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TPI Summer Convention Details Available On-Line

To find the latest information about the TPI Summer Convention & Field Days, visit www.TurfGrassSod.org. In addition to a brochure describing the event, you'll find an on-line reservation form for the host hotel Fairmont Palliser, a detailed day-by-day and hour-by-hour schedule of events including information about the Field Day venue Eagle Lake Turf Farms; Calgary, Alberta, Canada; and the Strathmore Rodeo.

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BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Turfgrass Producers International

Mentoring Future Leaders: A Five-Step Communication Accountability Formula!

"There is a story in Arabic which tells of a pupil asking a wise man how he could become a good conversationalist. The sage replied, 'listen, my son.' After waiting a while, the pupil said, 'I am listening. Please continue your instruction.' The sage smiled. 'There is no more to tell.'"—as told by Ali Karakus, Turkish Exchange Student in America

Far too often a communication exchange leaves two people with two different understandings of what was said and what is to be done. It is these miscommunications that can lead to a breakdown in communication connections. Consider this simple five-step communication connection model that is used in executive coaching and in a therapy session between doctor and client to ensure an effective systematic communication connection in business. With your mentor and your "mentee", communicate one step at a time to ensure both sides buy in at each level before progressing onward through to the fifth step.

1. Step One—establish a will to buy in or even enroll in a conversation on the subject matter you are putting forth. If the other party is unwilling to acknowledge and buy into that subject, there will be no communication connection.

2. Step Two—make a connection of the subject matter being raised to the other person's vested interest level. In essence,


his/her identity and purpose should be connected to the subject.

3. Step Three—jointly discuss the various choices the "mentee" is willing to make to ensure that which he/she is enrolling in materializes.

4. Step Four—from this range of choices, for a successful communication connection to materialize there must be at least two action items, which the "mentee" will commit to!

5. Step Five—in order for any communication connection to really take place, both parties need to agree on how to hold all parties accountable to this connection plan of five steps. In other words, how will you know objectively if you are on track, off track, ahead of schedule or behind schedule?

Investing valuable time with another person to grow and develop him/her can be quickly sabotaged if the parties cannot connect communicatively. Studies reveal that one of the leading contributors to organizational dysfunctionality rests at the door of ineffective communication among individuals.

By Jeff Magee, Ph.D., PDM, CSP, CMC, speaker, author and consultant helps individuals and businesses increase their productivity and profitability through managerial-leadership and sales training. Contact him at toll-free 877/90MAGEE or Jeffrey@JeffreyMagee.com or visit 

Passports are Required for ALL Non-Canadian Attendees of the 2008 TPI Summer Convention & Field Day

Now is a good time to begin planning to attend the 2008 TPI Summer Convention & Field Day in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. A good first step is to locate your passport and make sure it is up to date—ideally, its expiration date should be at least six months beyond the event's dates.

If you do not have a passport yet, or need to renew it, you can begin the process on-line by searching for "passport" to find the application forms DS-11 (first time) or DS-82 (renewal) and other requirements. In the U.S., you can use the government service, or pay extra for service companies available on-line to handle and expedite the process.

Taking Care of Business

By Ronnie Moore

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The Good, the Bad, the Ugly: E-mail Communication

Before thinking about how to compose a good e-mail, it's critical to think about whether e-mail is the right vehicle for the communication in the first place. E-mail has become such an integral part of our lives that many of us check it as soon as we get up in the morning, before we reach our destination in the airplane and before we go to bed at night. But the "e" in e-mail means "electronic" *NOT* "everything," so consider the following before going on "e-mail auto-pilot."

E-mail is an effective communications vehicle when:

- ♦ **Simply downloading and uploading information.**

E-mail is the cheapest and fastest way to send and receive information, including text documents, pictures, etc. via attachments. We are no longer dependent on fax machines, couriers and the U.S. mail for the simple exchange of information. This is e-mail at its finest.

- ♦ **You need to reach many people at the same time...often at different locations.**

We work in a telecommute, business travel, global professional world. E-mail, instant messaging, etc. allow us to be in constant and immediate contact with our colleagues, no matter where we are geographically.

