board of directors' service.

Certification: To develop strategies to grow the number of certified members; to consistently monitor the program and recommend enhancements to ensure that the program is the top achievement for sports turf managers.

Chapter Relations: To create a chapter structure that is beneficial locally and nationally; to financially assist chapters with their admin-

istrative, operations and educational efforts; to facilitate the sharing of best practices,

Conference: (Conference Education, Exhibition, and Tours sub-committees) To develop all content, sessions, workshops and off-site venues, and select speakers and moderators for the next year's conference that will make it a "must attend" event for members and non-members; to recommend strategies that will drive attendance to the exhibition and will add value to exhibitors.

Editorial: To insure that the STMA magazine contains information relevant to the sports turf manager; to provide ideas and contacts for articles for publication;

Ethics: To provide a fair and unbiased council to investigate claims of ethics violations, determine if the claim has merit, and shepherd the appeals process.

Finance & Audit: To provide oversight of the STMA's financial resources by reporting information to the Board of Directors.

Historical: To preserve the history of the association and the profession

Information Outreach: To develop educational and informational opportunities for members to enhance their personal and professional development.

Membership: To develop initiatives to drive membership growth and retention; to recommend programs that add value for each member.

Nominating: To provide to the membership a qualified slate of officers and directors for the annual STMA Board of Directors election in accordance with the STMA Bylaws.

Scholarship: To judge the SAFE Scholarship recipients; to develop strategies to enhance the program.

Technical Standards: To help determine standards and best management practices needed in the profession and to guide the work of the ASTM on developing sports field and facility standards.

Website: To insure that the STMA website contains information relevant to members, prospects and the green industry in an easily accessible and consumable format.

Student Challenge winners making excellent use of awards

In 2007, the STMA Student Collegiate Challenge winners received some significant prizes through a new partnership with the SAFE Foundation. Each winning 2-year and 4-year team won a prize of \$4,000 to use in developing a hands-on learning lab or to provide other benefits to the students in the program. The winners, the University of Tennessee and Mt. San Antonio College, provided us with an update of what they are doing with their funds.