

On the Grow

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A New Season Begins

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Inside this Issue

- 3 Speedwell in Des Moines in Bloom
- Nick Christians
- 4 The Danger of Exhausted Employees
- Jennifer Deal
- 5 FREE Applicator Testing
- 6 Developing a Small Business Training Culture
- Bill Hoopes

Advertisers

- River City Turf and Ornamental 5
- Pace Supply 6
- D & K Products 7

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Speedwell in Des Moines in Bloom

Nick Christians, Iowa State University

The picture below is from Larry Ginger of American Lawn Care. It is of Speedwell at the edge of a lawn in Altoona, Iowa, by Des Moines. This is likely Persian speedwell (*Veronica persica*) also known as creeping Speedwell, Common Field Speedwell, or Winter Speedwell. It is commonly found in Iowa, although I do not see a lot of it in central Iowa. It has opposite, rounded, toothed, leaves and forms a dense mat runners in the lawn. It generally lives as a winter annual and likely germinated in the fall of 2015. It is surprising to see it in bloom in early March.



Speedwell is known for its heart shaped seed pod (see below). This picture was taken on campus from another sample of common speedwell.



It is difficult to control with standard broadleaf herbicides and may persist when other broadleaves have been controlled. Applying 2,4-D alone will unlikely be successful. A combination product with at least 3 ingredients, including dicamba and a pyridine such as triclopyr or fluroxypyr will likely give the best control. Repeat applications may be necessary.

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The Danger of Exhausted Employees

Jennifer Deal, Wall Street Journal Contributor

One important and often unacknowledged challenge CEOs are facing is fatigue. Not just their own fatigue, the fatigue of their staff.

Employees at all levels are tired. They work long hours, and never feel as if they can get away from work, which makes them even more tired. The smartphones that were supposed to provide better work-life balance allow us to get away from the office more, but simultaneously allow more work to flow to us through an endlessly open fire hose.

Employees at all levels are working so many hours they just get tired. These long hours started before the recession, got worse during the recession when people had to take on too many responsibilities as a result of the downsizings, and haven't improved since. While some people think this is just an individual issue and people just have to deal with the fatigue and work harder, that is shortsighted because it doesn't take into account the impact of fatigued employees on the organization.

When people get tired they make mistakes, and mistakes increase the risk the organization faces. How much risk is your organization exposed to because your employees—your IT staff who keep your intranet and websites from getting hacked, your client-facing staff who calm angry clients, your executives making strategic decisions about where to invest for the future—are so tired that it affects their decision making? Recently I heard a story about a product delivered to a client that was wrong—really, really wrong. When the issue was pointed out to the staff member who was responsible for it, the staff member was so tired he couldn't even figure out what was wrong with it (the client had to tell him).

Physical fatigue from working too many hours is compounded by fatigue resulting from never having a break from work to recharge. Most people I speak with say the first thing they do when they wake up and the last thing they do before they go to bed is to check—and respond to—emails on their smartphones. It isn't just the early morning and late night work, it's also the weekend and holiday work. Because someone from work can always reach them through email, text, phone, they never feel off the clock. The mental program labeled “work” is constantly running in the background, regardless of what they're doing or where they are. This inability to escape work and recharge leads to increased fatigue.

At this point many people have been tired for so long that many may have started to believe this is just the way the work is, and don't necessarily think working under these conditions makes them less productive or increases risk for the organization. But just because it is common doesn't mean it is good for the organization for CEOs to allow this state of affairs to continue. How many mistakes are made because of fatigue? How much business is lost because a staff member was exhausted? How many people have difficulty making healthy choices (physical, social, and emotional) because they are just plain tired, which result in health care expenses for the organization?

There are real business consequences to fatigue that many people don't talk about, but which CEOs need to start addressing.

Originally published: <http://blogs.wsj.com/experts/2015/02/25/the-danger-of-exhausted-employees/>

Developing a Small Business Training Culture

Bill Hoopes, Grass Roots Training / Consulting

direct this article toward small businesses that want to develop a training culture, create or access and deliver programs that maximize productivity and profit.

Two facts are important. First, untrained people typically fail or, at best, under-perform. Their mistakes and omissions lower your service level, damage your image in the marketplace and eventually, cost you money. Second, if you don't devote significant time and resources to building and administering a serious teaching program, building staff skills isn't easy. So, we have a need to train and a challenge in making it happen.

Below are some practical suggestions that will enable the smallest business to train more effectively.

Designate someone who cares.

Training is a management responsibility. Still, managers may not always be available to deliver training. Rather than try and fail because you are too busy, delegate. Use training as a development tool for your most quality oriented team member. Choose someone who shares your beliefs about doing the job right. While this is the person who will build your training program, he/she need not be an expert. Most of the info you'll need is readily available. Your 'trainer' must focus equally on task

completion and on the people who make it happen. Effective and enthusiastic communication is mandatory. Select the trainer accordingly.

Organize topics in 'need to know' sequence.

Limit initial training objectives. Begin with the job description. What is it the employee must know or be able to do first? Begin your training there. Teaching in a logical need-to-know sequence, according to job requirements, will improve retention of the information and make more sense on the job. Information I'll call "nice to know", while often more interesting to the trainer, tends to reduce clarity for new people and can be confusing. Trainees must understand what is important now.

Plan training in 'small bites'.

Spend some initial development time re-formatting important but often boring information. Emphasize most important points and critical knowledge in concise, easy to understand 'bites' or learning modules. New hires cannot and will not absorb extensive information. Initial training should allow the new hire to begin successfully, accomplishing small tasks, one at a time. Do not attempt to create a subject matter expert in a week or two. Not only is limited 'small bite'

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training easier to absorb and translate to behavior on the job, it is easier for a new trainer to create and deliver.

Use available and inexpensive resources.

In today's "green industry", whether your business is focused on design and build, maintenance, landscape or lawn care, the information you need is out there. One of the first tasks for your new 'trainer' should be to network with established and respected companies and trainers in the industry. Take advantage of the work others have done to pull together necessary information. You will find most of us are ready to help. Here are other great resources:

- Pesticide safety/use topics – OSHA website and state extension services.
- Environmental stewardship – EPA websites [federal and state]
- Driver safety – National safety council, local/state police and for profit training producers ["Google" the topic, you'll be amazed at the choices available].
- Equipment and product use – Manufacturers provide this info in video and written form.
- Plant/pest relationships – Your state extension service is a great resource and all information is free!
- Sales/customer service – "Train the Trainer" seminars can equip your trainer to deliver these topics. Programs are available and can be customized to your needs.

Finally, remain active in your national and local associations. Take advantage of the resources provided.



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