- ♦ **The message does not require repeated interaction.**

E-mail's intended expedience and efficiency is compromised when the communication requires discussion. Here's what the "e" trail (e-mail's version of a paper trail) looked like on a communication between Brenda and Alicia:

E-mail #1 (from Alicia to Brenda)

"Brenda, What do you think of the ABC Company as a provider of the computer training we need?"

E-mail #2 (from Brenda to Alicia)

"I don't know much about them, Alicia. What other like companies have they helped with this type of training?"

E-mail #3 (from Alicia to Brenda)

"I don't know. I'll find out. Do you know anything about their curriculum or

trainers?"

E-mail #4 (from Brenda to Alicia)

"I know a little about their approach to adult learning but I don't know anything about their trainers, and that's important because the trainer will make or break even the best curriculum, especially in a subject like this, where it's technical, hands-on and potentially tedious if not presented well.

And so on... It took Alicia and Brenda eight e-mail messages to conclude this communication. If they spent five minutes talking by telephone or in person, they would have been far more expedient and efficient.

E-mail is not effective when:

- ♦ **It is replacing face-to-face communication.**

And here lies the human disconnect. We need to see each other's eyes. We need non-verbal communication. We need to hear someone's voice (even if it's on the phone).

An example: Bob was promoted to management because of his technical skills, knowledge (he's a brilliant engineer) and strong work ethic. The problem, however, is that he was promoted for his ability to perform and manage functions, not people. He never learned how to manage and communicate with others.

Bob was concerned that he was not connecting with his staff even though he sent his "Bob-O-Gram" e-mails throughout the day to his employees. Although his employees were all within 50 feet of him, he chose to "communicate" with them by e-mail.

- ♦ **Conflict needs to be resolved**

We often "say" things via e-mail that we would not say if we were not safely behind the screen. There are several reasons why communicating through conflict should occur in person or at the very least by telephone, but never via e-mail.

Face-to-face communication is a three-channel experience. We send our message with our words (verbal channel), our voice (vocal channel) and our face and body (non-verbal channel). The same words communicated with a pleasant voice versus an angry voice will be received differently. We know

that a smile versus an angry face changes the meaning of our words. The problem communicating during conflict is that we need all three channels; we need to use our words, our voice and our face and body congruently to ensure that our intended message is received. When we use the telephone, we lose the third channel (the non-verbal channel) and now we are dependent on our words and voice only.

Our listener can't see our face and body to get a more reliable idea of what we really mean. In fact, one of the first things that telephone skills training teaches is that if you provide customer service via telephone, you must get in the habit of smiling as you answer the phone. Your listener/customer can't SEE your smile so your listener must HEAR your smile.

The problem worsens when you try to resolve conflict by communicating via e-mail. Now you're down to only one channel without a voice or a face or body language, that creates a big potential for misunderstanding because the person with whom you share the conflict, the person to whom you're sending your e-mail, can not hear you or see you and must judge your true meaning and intent by your words only.

- ♦ **Communicating private/proprietary information.**

The term "private e-mail" is usually an oxymoron, especially in the workplace. Within most companies' e-mail guidelines is the fact the employer can read anyone's e-mails at any time. Generally, employees can be held responsible for e-mails they originate or forward.

Before hitting the "send" button, consider whether your e-mail could be used against you in matters of discipline, termination, etc. Anything racist, sexist or sexual should not originate from or be forwarded from an employee's e-mail account. Save the questionable stuff, the personal stuff, for your personal e-mail account.

Well-formatted, clear, concise e-mail text is critical for getting our messages read and getting the responses we need. But before you think about what you're going to communicate in that e-mail, make sure e-mail is the best way to go.



Safety Management

What to Do if You Have a Serious Accident

An employee jumps off a forklift while it is still moving. He is seriously injured, but escapes being crushed to death. Another worker who is wearing loose clothing loses his arm after his shirt sleeve gets caught in a rapidly moving power takeoff unit (PTO) shaft. A third employee who is driving too fast for conditions is severely injured when his truck-trailer tips over on the wet roadway.

These incidents are among the many examples of accidents that could occur at your turfgrass sod operation. It only takes a split second for an accident to happen, and both the financial and the "human" costs may be enormous. It's important to have procedures in place for investigating accidents when they do occur. Be sure to share these procedures with all supervisors, other managers and employees. Here are a few basic tips:

- ♦ Put your accident investigation procedures into writing, and develop forms that can be used when an accident does occur. (*Note: We will provide you with some sample forms—as well as other sample safety-related policies—in future issues of Safety Management.*)
- ♦ Require employees to promptly report all accidents, including property damage accidents and "close calls."
- ♦ Train your employees so they know what steps to take when an accident does occur. Be sure to train them in a language and manner they understand.
- ♦ Keep a written record of all accident investigations. You may need these records down the road (if, for example, you later face a lawsuit from an injured person or his/her family). Be sure your records include the times and dates of any corrective actions aimed at preventing a similar incident in the future.

Accident Investigation DO's and DON'Ts

— DO:

- ♦ Look for the cause(s) of all accidents to reduce the risk of similar occurrences in the future.
- ♦ Train your key supervisors/managers in how to gather evidence during an accident investigation.
- ♦ Document in writing all corrective actions that are taken. Also, keep good written records of all interviews conducted as part of the accident investigation.

— DON'T:

- ♦ Be satisfied with just the obvious or surface cause of an accident. Dig deeper than that to look for the true root cause.
- ♦ Panic or get angry when an accident does occur. Instead, calmly begin investigating the incident, using your company's accident investigation procedures.
- ♦ Turn all accident investigations solely over to law enforcement officials, your insurer or anyone else. Remain an active participant and conduct your own independent investigation.

Accident Investigation Checklist

- ✓ Develop written accident investigation procedures and train all employees in these procedures.
- ✓ Assign overall responsibilities for accident investigations. For

example, will the supervisor of an injured employee be responsible for the investigation? Or, will you as the company owner take it upon yourself?

- ✓ Keep easy-to-follow accident investigation forms/reports in all trucks and other vehicles.
- ✓ Prioritize the steps that must be taken when an accident occurs. Share these priorities with all employees. Your priorities should include attending to any injured persons first.
- ✓ Don't disturb the scene of an accident unless absolutely necessary to remove an injured person or to eliminate a hazard.
- ✓ Train your workers in the following: a) Don't move an injured person unless he or she is in danger; b) Stay calm, and call 911 for police or professional emergency medical assistance when needed; c) Block off the scene of an accident, whenever possible, to keep others from being injured.
- ✓ Interview any witnesses to an accident as soon as possible. This is important because they might forget details later on or their "stories" may change. Try to get signed witness statements.
- ✓ Make use of all available resources to assist you with accident investigations. (*Note: We will give you more tips on interviewing accident witnesses in future issues of Safety Management.*)

"Hidden" Costs of an Injury Accident

Editor's note: An accident that results in an employee injury can be extremely costly. While your insurer may pick up some of these costs—such as the costs of medical treatment and lost wages—there are many other "hidden" costs that you, the turfgrass sod producer, will likely pay out of your pocket. These indirect or hidden costs are often four or more times greater than the insured costs. And, of course, if you don't have insurance to cover the incident, the total costs can be prohibitive.

Here are some examples of the often hidden costs of a serious employee injury:

- ♦ Costs associated with the need to train (or to recruit, train and hire) a replacement employee.
- ♦ Costs of time spent by managers and administrative staff in processing insurance claims, talking with insurers, interviewing the injured employee, following up with his or her physician and performing other related tasks.
- ♦ Decreased productivity and/or a decrease in the quality of work while the injured worker is away from work.
- ♦ Medical costs not covered by insurance. These may include such items as traveling to and from a rehabilitation facility, replacement labor while the injured employee is at a rehabilitation session and reduced productivity during that time.
- ♦ Potential loss of a good customer due to decreased quality or a failure to get the work completed on time.
- ♦ Potential government penalties, lawsuits or other legal action, as well as attorneys' costs, especially if the injury could have been prevented.
- ♦ Increases in insurance premiums.
- ♦ Reduced morale of other employees, particularly if this is not your company's first injury accident.

- ♦ Negative publicity for your company, should the incident result in death or otherwise receive media attention.

Chock Those Wheels!

TPI members can often learn valuable lessons from the safety-related experiences of those in other industries. Here is one example: A distribution center employee was inspecting tractor-trailers as they were leaving the company's property. He had just inspected the inside of an empty trailer when the driver of the truck began having trouble closing the door. A second tractor-trailer was parked 10 to 15 feet behind the first vehicle. When the second driver jumped out to offer assistance, his rig began rolling.

The two drivers were able to get out of the way, but the employee performing the inspections had his back turned to the rolling truck and didn't make it out of the way on time. He was crushed to death between the two vehicles.

One important lesson is to remember to chock your wheels to prevent your vehicle from moving while you are loading it, unloading it, or for any other reason decide to get out. Make sure your brakes are set. If your brakes are not adjusted correctly, the vehicle may unexpectedly roll.

Here are a few more tips:

- ♦ Use the correct chocking equipment.
- ♦ Store the chocks inside your truck-trailer or other rig.
- ♦ Don't use makeshift items such as rocks, pieces of lumber or cinder blocks to chock your wheels.
- ♦ Before exiting your vehicle, make sure that the brakes are set, the vehicle is at a complete standstill and that it will not roll forward or backward.

Reminder: A few extra minutes of time can make the difference between a SAFE day and a severe injury or death.

Turfgrass Sod Producers' Safety Q&A—No. 1

Editor's note: One good way to keep your safety skills sharp is to regularly quiz yourself on safety-related questions. You can also use these quizzes for your supervisors and other employees. (Be sure, however, to quiz your workers orally, in case some of them are unable to read or write.) The one correct answer to each question in this Safety Q&A will appear in our next issue of "Safety Management."

When a tractor is equipped with a rollover protective structure (ROPS), you should:

- Keep the ROPS in the down position.
- Perform maintenance on the ROPS so it is the correct height for the tractor.
- Wear the seat belt when the ROPS is in the upright and locked position.
- Remove the ROPS when loading a trailer.

When an accident occurs, the very first thing you should do is:

- Make sure top management is informed.
- Report the accident to your insurer.
- Talk with police investigating the incident.

- Get help for any injured persons.

When training a non-native speaking employee in safety, the best thing to do is:

- Ask the person's co-workers if he or she can read and write.
- Use "visual" examples and have the worker demonstrate what you just showed him or her.
- Tell the person that he or she must learn your language.
- Let the person go because training will be too time consuming.

More Low-Cost Safety Ideas You Can Use

Editor's note: This is the third in a series of articles on free or low-cost safety ideas you can use.

- ✓ Appoint a safety committee or "team." If you have a small operation, a team can consist of as few as two people. It's best, however, to include representation from both management and non-supervisory employees. Make sure your committee or team meets monthly to discuss any injuries or other accidents that have occurred, areas where more training is needed and other safety issues.
- ✓ Appoint safety mentors. The purpose of this is to provide each new employee with one-on-one assistance on safety matters. Safety mentors should have good safety track records and understand your company's safety policies and rules. If possible, the mentor (a co-worker, NOT a supervisor or other manager) should be from the same country/culture as the new employee—and must be able to speak the new employee's language. The mentor should keep an eye out for any unsafe behaviors and be available to answer safety-related questions in the new employee's native language.
- ✓ Hold safety barbecues, lunches or similar events. If your company goes an entire month without any accidents or injuries, reward employees by bringing in lunch or other treats. If you employ workers from more than one culture, ask them to bring a native dish to pass. That way, your event can also serve as a learning experience for workers from different cultures.
- ✓ Set up a safety suggestion box or boxes. You will want to locate these in a central location where employees gather, such as in a break room, by a time clock or even inside trucks. Keep small pieces of paper and pens or pencils next to the boxes and encourage employees to submit any safety-related ideas or concerns. No names are needed; often, not requiring a worker to provide his or her name will result in a greater willingness to report any problems.

TPI Safety TIPS

- Gain an understanding of your workers' cultures.
- Use safety examples that reflect employees' cultural values.
- Learn at least some of your non-native-speaking workers' languages.
- Praise employees for working safely.
- Discuss safety on a daily basis.
- Document all accidents and near miss incidents.

Think Safety!

Marketing Tip

By Bob Schultz, MIRM, CSP
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Confusion in a Cooling Market

A cooling housing market is here. The good news is that turfgrass sod and other related businesses can still succeed as long as you have a clear understanding of how this market works.

A cooling market is a confused market. In addition to homebuyers being confused, other consumers are too. They suddenly see prices dropping or leveling when they are used to prices rising. They aren't sure if they should buy now, or hold out for better deals.

The marketplace itself is confused—

The market is over-saturated with spec homes and re-sale properties. Builders are also confused because it has been a builders' market and, suddenly, it is not. Their salespeople think their builders should lower prices, offer incentives and spend more on advertising so they can again make the easy sales they did when the market was hot.

To thrive in a cooling market, you must not be confused—The fact that the market is cooling doesn't mean it's turning into a bad market; it's simply returning to normal.

Imagine a given area's average yearly temperature over several centuries is 75 degrees. And suddenly that area's average temperature jumps to 115 degrees and remains there for several years.

Then, just as suddenly, it begins to fall and the next year's average temperature is 95 degrees; are you going to say it's abnormally cold? Of course not.

The same thing is happening with the housing market which directly impacts the turfgrass sod market.

Get back to basics—What's happening now in the U.S. is no different than what happened in 1974-75 when the Arab oil embargo triggered a market slowdown, or in 1981-82 when interest rates rose to 18 percent and caused a housing recession. We went from good markets to transitional markets.

There are many people in housing related businesses who have never been through difficult market times. It will be difficult for them to make the mental shift necessary to thrive in changing conditions.

Improve the things you can control—

As the market changes, you must identify what you can and can't control; then learn

how to improve on what you can control.

You can't control what the competition does, but you can control what you do—presentation and sales skills, appointment scheduling, overall marketing image, follow up, etc. You can't control the weather outside of your sales office, but you can control what kind of environment people experience when they come into contact with you.

As the market changes, there will be less traffic to convert, so you must work to increase conversion ratio. Make every prospect count.

Below are some other specific things turfgrass producers can do to succeed in the confused market:

1. Maintain strong, thorough knowledge of your marketplace. Research the housing market, including new and re-sale houses, as it relates to potential turfgrass sod sales. Track, on a monthly basis, information such as how many listings go unsold, how many close, average sales price and the average days on the market prior to selling?

2. Look at trends. As the market cools, there will be more re-sales housing than before, and they will stay on the market longer. At what rate are they selling compared to normal market absorption? You can use this information to estimate how long it will take to sell your inventory.

Also note the names of the realtors who are selling the re-sales; they might be able to help you with referrals.

3. Compare your prices with other selling prices in your marketplace—don't mimic; instead, you may need to rework your product's marketing approach to reflect benefits.

4. Assure prospective buyers that your market is strong market, never let them think it is weak. Be a beacon of clarity and reassurance when everything else is confusing to them.

In an extraordinary market, it is easy for ordinary salespeople to look like very good salespeople. Whereas in an ordinary market, it takes hard work to be an extraordinary salesperson. But those who keep a clear focus, stay informed about their marketplace, perfect their presentation and practice diligent follow-through will continue to succeed even in tough times.



Shrewder Computing

Secure Your Wireless Network

Today, business travelers use wireless laptops to stay in touch with the home office, even placing orders and just keeping in touch with family and friends.

Going wireless generally requires a broadband Internet connection called an "access point" (like a cable or DSL line that runs into a modem) in your home or office. The access point is connected to a wireless router that broadcasts a signal through the air, sometimes as far as several hundred feet. Any computer within range that's equipped with a wireless client card can pull the signal from the air and gain access to the Internet. Consequently, a wireless network requires certain precautions to prevent others with a wireless-ready computer from using your network, even accessing your computer. If an unauthorized person uses your network to commit a crime or send spam, the activity can be traced to your account.

Although no one step offers complete protection, the following steps will help you be more secure.

Precautionary Steps

- Use encryption to scramble communications over the network. If you have a choice, Wi-Fi Protected Access (WPA) is stronger than Wired Equivalent Privacy (WEP).
- Use anti-virus and anti-spyware software and a firewall.
- Most wireless routers have an identifier broadcasting mechanism—turn it off so your computer won't signal other devices in the vicinity.
- Change the identifier on your router from the default so a hacker can't use the manufacturer's default identifier to try to access your network.
- Change your router's pre-set password for administration to something only you know—longer passwords (10+ characters) are tougher to crack.
- Allow only specific computers to access your wireless network.
- Turn off your wireless network when you are not using it.

TPI Action

TPI Website to feature Video Coverage of Midwinter Conference

For the first time ever, an internal news crew will be videotaping sections of the TPI Midwinter Conference. The event coverage will be posted on the TPI website for all to view in the "News" section of TPI's home page. Conference attendees will be able to review the previous day's activities—and maybe see themselves—while individuals unable to attend will have an opportunity to experience a virtual overview!

TPI's *Benefits of Turfgrass* Presentation Being Expanded

The recently developed *Benefits of Turfgrass* presentation is already being enhanced with an additional option that allows it to be used as a stand-alone presentation, as well as controlled by the presenter who might wish to pause the various slides and share personal experience, knowledge and views. The stand-alone option features timed slide advance synchronized with a clear audio narrative—ideal for a trade or consumer show exhibit booth or school classroom delivery. Spring 3008 is the planned release date.

TPI 40th Anniversary History Book Hardcopy Coming Soon

Because the electronic version of the *History of Turfgrass Producers International—40th Anniversary* on CD was so well received at the 2007 Summer Convention, the following TPI member manufacturing companies agreed to sponsor a hardcopy version of the book, which is being sent to members this month:

\$5,000 Sponsors:

Bucyrus/Magnum: www.bucyrusmagnum.com

Kesmac/Brouwer: www.kesmac.com

Trebro Manufacturing: www.trebro.com

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To receive additional information on any of these items, contact the TPI Office at Tel: 800/405-8873 or 847/649-5555

Fax: 847/649-5678, or e-mail: info@TurfGrassSod.org

Website: <http://www.TurfGrassSod.org>

Artificial vs. Natural?

In a 2006 NFLPA (National Football League Players Association) Opinion Survey, players were asked, "Which surface do you think is more likely to contribute to injury?" Here are their responses:

Ball Club	Artificial Infilled	Natural Grass	Neither
Arizona Cardinals	60.0%	6.0%	34.8%
Atlanta Falcons	52.3%	9.1%	38.6%
Baltimore Ravens	70.5%	6.8%	22.7%
Buffalo Bills	53.6%	12.5%	33.9%
Carolina Panthers	67.4%	8.7%	23.9%
Chicago Bears	86.1%	0.0%	13.9%
Cincinnati Bengals	58.5%	22.6%	18.9%
Cleveland Browns	64.7%	2.0%	33.3%
Dallas Cowboys	61.4%	4.5%	34.1%
Denver Broncos	68.3%	12.2%	19.5%
Detroit Lions	44.6%	7.1%	48.2%
Green Bay Packers	59.6%	11.0%	28.8%
Houston Texans	75.9%	9.3%	14.8%
Indianapolis Colts	46.5%	9.3%	44.2%
Jacksonville Jaguars	64.3%	4.8%	31.0%
Kansas City Chiefs	65.1%	16.3%	18.6%
Miami Dolphins	68.1%	8.5%	23.4%
Minnesota Vikings	69.2%	10.3	20.5%
New England Patriots	66.0%	2.0%	32.0%
New Orleans Saints	52.3%	4.5%	43.2%
New York Giants	72.2%	9.1%	18.2%
New York Jets	77.6%	2.0%	20.4%
Oakland Raiders	74.4%	5.1%	20.5%
Philadelphia Eagles	79.6%	1.9%	18.5%
Pittsburgh Steelers	59.2%	6.1%	34.7%
St. Louis Rams	58.8%	5.9%	35.3%
San Diego Chargers	78.8%	3.8%	17.3%
San Francisco 49ers	59.2%	4.1%	36.7%
Seattle Seahawks	51.0%	7.8%	41.2%
Tampa Bay Bucs	65.2%	4.3%	30.4%
Tennessee Titans	70.7%	4.9%	24.4%
Washington Redskins	76.3%	2.6%	21.1%

Business Management

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